

... on the judge's stand, looking for the placard announcing the winner.

Doubts were set at rest, as the large letters were strung out, spelling the name of "Dorothy."

The clouds were scurrying across the blue, during the afternoon, and soon after the sun had darted a lurid, parting glance through a rift in the rolling pile of dense black, massed in the Western horizon, the low-lying, leaden sky deluged the earth with a steady downpour. A furious cannonading roared through the heavens, as the contending hosts fiercely beat against each other in marshalled array.

The observatory had given a correct forecast. "Clear and fair to cloudy and rain, and, later, lightning and thunder," had been the weather report. All these conditions were realized.

Fairlie had driven home from the races, immediately after Osceola's defeat. Jumping out of his trap in the covered archway of the hostelry, he omitted to give his customary directions to the stable boy holding the heads of his prized pair of grays. He wandered around aimlessly in the rain. The harder the stinging drops pelted into his face, the keener his delight. By pure force of habit, he drifted into a favorite restaurant. He involuntarily associated the many brilliant lights streaming through the plate-glass front with a sense of comfort. His garments were drenched. His teeth were chattering. He forgot to remove his hat. A waiter eyed him suspiciously, handed him the menu card, and stood by, stolidly, waiting for the order. Fairlie stared vacantly at the man, and, without a word, rose and walked away.

It was nearly seven when he turned the knob of his door. He entered stealthily, as if fearful of the sounds of his own footsteps, closed the door slowly, and, with unnecessary precaution, locked it. A blinding flash of lightning shot past the window, and momentarily illuminated the city, shrouded with a pitch-black pall of unrelieved duskiess. Fairlie started, and stood transfixed, as the heavens belched forth a succession of sharp, deafening detonations, followed by a grinding, clashing, rumbling roar. The air seemed oppressively hot and suffocating. Mechanically, he took off his pearl-buttoned, light fawn driving coat. It was soaking wet, and he experienced difficulty in extricating his arms from the clinging, shrunken sleeves. He next went to the window, unfastened the bolt, and swung open the glass doors, hinging inwards. He leaned over the casement, peering out into the impenetrable gloom, now and again streaked with leaping gleams. Painfully, his fevered brain revolved every phase of the sore dilemma.

"Yes! he would have to do it. There was no escape," and with a sense of intellectual pleasure, he argued the pros and cons of suicide. Was it cowardly to avert disgrace? What right had he to take a God-given life before the expiration of its natural term of existence? If he had committed wrong, why shouldn't he expiate it by earthly punishment? His soul revolted against the stern decrees of the earthly tribunal passing for justice. How would the law with its vaunted sapience treat his offence? Would it not indiscriminately sentence him, and rudely deprive him of every atom of self respect, putting beyond reach any possibility of retrieving lost dignity and abandoned honor? Society still clings to a barbaric code. Civilization has been slow in devising appropriate gradations of punishment. Retribution is still the cry of outraged law. One would have thought that enlightened religion would concern itself more with the salvation of the individual offender. Religion sounds well from the pulpit. It looks past the convict cell with disdainful eye.

The thought of long prison confinement settled it with Steve Fairlie. He clenched his teeth in grim resolve. He summoned up a picture of the coroner's jury viewing his remains. Would it be on the table of his room, or on the marble slab at the morgue. The surgeon would trace the course of the bullet, and, from the position of the body and pistol, would learnedly deliver an opinion as to whether the shot was self-inflicted, and discuss the possibility of foul-play. There would be an enquiry into his financial status, his past life and habits. The jury would retire, and bring in a verdict of "suicide through despondency or temporary insanity." This verdict was as hackneyed as the favorite cause of death among the medicos, when unable to detect any specific malady—heart failure.

He left the window, unlocked a small drawer in the camphor-wood cabinet, and took out a thirty-eight calibre Smith and Weston. The chambers were empty. He snapped the trigger a few times. It was double-action. He went to the same drawer, and brought out a circular box of cartridges. The pistol was soon loaded. A writing-pad lay on the table. He addressed a letter to Mr. Grant, telling him everything, and asking him to take Osceola, the grays, any prize-money the mare might win and all his personalty as part payment of his debt. He next wrote to Zela. He made half-a-dozen beginnings, and tore up as many sheets. At last, it was finished. He was sure she would understand all. There was no hurry. He went to the Steinway upright, and, out of pure perversity, improvised something fantastically light, and of lively tempo. He marvelled at his contradictory

moods. "My playing isn't a bit dolorous or funereal. This is my dying dirge, and I feel awfully like laughing." And he did laugh convulsively, until his head fell forward against the music-holder. Then he rose, and went to the table again, and, burying his face in his hands, gave way to a passionate fit of weeping. "This is baby play," he muttered in desperation, and again he nervously fingered the revolver.

(To be continued.)

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