An Outsider

(By LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE)

AUTHOR OF
"The Lone Wolf"
"Joan Thursday"
"The Brass Bowl" etc.

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(From Monday's Daily.)

With no more expression than she had employed in the case of Sally, Mrs. Gosnold saluted the last comers with a request to enter and be seated, then directed her maid to go out into the hall, close the door, and stand guard to prevent eavesdropping. When the door was closed she plunged directly into a prepared address.

"I owe every one an apology," she began with a fugitive, placating smile, "for all this inconvenience and nonsense—as it must seem. But I'm sure you will bear with me when you know the circumstances, which are extraordinary, and my motive, quite a natural one.

"We are now," she pursued with a swift glance that embraced the room, "just twenty-three, including myself; that is to say, everybody who slept here last night, and one or two more. And your masks are a sure screen for any betrayal of emotion when I tell you why I have asked you to oblige me by meeting here. So please retain them whatever happens."

She paused, made a little gesture of deprecation. "I would rather almost anything than be obliged to say what I must.

"One of us," she announced deliberately, "is a thief. These rooms were entered some time last night, while I was asleep, and all my personal jewelry was stolen. Please no one interrupt. I will answer all the natural questions before I finish.

"The robbery was not difficult to accomplish. The island is well policed, there has not been a burglary in its history, and I am a careless old woman. When I take my things off at night I leave them on my dressing-table. Marie, my maid, puts them away in the morning. I have three large jewel-cases, none of which is ever locked except when I travel. I have never had a safe. The jewel-cases are stored away in unlocked dresser-drawers. My bedroom and boudoir doors are never locked. And I am a sound sleeper. There is—and was—nothing to prevent the thief from entering after I had turned out my light and, employing ordinary discretion, helping him or herself. Which is precisely what happened last night. Every piece of jewelry was taken from my dressing table, and the three jewel-cases from their drawers.

"I discovered my loss promptly after waking up this morning. I said nothing, but after setting in motion the machinery for to-night's amusement, which I have long had in mind, devoted the day to a quiet investigation, as a result of which I am convinced that the house servants had no part in the robbery. In short I am persuaded that the thief is now in this room. I do not, however, wish to know his or her identity. And I am especially anxious to avoid the scandal which must follow if this affair leaks out.

"Finally, I feel so sure you all share my horror of publicity and my aversion to know postively who committed this crime that I ask you all silently to pledge yourselves to secrecy—and then to humor my plan for regaining my jewels and covering up the affair completely. I have thought it might be accomplished this way:

"Marie has given you each a card, an envelope, and a pencil. The cards and envelopes have no distinguishing marks. The pencils are all alike. The authorship of anything you may care to communicate cannot possibly be traced, if you will be careful not to write but to print.

"Please take the cards away with you to your rooms, and please each of you remain there at least five minutes before coming out. Then take the cards in the envelopes, sealed, down-stairs and deposit them in the mail-box. By that time I shall expect the thief to have deposited my jewelry in some hiding-place about the house or gounds—a dozen will suggest themselves on a moment's thought—the spot is to be indicated on the card. By this method ample time is granted in which to make restitution with complete immunity from recognition, the secret will be kept, the scandal hushed up, and, best of all, I shall be able to continue considering each and every one of you my very dear friend.

"But"—and her handsome old face darkened with the shadow of the determination that rang in her tone—"if this scheme should fail, and the thief refuse to make restitution, then, though it break my heart, I shall feel without alternative other than to take certain steps—steps which I cannot now contemplate without positive loathing, so repugnant are they to me.

"Now I have finished," Mrs. Gosnold said quietly. "I am sorry to have imposed in this way upon your patience; but it seemed, I think you'll grant me, warranted and necessary. I thank you, and hope you'll forgive me. And now will you please return to your rooms, without asking me any questions, and do as I have begged? And I sincerely hope that this wretched business may not interfere with your enjoyment tonight. For my part, I am so confident of the success of this scheme that I mean to consider that I have not been robbed—that everything is as it has always been, and as it will be after the envelopes are opened at one o'clock."

She ceased; there was the stir of a general rising and movement toward the door, amid a hum of excited murmurings.

CHAPTER XIII.
Marplot

Once sheltered by the privacy of her bedchamber and seated before the little white-enamel desk with its chints-covered fittings that suited so well the simple, cheerful scheme of decoration, the girl lingered long, an idle pencil caught between fingers infirm of purpose. Her gaze was fixed as if hypnotized to the blank white face of the bit of cardboard that lay before her on the blotting-pad, her thoughts far astray in a dark jungle of horror, doubts, suspicions, fears.

Immediately after shutting herself in she had gone straight to this desk, possessed by the notion that there was a message requiring to be written upon the card, one self-exculpatory sentence which had framed itself in her mind as she sped down the corridor from that remarkable meeting in Mrs. Gosnold's rooms.

"I have not told you everything—but I am innocent," thus ran the words which she felt were demanded of her and a legitimate privilege, her duty to herself in sheer self-preservation. And as they wrote themselves down before her mental vision she saw two heavy strokes of the pen underlining "everything," and her own true name, Sarah Manvers, following in the place of the signature—no more "Sara Manwaring," Mrs. Gosnold explicit commands to the contrary notwithstanding!

But that had been an impulse only natural in the first shock of horror inevitably attending the disclosure of the robbery, to clear herself; or, rather, to reaffirm her innocence.

For with second thought had come the consideration: Was she not already cleared, was her innocence not already established?

She was prepared to believe that Mrs. Gosnold knew everything. That extraordinary woman! What had she not known, indeed? Mark how cunningly she had drawn from Sally the admission that she had been up and about the house and grounds long after she had gone to her bedchamber for the night!—at the very time, most probably, when the robbery was being done! And that had been by way of preface to the pledge she had made Sally of her protection before startling a confession from the girl—a pledge not only given in advance, but by implication at least renewed when the truth was out.

If she had believed Sally guilty, or party to the crime, or even in possession of guilty knowledge of it, would she have made that generous promise?

She was kind of heart, was Mrs. Gosnold, but she was nobody's fool; if she had not been well satisfied in her own mind as to the thief she would never have so committed herself to Sally, for she was not one to give her word lightly or, as she herself had said, to bait a trap with fair words and flattery.

In vain Sally searched her memory for anything to warrant an assumption that her mistress had been in any way ignorant of that black business of the small hours. She had neither denied such knowledge nor asserted it, but had simply permitted Sally to leave out of her account all reference to the overnight adventure.

And all that assorted consistently with her statement that she did not wish to learn the thief's identity, as well as with her invention of a means for obtaining restitution without such intelligence.

So Sally ended by believing it rather more than possible that Mrs. Gosnold knew as well as the girl herself who had consummated the crime—or, at all events, shared the damning suspicions engendered in Sally's mind by circumstantial evidence.

(Continued in Wednesday's Issue.)

SIDE TALKS

By RUTH CAMERON

TOO MUCH TIME.

The less one does the less one wants to do.

That is a familiar bromide.

It is also a familiar experience. There is really such a thing as having too much time.

It Takes Her Months To Answer A Letter

I have a friend who was married a fews years ago and went to a distant part of the country to live. Her friends here miss her and write to her. Sometimes months elapse before she answers their letters. Sometimes she does not answer at all. When she comes back here to visit we are so glad to see her that we forgive her. She is the kind of a person who somehow manages to make people fond of her without doing things for them. People vie with each other for the chance to do things for her. She takes what they give as a matter of course and they give as a matter of course and they are content. You know the sort of people I mean. Nevertheless we do sometimes chide her for not answering our letters. And then she explains that she cannot find the time.

That may not strike you as a peculiar excuse. There doubtless are people for whom it is difficult to find the time to keep up with their correspondence (and they are often the people who answer you the day they get your letter). Know then that she has no children, that she and her husband board and that she does no outside work of any sort.

And yet she cannot find time to write.

Pressure Of Work Keeps you Up To The Mark

Truly if you want a thing done, find a busy man or woman to do it. There really is something in the pressure of much work that seems to keep one up to the mark.

I have found that if I get my work ahead so that I have only a little to do on a certain day, half the time I will not do even that little bit. I have so much time that I do not feel the necessity of getting at it. Consequently I put off getting at it, and by and by the day is gone and my work is not done.

You Depend On Its Being Faster Than It Is.

Having plenty of time to do a thing is like having a clock fast. Before you know it you miss the train because you are depending on its being faster than it is.

Too much time is as bad for the character as too much money.

I suppose we ought to pity those who are handicapped with both. But somehow one doesn't seem to.

Good Night Stories

By Clyde Sitton

GRANDFATHER'S CLOCK.

Strange, the old clock hasn't struck since we came home," Davy said to his mamma.

"We'll ask daddy to have it fixed," replied mamma, as she went about her work.

Davy sat down before the fireplace and watched the lights flickering until he grew drowsy.

"Hello, Davy!" cried a squeaky voice from above his head.

Davy looked up. There on the mantel sat a queer little fellow dangling his feet over the edge. Davy gasped in astonishment. "Why, who are you?"

"I'm Clickidy, from Windupland," he exclaimed, and taking a tiny key from his green coat pocket, he put it under his ribs and quickly wound himself up.

With each click of the key Davy felt himself growing smaller, and when Clickidy stopped winding Davy was no larger than a tumbling bug. Two little wings sprouted from his elbows and when he raised his arms the wings lifted him into the air and whisked him off to Windupland.

In the centre of the town stood a great Grandfathers clock, just like the one that stood on mamma's stairs only Davy could plainly see this was

not used as a clock, but as a castle. Hundreds of little people ran to and fro.

"That's the castle of the King. Something has happened to the door that leads to the belfry, and they can't get in to toll the bell," whispered Clickidy.

Several little fellows ran out of the castle and came toward them.

"There are wild animals in the belfrey and they've come to eat us alive!" they cried excitedly.

They ran a little way, then stopped. The King tumbled out of the doorway in his haste, then couldn't move any further.

"Hurry!" called Clickidy. "They have run down."

And taking out his tiny key he fitted it first into the ribs of the King, then in their turn into each of his followers and wound them all up.

"Help us, Davy," cried the King.

Davy ran up the long stairway to the belfrey tower and burst open the door.

There on a cosy nest of cotton lay three tiny gray mice. Davy laughed and called the people of Windupland.

"They're not wild; they're perfectly harmless. Why it's only a family of baby mice!" he laughed. The funny little people crowded around him and praised him for his bravery.

Something fell with a crash and Davy opened his eyes. He had fallen asleep with his nursery book on his lap and it had fallen on the floor open at the story of "Hickory, Dickory, Dock."

Davy laughed out loud, and mamma came running in to see what was funny.

"Mamma, do mice ever build nests in clocks?" Davy asked.

"Well, I never thought of that," answered mamma. "Perhaps that's why our clock won't strike." She brought a chair and peeked into the top.

Sure enough, while they were away, a family of mice had moved into the attic of Grandfatheris clock.

Mamma took them out and put them into a little box for Davy, and the old clock, no longer hindered by the nest, chimed the hour of Davy's bedtime.

Women's Institute

The September gathering of the Alford and Park Road Women's Institute met at the home of Mrs. Williams on Thursday afternoon with 25 in attendance. The president, Mrs. Turnbull, occupied the chair, and the meeting was opened by singing the opening ode and repeating the motto, after which the roll was called and the minutes read and adopted. The secretary read letters from boys at the front thanking the Institute for boxes received. The following program was then given: Miss M. Armstrong gave an instrumental number from Ill Trovatore which was very much enjoyed. Miss G. Agnew gave a very interesting sketch of the life of Robert Service and his poetry, also a reading, "The Cremation of Sam McGee." Mrs. R. Kilgour read one of Service's latest poems called "The Fool," and Mrs. I. Gilbert read "The Revelation," another new one. Miss Armstrong then gave another instrumental solo. Miss E. Kitchen read "A Ballad of the Northern Lights," also one of Services'. While the program was being given, the ladies were knitting and quilting, completing two quilts in the afternoon. A Red Cross collection was taken which amounted to $5.75. The meeting closed by singing God Save the King.

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By Anabel Worthington.

The small boy may not consider this suit as fascinating as an Indian or a Boy Scout suit for play, but it certainly will be a lot cooler and more comfortable. His mother will find it very easy to make, as it has a kimono waist, buttoned at the back, with short sleeves. The straight trousers are buttoned to the waist all around and tiny pockets are stitched on at the belt. Gingham, galatea, chambray or kindergarten cloth will be suitable materials.

The romper pattern, No. 8423, is cut in sizes 2, 4 and 6 years. The 4 year size requires 1¾ yards 27 inch, with ⅜ yard 27 inch contrasting goods.

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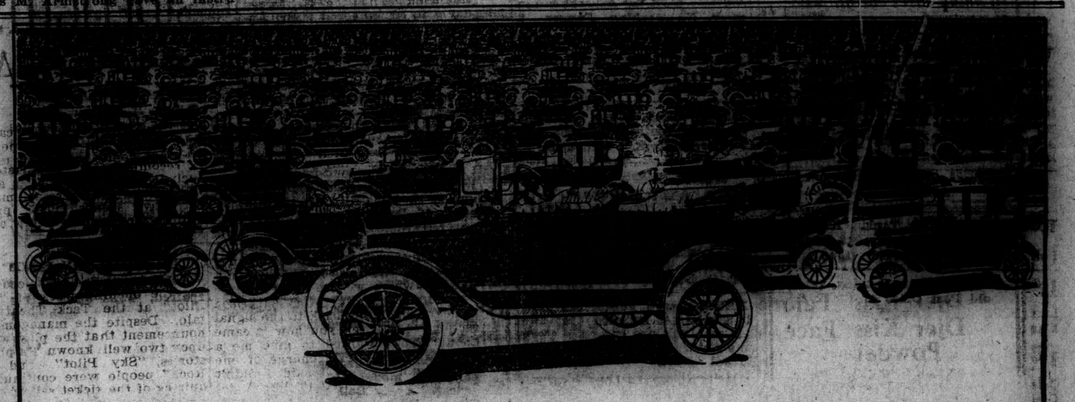

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