

Way Up.

Figg—They tell me that Blumley is a man of high principles.

Fogg—You may well say that. His principles are so high that he has never been able to come within a thousand miles of them himself.

A Great Loss.

First Swell—Cholly sent his diamond stud to the laundry with his shirt, and the Chinaman has decamped with both.

Second Swell—Ye gods! That shirt was worth \$21—Clothiers and Haberdashers' Weekly.

A Mistaken Idea.

"Dodsdese!" groaned Jingleberry as he caressed his nose with his handkerchief. "Adybody that says cold always codtrags is a base deceiver. By cold has been expaddig for the last seved days."

THE LOST PLOT.

By LILY A. LONG.

I



Carne caught his hand.

For nine months of the year Lake Sophia indulged in a beauty sleep. Sometimes, indeed, one of her summer visitors would linger on into the early autumn to catch from nature that drop of sentimental melancholy which crowns the cup of happiness, and sometimes a sentimental sportsman would build a bonfire on its banks in winter with a view to teaching the guileless fish how treacherous are the ways of men, but in general the wild things of the woods and waters had it all their own way from September to June, while the deserted summer hotel stood like a three storied homily, in green and white paint, on the vanity of human pursuits. But when the ephemeral northern summer flashed itself upon the lake it brought gay parasols to astonish the roses, and the hotel, now that at last it had an audience, forgot to preach and betook itself to entertaining.

Maurice Carne had managed to make away pleasantly with a few weeks there one January, so in default of anything better to do he let himself drift back the following August.

"Presto, change!" he thought to himself as he tried, on the evening of his arrival, to renew his acquaintance with the locality. "Like her namesake, in the old vicar's story, she only needed a new set of ribbons to turn her into a coquette."

Instead of the white solitudes, with their secrets of rest, the groups common to lakeside resorts were wandering about, trying to do their duty by the sunset. Here were children laden with flowers already faded; young women brought up on sentiment and young men trying it for a two weeks' vacation time; business men talking stocks and markets as a relaxation from the unaccustomed strain of enjoying themselves; anxious mothers secretly longing for the rest of home, with here and there some serene soul enough at leisure from itself to receive the blessing of nature.

Carne wandered along a bypath, noting all with careless eye till his unconcern was suddenly scattered by the familiar appearance of one of the approaching figures. By his melancholy visage it should be Mark Liddell, but by his environment any one but he, recluse that he was. Could he be trying to enjoy himself after the fashion of ordinary mortals? If so, the experiment could hardly have been called successful, for dejection spoke from every fold of his limp seersucker, and his hat drooped over his eyes in an openly disconsolate manner.

Carne caught his hand.

"Mark, old fellow, how did it happen? How did you, of all people, come to lose your way into this place?"

Liddell looked up with the air of one too deeply sunk in woe to feel surprise.

"Oh, I was here before these folks came. I didn't realize the dangers of the situation until it was too late and they were upon me. I can blame no one but myself."

"And you have been doing that very effectually, I should judge. Do you know, when I first saw you, I was wild enough to fancy for a moment that you had at last concluded to take some good advice about coming out among human beings and studying your raw material before working it up into your books? I suppose I was all at sea, eh?"

"You certainly were if you thought that I would ever willingly or wittingly put myself into a corner of the globe where half a hundred of them could crowd around me at once. They fairly suffocate me."

"I hope you won't let the fact that I happen to belong to the human race place any awkward restraint on the free expression of your feelings. Just go on as though I were not here," murmured Carne reassuringly.

"You are different. You are not so aggressively alive as these jerky people."

"Hum! You intend that as a compliment, so I will try to be grateful, though privately remembering the place to which certain good intentions are proverbially consigned. But some one is coming this way—or some two, rather. Let me gently suggest that we withdraw from the enemy and seek a solitary spot where you can breath your woes and berate humanity at a safe distance."

But Liddell, with a sort of horified fascination, was watching the self absorbed loungers who approached, and shook off the arm of his friend.

"They look like lovers, don't they?" he asked, with bated breath. "And they will have to pass us. Go on talking; say something, anything, and don't mind if I don't listen. I must hear what they are saying, don't you understand?" His sunken eye was glowing with suppressed excitement.

But the wary young people were watering place graduates, with a reserve stock of subjects warranted strictly impersonal, to supply necessary breaks in conversation.

"Do you admire Herbert Spencer?" asked she, as they came within earshot.

"Spencer? He is the evolution theory man, isn't he?"

"Is he or isn't he?" she asked mockingly.

"Oh, well, you know I don't pretend to keep up with you on those things. It isn't fair for you to try to trip me."

They were out of range by this time, and Maurice turned to his friend severely:

"If your reason for shunning society in general, Mark, is the consciousness of an unrestrainable impulse to turn eavesdropper on the slightest occasion, I shall respect your principles hereafter, and I only regret that that you have ever been tempted to forget them."

"They're going through Lovers' lane," cried Liddell unheedingly. "We might intercept them there. It isn't a lane and no lovers not hypnotized by a hotel prospectus would dream of wandering through it, but I have found, as a matter of fact, that they do here. I know a place where we can hear everything that is said without being seen ourselves."

II.

"Mark, man, what has taken possession of you?"

Liddell looked up in surprise and saw by the look in his friend's face that it was time for him to clear his character.

"It isn't so bad as that, Maurice. I am trying to recover something that is either lost or stolen, and detectives must not be hampered by conventional moralities."

"What have you lost?"

"A plot. The plot of my last novel. I came down here a few weeks ago to work, because this is the quietest place in the world before it becomes fashionable, but I became too absorbed and lost count of the time. One morning I looked out and found the ground covered with people. I ought to have re-