URNING DAYLIGHT BY CACK LONDON

Synopsis of preceding chapters

CHAPTER XXXI.—(Continued.)

OOK here," he said, in a voice that shook with passion. "There's one thing I won't do, and that's propose to you in the office. That's why I'm here. Dede Mason, I want you. I just want you." While he spoke he advanced upon her, his black eyes burning with bright fire, his aroused blood swarthy in his cheek.

So precipitate was he that she had barely time to cry out her involuntary alarm and to step back, at the same time catching one of his hands as he attempted to gather her into his arms.

In contrast to him the blood had suddenly left her cheeks. The hand that had warded his off and that still held it was trembling. She relaxed her fingers and his arm dropped to his side. She wanted to say something, do something, to pass on from the awkwardness of the situation, but no intelligent thought nor action came into her mind. She was aware only of a desire to laugh. This impulse was partly hysterleal and partly spontaneous humor—the latter growing from instant to instant. Amazing as the affair us side of it was not veiled to her. She feit like one who had suffered the terror of the onslaught of a murderous footpad, only to find out that it was an innocent pedestrian asking the time. Daylight was the quicker to achieve action.

"Oh, I know I'm a sure enough fool," he said. "I-I guess PH sit down. Don't be scairt, Miss Mason.

I'm not real dangerous." "I'm not afraid," she answered with a smile,

alipping down herself into a chair beside which on the floor stood a sewing basket from which, Daylight noted, some white fluffy thing of lace and muslin overflowed. Again she smiled. "Though I confess you did-startle me for the moment."

"It's funny," Daylight sighed, almost with regret; "here I am, strong enough to bend you around and tie knots in you. Here I am, used to having my will with man and beast and anything. And here I am sitting in this chair, as weak and helpless as a little she was not looking at him he devoured her with his lamb. You sure take the starch out of me."

ply to these remarks. Instead her thought dwelt insistently upon the significance of his stepping aside in the middle of a violent proposal in order to make freelevant remarks. What struck her was the man's certitude. So little did he doubt that he would have her that he could afford to pause and generalize upon love and the effects of love.

She noted his hand unconsciously slipping in the familiar way into the side coat pocket where she knew he carried his tobacco and brown papers.

"You may smoke, if you want to," she said. He withdrew his hand with a jerk, as if something

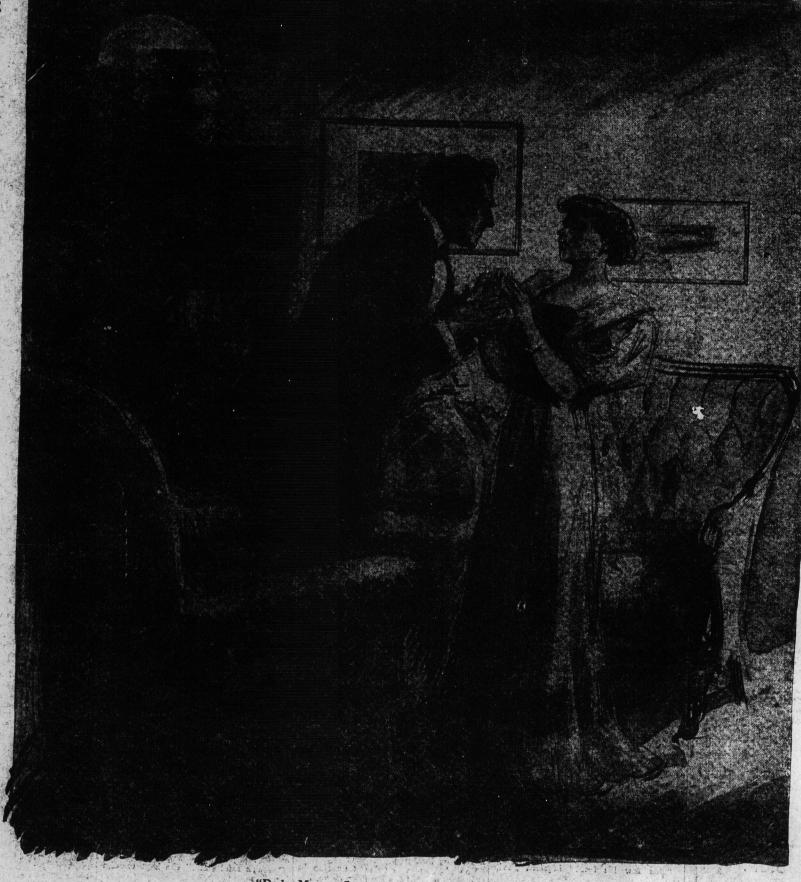
in the pocket had stung him. "No, I wasn't thinking of smoking. I was think-

ing of you. What's a man to do when he wants a woman but ask her to marry him? That's all that I'm doing. I can't do it in style. I know that. But Lear use straight English, and that's good enough for me. I sure want you mighty bad, Miss Mason. You're in my mind 'most all the time now. And what I want to know is well, do you want me? That's all."

"I-I wish you hadn't asked," she said softly. "Mebbe it's best you should know a few things before you give me an answer," he went on, ignoring the fact that the answer had already been given. "I never went after a woman before in my life, all reports to the contrary notwithstanding. The stuff you read about me in the papers and books about me being a lady killer is all wrong. There's not an iota of truth in it. I guess I've done more than my share of cardplaying and whiskey drinking, but women I've let alone. There was a woman that killed herself. but I didn't know she wanted me that bad or else I'd have married her-not for love, but to keep her from killing herself. She was the best of the boiling, but I never gave her any encouragement. I'm telling you all this because you've read about it, and I want you to get it straight from me.

"Lady killer!" he snorted. "Why, Miss Mason, I don't mind telling you that I've sure been scairt of women all my life. You're the first one I've not been afraid of. That's the strange thing about it. I just plumb worship you, and yet I'm not afraid of you. Mebbe it's because you're different from the women I know. You've never chased me. Lady killer! Why. I show. Tout the next character of the state I was strong in the wind and that I never fell down and broke a leg or anything.

"I didn't ever want to get married until after I



"Dede Mason, I want you. I just want you."

Dede vainly cudgelled her brains in quest of a re- could control a horse like Bob; that could run a typethey had given no advertisement of this. The bronze suppers tascinated him, and to them his eyes repeatedly turned.

A knock came at the door, which she answered. Daylight could not help hearing the conversation. She was wanted at the telephone.

Tell him to call up again in ten minutes," he heard her say, and the masculine pronoun caused la him a flashing twinge of jealousy. Well, he decided, whoever it was, Burning Daylight would give him a run for his money. The marvel to him was that a

She came back smiling to him and resumed her sewing. His eyes wandered from the efficient bands to the bronze slippers and back again, and he swore to himself that there were mighty lew stenographers like has meastence. That was occases she must have come of pretty good stock and had a pretty good raising. Nothing else could explain these rooms of hers and the cloches she were and the way she were

"Those ten minutes are flying," he suggested.
"I can't marry you," she said.

the shook her head.

She shock her head.

"Do you like me—the littlest bit?"

This time she nodded, at the same time allowing the smile of amusement to play on her lips, But it was amusement without contempt. The humorous side of a situation rarely appeared in vain to

Well, that's something to go on," he announced. "You've got to make a start to get started. I just liked you at first, and look what it's grown into.
You recollect, you said you didn't like my way of life. Well, I've changed it a heap. I ain't gambling fike I used to. I've gone into what you called the legitimate, making two minutes grow where one grew before, three hundred thousand folks where, only a hundred thousand grew before. And this next year there'll be two million eucalyptus growing on the hills. Say, do you like me more than She raised her eyes from her work and looked at

him as she answered:

"I like you a great deal, but"—
He waited a moment for her to complete the sentence, failing which he went on himself.

"I haven't an exaggerated opinion of myself, so I know I aim't heavents." good huspand. Your had I was no hand at hagging and fault finding. I can guess what it must be for a woman like you to be independent. Well, you'd be independent as my wife. No strings on you. You could follow your own sweet will and nothing would

The think so, but it would turn out differently. She suddenly became nervous. "We must stop this talk. It is too much filte aftempting to drive a bargain. 'How much will you give?' I'll give so much,' 'I want more,' and all that. I like you, but not enough to marry you, and Pil never like you

enough to marry you," How do you know that?" he demanded.

"Because I like you less and less."
Daylight sat dumfounded. The hurt showed treef plainly in his face.
"Oh, you don't understand?" she cried wildly, be

ginning to lose self-control. "It's not that way mean. I do like you; the more I've known you the more I've liked you. And at the same time the more I've known you the less would I care to marry This enigmatic utterance completed Daylight's

perplexity.
"Don't you see?" she hurried on. "I could have far easier married the blam Harnish fresh from klondike when I first laid eyes on him, long ago, when the string before me now."

than marry you sitting before me now."

He shook his head slowly.

"That's one too many for me. The more you know and like a man the less you want to marry him. Familiarity breeds contempt—I guess that's what you mean."

"No, no," she cried, but before she could continue a knock came on the door.
"The ten minutes is up," Daylight said. "The ten minutes is up," Daylight said.

His eyes, quick with observation like an Indian's, darted about the room while she was out. The impression of warmth and comfort and beauty predominated, though he was unable to analyze it while the simplicity delignted him—expensive simplicity, he decided, and most of it left-overs from the time her father went broke and died. He had never horoze appreciated a plain hardwood floor with a before appreciated a plain hardwood floor with a comple of wolfskins; it sure beat all the carpets in creation. He stared solemnly at a bookcase faining a couple of hundred books.

He could not understand where people, found uch to write about. Writing things and reading things were not the same as doing things, and, himself primarily a man of action, doing things was afone comprenensible.

His gaze passed on from the crouched Venus to a little tea table with all its fragile and exquisite accessories, and to a shining copper kettle and copper chaing dish. Chaing dishes were not unknown to him, and he wondered if she concoted suppers on this one for some of those university young men he had heard whispers about. One or two watercolors on the wall made him conjecture that she had painted them herself. There were photographs of horses and of old masters, and the trailing purple of a "Burial of Christ" held him for a time. But ever his gaze returned to that crouched Venus on the plano. To his homely frontier trained mind it a little tea table with all its fragile and exquisite acplano. To his homely frontier trained mind it seemed curious that a nice young woman should have such a bold, if not sinful, object on display in

met you, and until a long time after 1 met you. I be too good for you. I'd give you everything your cottoned to you from the start; but I never thought it would get as had as marriage. Why, I can't get to sleep nights, thinking of you and wanting you."

Except yourself," she interrupted suddenly, all right. Evidently such things went slong with the came to a stop and waited. She had taken the her nerves and wits, and was sewing upon it. As she was not looking at him he devoured her with his yes. He noted the firm, efficient hands—hands that could control a horse like Bob; that could run a typeward the witer almost as fast as a man could talk; that could see wo dainty garments and that doubtlessly could play on the plano over there in the corner. Another substantially all right is declared stoutly. "I'd see that I didn't," he declared stoutly. "I'd see that I didn't," be declared stoutly. "I'd see that I didn't," she suddenly became nervous. "We must stop this she re-entered the room, and as she crossed it to prome shippers were maduening.

Tout think so, but it would turn out differently." She suddenly became nervous. "We must stop this she re-entered the room, and as she crossed it to prome shippers were maduening.

Tout think so, but it would turn out differently." She suddenly became nervous. "We must stop this she re-entered the room, and as she crossed it to prome shippers were maduening.

To like to say the faith. Since it was 'Dede it must be enfinently. The act

immediately. "Are you thinking of marrying some-

She laughed merrily and shook her head.

"Do you like anybody else more than you like e? That man at the telephone just now, for in-There isn't anybody else. I don't know anybody

I like well enough to marry. For that matter, I don't think I am a marrying woman. Office work Daylight ran his eyes over her from her face the tip of a bronze slipper, in a way that made the color mantle in her cheeks. At the same time he shook his head sceptically.

"It strikes me that you're the most marryingest woman that ever made a man sit up and take nogot to locate the lay of the land. Is there anybody you like as much as you like me?"

But Dede had herself well in hand.

"That's unfair," she said. "And if you stop and consider you will find that you are doing the very thing you disclaimed—namely, nagging. I refuse to answer any more of your questions. Let us talk about other things. How is Bob?"

Half an hour later, whirling along through the rain in Telegraph avenue toward Oakland Daylight smoked one of his brown paper cigarettes and reviewed what had taken place. It was not at all bad, was his summing up, though there was much about it that was baffling. There was that liking him the more she knew him and at the same time wanting to marry him less. That was a puzzler. But the fact that she had refused him carried with But the fact that she had refused him carried with that the fact that she had refused him carried with it a certain elation. In refusing him she had refused his thirty million dollars. That was going some for a ninety-dollar-a-month stenographer who had known better times. She wasn't after money, that was patent. Every woman he had encountered had seemed willing enough to swallow him down for the sake of his money. Why, he had doubled his fortune made fifteen millions—since the day she first came to work for him, and behold! any willingness to marry him she might have possessed had diminished as his money had increased.

"Gosh!" he mintered. "If I clean up a hundred million on this land deal she wou't even be on speaking terms with me."

But he could not smile the thing away. It re-mained to baffle him, that enigmatic statement of mained to baffle him, that enigmatic statement of hers that she could more easily have married the Elam Harnish fresh from Klondike than the present Elam Harnish. Well, he concluded, the thing to do was for him to become more like that old time Daylight who had come down out of the North to try his luck at the higger game. But that was impossihis luck at the bigger game. But that was impe ble. He could not set back the flight of time.

ing wouldn't do it and these was no other way. He might as well wish hinself a boy again.

Another satisfaction he cuddled to himself from their interview. He had heard of stenographers before who refused their employers and who invariably quit their positions immediately afterward. But Dede had not even hinted at such a thing. No matter how baffling she was there was no nonsensical stilliness about her. She was level headed. But also he had been level headed and was partly responsible for this. He hadn't taken advantage of her in the for this. He hadn't taken advantage of her in office. True, he had twice overstepped the bou but he had not followed it up and made a practice of it. She knew she could trust him. But in it of all this he was confident that most young won would have been silly enough to resign a post with a man they had turned down. And, after he had put it to her in the right light, she not been silly over his sending her brother to (

"Gee!" he concluded, as the car drew up before hotel. "If I'd only known it as I do now I'd have popped the question the first day she came to work. According to her say so that would have been that proper moment. She likes me more and more, and the more she likes me the less she'd care to marry me! Now what do you think of that? She sure must be fooling."

CHAPTER XXXII. NCE again, on a rainy Sunday, weeks afterward, Daylight proposed to Dede. As on the first time, he restrained himself until his hunger for her overwhelmed him and swept him away in his red automobile to Berkeley. I left his machine several blocks away and proceeded the house on foot. But Dede was out, the landlady daughter told him, and added, on second thought, that she was out walking in the hills. Furthermore, the young lady directed him where Dede's walk was most likely to extend.

Daylight obeyed the girl's instructions, and soon the street he followed passed the last house and itself ceased where began the first steep slopes of the open hills. The air was damp with the oncoming of rain. the storm had not yet burst, though the rising wind proclaimed its imminence. As far as he could set there was no sign of Dede on the smooth, grassy hills To the right, dipping down into a hollow and rising To the right, dipping down into a hollow and rising again, was a large, full grown enealyptus grove. Here all was noise and movement, the lofty, slender trunked trees swaying back and forth in the wind and clashing their branches together. In the squalls above all the minor noises of creaking and groaning, and a mighty have above all the minor holses of creaking and groaning, arose a deep thrumming note as of a mighty harp. Knowing Dede as he did, Daylight was confident that he would find her somewhere in this grove where the storm effects were so pronounced. And find her he did, across the hollow and on the exposed crest of the capoulog slope where the gale smooths its forcest. the opposing slope where the gale smote its flerces!

There was something monotonous, though not tiresome, about the way Daylight proposed. Guiltless of diplomacy or subterfuge, he was as direct and gusty as the gale itself. He had time neither for greeting

nor apology.
"It's the same old thing," he said; "I want you and I've come for you. You've just got to have me, Dede, for the more I think about it the more certain I am

for the more I think about it the more certain I am that you've got a sneaking liking for me that's something more than just ordinary liking; and you don't dast say that it isn't, now, dast you?"

He had shaken hands with her at the moment he began speaking, and he had continued to hold her hand. Now, when she did not answer she felt a light but firmly insistent pressure as of his drawing her to him. Involuntarily she half yielded to him, her desire for the moment stronger than her will. Then suddenly she drew herself away, though permitting her hand still to remain in his.

"You sure ain't afraid of me?" he asked with sules. You sure ain't afraid of me?" he asked with quick

"No," she smiled wofully, "not of you, but of my-

"You haven't taken my dare," be urged under this encouragement.

encouragement.

"Please, please," she begged. "We can never marry, so don't let us discuss it."

"Then I copper your bet to lose." He was almost gay now, for success was coming faster than his fondest imagining. She liked him without a doubt; and without a doubt she liked him well enough to let him hold her hand; well enough to be not repelled by the nearness of him. She shook her head.

"No; it is impossible. You would lose your bet." For the first time a dark suspicion crossed Daylight's mind—a clew that explained everything.

"Say, you ain't been let in for some one of these secret marriages, have you?"

The consternation in his voice and on his face was too much for her, and her laugh rang out, merry and spontaneous as a burst of joy from the throat of a

Daylight knew his answer, and, vexed with himself, decided that action was more efficient than speech. So he stepped between her and the wind and drew her so that she stood close in the shelter of him. An unusually stiff squall blew about them and thrummed overhead in the treetops, and both paused to listen. A shower of flying leaves enveloped them, and hard on the heels of the wind came driving drops of rain. He looked down on her and on her hair, wind blown about her face, and because of her closeness to him and of a fresher and more poignant realization of what she meant to him he trembled so that she was aware of it in the hand that held hers.

She suddenly leaned against him, bowing her head until it rested lightly upon his breast. And so they stood while another squall, with flying leaves and scattered drops of rain, rattled past. With equal suddenness she lifted her head and looked at him.

"Do you know," she said, "I prayed last night about her so that she stood close in the shelter of him. An

"Do you know," she said, "I prayed last night about you. I prayed that you would fail, that you would lose everything—everything."

Daylight stared his amazement at this cryptic ut-"That sure beats me. I always said I got out of my depth with women and you've got me out of depth now. Why you want me to lose everything, seeing as you like me"-

"I never said so."
"You didn't dast say you didn't. So, as I was saying, liking me, why you'd want me to go broke is clean beyond my simple understanding. It's right in line with that other puzzler of yours, the more-'I never said so! pu-like-me-the-less-you-want-to-marry-me one. Well,

you've just got to explain, that's all.' His arms went around her and held her closely, and this time she did not resist. Her head was bowed and he could not see her face, yet he had a premonition that she was crying. He had learned the virtue of silence and he waited her will in the matter. Things had come to such a pass that she was bound to tell him something now. Of that he was bound to tell him something now. Of that was confident.

"I am not romantic," she began, again looking at him as she spoke. "It might be better for me if I were. Then I could make a fool of myself and be unhappy for the rest of my life. But my abominate the spoke were." nable common sense prevents. And that doesn's make me a bit happier either." still out of my depth and swimming feeble,

Daylight said, after waiting vainly for her to go on. "You've got to show me and you ain't shown me yet. Your common sense and praying that I'd go broke is all up in the air to me. Little woman, I just love you mighty hard and I want you to marry me. That's straight and simple and right off the bat. Will you marry me?"
She shook her head slowly, and then, as she talked,

seemed to grow angry, sadly angry—and Paylight knew that this anger was against him.

"Then let me explain, and just as straight and simply as you have asked." She paused, as if costing about for a beginning. "You are honest and straightforward. Do you want me to be honest and straightforward, as a woman is not supposed to hely to tall. forward, as a woman is not supposed to be?—to tell you things that will hurt you?—to make confessions that ought to shame me?-to behave in what many men would think was an unwomanly manner?" The arm around her shoulder pressed encourage-

ment, but he did not speak.

(To Be Continued.)

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