

A SERIES OF TEN STORIES BY JOAN T. MCINTYRE

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SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS STORY

CRAVATH is an athletic young fellow in search of \$1000. He has just been out of a girl's hands, and he is now in a state of mind to do anything. He has just been out of a girl's hands, and he is now in a state of mind to do anything. He has just been out of a girl's hands, and he is now in a state of mind to do anything.

II.—The Adventure of the Flemish Cabinet

CRAVATH lived in a pretty suburban place and I dropped in to see him the next morning. "You've got it comfortable enough here," said I, as I looked at the perfect he handed me, and looked out at the tall elms and the level lawn.

"The sort of a place a man thinks of when the night's going against him. Peaceful, with a background of winter nights, open fires, good books and pipes of fragrant tobacco."

"It has all of those things," said Cravath, soberly. "And it has a good old mother in the bargain to look after it."

"Ah," said I. The words stirred the gray embers of the past, and I was surprised when a faint glow resulted. "A home and a mother! Even a cycle of bathetic popular songs has failed to spoil the beauty of the idea. I haven't had a real home in years, and I haven't had a mother for almost as many more. But I remember what both were like. The pleasure is yours, my boy."

"Humanized," said he, "is never content. And it is the blood of youth to want a wife."

"Right," agreed I. "And it's pretty natural. However, I suppose it will not be long now before you are satisfied upon that score also."

"No," said he, "not a great while. But—and he frowned at the rings of smoke that drifted about his head—a silver-mounted dueling pistol does not make a very effective bulwark against the assaults of the world."

"Many a chance has been taken on less," said I. "I've known life partnerships formed on just enough to pass to the minister to turn out wonderful successes. And, on the other hand, I've heard of other ones bolstered by millions which have been touched by frost."

"The most gifted of the optimistic philosophers, however he was, had nothing on you," spoke Cravath. "And what you say is right. The possession of money figures only to a certain point; after that it's the stuff that's in one that counts."

"Right again," said I. "Very right, indeed. Then I looked about, expecting to catch a glimpse of the treasure which had brought him so hurriedly from Europe. I suppose," said I, "you had a business interview with Davidson this morning."

"He shook his head, and answered: "He was closed last night when we reached his place of business. And he was still closed when we went there again today."

"Perhaps he's ill or—"

"No," said Cravath. "A man in the next shop told me that he had been called away quite suddenly about half an hour before I reached there. A telegram."

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alone. It affects my son; it affects—beating his breast—"me."

Cravath leaned back in his chair, regarding the speaker in amazement.

"Explanations are now due," he said. "Last night," spoke Blaylow, "you engaged in a brutal prize-fight in order to secure money enough to take advantage of the ill-advised words of an estimable young lady."

"Well," "A number of people know of these words, and some of them—with disdain—attach a meaning to them never intended."

"Don't be too sure as to the latter," said Cravath. "This young lady," maintained Blaylow, "is to be my son's wife. That is a complete answer to your absurd pretensions, Mr. Cravath, and I trust to hear no more from you under that head."

"I think," said Cravath, "that I will wait and hear the young lady herself upon the subject."

"Sir," said the other, "your effrontery is equal to anything, so this determination does not surprise me. But time will prove how futile the attempt will be. However, that is not what brought me here this morning. I came, sir, to express my views as to your conduct of last night. My son's fiancée, myself, and family have been placed in what I may justly call jeopardy by your mad actions. We will be made the victims of vulgar ridicule. That you shall not succeed in accomplishing your object will make no difference in this, unfortunately. No matter how it goes, we will still be the target for the gibes of the unfortunates."

Cravath got up, going to a desk he took out a thick bundle of notes and flashed them, I thought, a little vaingloriously.

"These," said he, "are the dueling pistol so much craved by Miss Betterton. She has said certain things with regard to the successful ending of the search; being a thoroughbred, she will hold to those things. The fellow to this thousand—as he threw the bundle of notes back into the drawer, which he looked—was taken from me on board the steamer. I think I'll give you some of my own money. But in addition, your son and he would not have profited by my failure. A word to Miss Betterton would have fixed that."

The craggy-faced one snapped his fingers. "Proof," said he. "Let us have the proof of what you charge." He paused, and as Cravath merely smiled, he continued: "Are you aware that what you say is an actionable matter? Are you aware, sir, that I am the place for such as so judge themselves?"

And for a space of five minutes he continued in this latter strain; however, as I watched him, I little by little became convinced that though there was much warmth of words, there was little or no meaning behind them. Also I noted some curious indications. Instead of indignation there was a look of speculation in his crafty old eyes; somehow they seemed to laugh and mock. Then, after exhausting his repertoire of expression, he turned and stalked out of the room after the manner of a man incensed; but the look which he threw over his shoulder was one of triumph.

"There is a man," observed I, from behind the door, "perfectly, 'who has no beauty in his soul. A meditative, speculative, plotting old rascal, I would call him."

Cravath laughed. "We will try and not be too hard upon him," said he. "In one respect he is well worthy of the highest praise."

"And what respect is that?" I demanded, non-believingly. "He has a son who aspires to a girl of surpassing fairness and most exceptional sweetness," said Cravath. "And in remembering a thing like that we must needs forget all the others."

"It is the commonest of things in you that makes you speak so," said I. "If your blood was cold you'd go no further than I."

"How was that?" "The junkman we had nothing for him."

"The junkman? I see. And where was he?" "Coming up the walk. But he hadn't got far when I saw him and ordered him away."

"And did he go?" "Yes—yes, but she said it in such a hesitating way as to cause me to suspect that she was not sure."

"Did you watch him outside the grounds?" "No," said Cravath. "I looked at Cravath and Cravath looked at me."

"The junkman looked promising," said he. "You were accustomed to seeing this man at different times, I suppose?" I hinted to the cook.

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ward some opportunity that will put last night's to the blush."

"Sit down," said I. He did so, and while I surveyed him scornfully, he lit another cigar.

"Now," said I, "when did you go out?" "About 2 o'clock."

"And when did you return?" "A little after 4."

"Who was in the house when you left?" "Only one person—Della, the cook."

"And who was here when you returned?" "Only Della."

"Did you see her any questions?" "A few, but she knew nothing."

"Suppose we have her in. I'd like to speak to her."

In a few moments Della appeared. She was a large, square female, and one who I saw at a glance was perfectly familiar with her right. Somehow she had got it into her head that she was being charged with the theft, and her manner and answers were uncompromisingly hostile. She had seen nothing, she had heard nothing, she knew nothing.

"You were in the kitchen all the time?" asked I. "I was," she answered, deliberately. "That is where I had to be. I always earn every penny I get."

"Della," said I, "I believe you. But, while deep in these breathless efforts, surely you noticed some one or heard something. There was a second or two in which you glanced up, or out of the window, or something of that nature, harmless in itself and perfectly natural in the most industrious of cooks."

"I never glanced out of the window but once," said she, gloomily. "And then I was forced to."

"How was that?" "The junkman we had nothing for him."

"The junkman? I see. And where was he?" "Coming up the walk. But he hadn't got far when I saw him and ordered him away."

"And did he go?" "Yes—yes, but she said it in such a hesitating way as to cause me to suspect that she was not sure."

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hand close warningly upon my arm. Again we stood listening, but, as before, nothing followed.

"We are nervous, that's all," said Cravath at length. "It's mighty queer," I grumbled, "that we should both be seized by the condition at exactly the same moment and in the same way."

"Hum-m-m!" said he, and I knew from the tone that I had touched upon a point upon which his own mind was not at rest. However, there was no time for delay; we drew the blinds and turned on the lights. Then the Flemish cabinet took our attention. It was a massive, oaken, smoky-looking affair, with dull-brass knobs and many drawers. One after another of these Cravath drew open, but none of them contained the \$1000.

"The old man changed his place of deposit," said I, wrathfully. "I wouldn't have a suspicious nature like that for the world."

Cravath stood staring at the cabinet; then, in a muttering tone, he said:

"You are wrong I think; take a look at those locks."

I did so, and then I all but cried out with surprise. "Forced!" said I. Then I inspected them closely. "And a very effective and nicely done job. The man who did it was a perfectly competent—"

There came a sound at the library door; like a flash Cravath threw off the lights; then a revolver shot rang out. With the same impulse we both made for the window, tumbled out upon the stairs and leaped to the ground. And as we did so the revolver sounded again; I saw the awful spurt of fire from its muzzle at the window I had just vacated; and as we raced over the lawn another weapon, off to our left, sounded with equal viciousness. Then another came from the right.

"They must have ordered out the militia," said Cravath as we hurried the fence, just visible in the mist. After going fifty yards or more, the hard stones of the road began to hurt our feet, and so we stopped to pull on our shoes.

"The old man," said Cravath, "has either beaten me or been beaten himself."

"The money is gone," said I, laboring with my shoes. "So it's all the same thing. You lose, no matter how it stands."

We had finished and stood up when we heard running feet coming down the road.

"They are still after us," said Cravath. "Look out for the guns!"

On and on came the runner; we stood perfectly still, meaning to allow him to pass. But when he arrived, he most directly opposite us he halted for a full minute, he stood perfectly still, as though listening. Then, softly, slowly, we heard him moving; and when I felt Cravath's warning touch upon my arm, I knew that he was moving toward us.

Cravath sat astride of him, and surveyed him with growing understanding.

"We can say much the same thing," said he. Then to me, who had just run a hand through his pockets, I said so, and in a moment had produced a thick wad of notes which had a familiar look. A moment's glimpse, and we were both staring at each other. "A moment's glimpse, and we were both staring at each other. "A moment's glimpse, and we were both staring at each other."

"All right," said I, dazed, but maintaining the best front I could.

Cravath arose and the "gun" did likewise. All the time I kept the matches burning.

"And now, my dear sir," said Cravath, and his finger pointed down the road.

"Nothing doing," asked Strauss, as he grinned and shook himself like a dog.

"Well," said Cravath, "we might tender you a vote of thanks. But, on the whole, I think we'd better not. I think I'll say, 'I'm not as tight as you, I'll hand you mine. When you jump me a minute, say, I think it was one of the guys from back there on the job, and expect to be shipped a good fifteen years. He waved his hand and moved away. "Well, so long, gentle. Maybe I'll see you again."

And as his footsteps died away, Cravath stretched himself luxuriously. My matches had given out, but I could hear the loud yawn through the darkness.

"He can hold as carefully as we may," philosophized he. "But we can never outdo the results which are brought in by chance."

"Right," agreed I. And then, "All the pictures of Chance that I have ever seen show the form of a female. And so, I'm willing to go on record here as saying that she is a lady, every inch of her."

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