

her lap and pressed her lips to his feverishly, time after time.
 "Dick, Dick!" she sobbed, and tears fell upon the Burglar's sinister mask.

II.

When the Burglar awoke to consciousness he was as near Heaven as any mere man ever dares expect to be. He was comfortable—quite comfortable—wrapped in a delicious, languorous lassitude which forbade him opening his eyes to realisation. A woman's hand lay on his forehead, caressingly, and dimly he knew that another hand cuddled cozily in one of his own. He lay still, trying to remember, before he opened his eyes. Some one beside him breathed softly, and he listened, as if to music.
 Gradually the need of action—just what action and to what purpose did not

get better. I had no stimulant or anything, and I didn't dare to leave you, so—so I just waited," she ended with a weary little sigh.
 "How long was I knocked out?" he queried.
 "I don't know; half an hour, perhaps."
 "The bag is all right, I suppose?"
 "The bag?"
 "The bag with the stuff—the one I threw in the car when we started?"
 "Oh, yes, I suppose so! Really, I hadn't thought of it."
 "H hadn't thought of it!" repeated the Burglar, and there was a trace of astonishment in his voice. "By George, you're a wonder!" he added.
 He started to get on his feet, then dropped back wearily.
 "Say, girlie," he requested, "see if you can find the bag in the car there, and hand it out. Let's take a look."
 "Where is it?"
 "Somewhere in front. I felt it at my feet when I jumped out."

There was a rustle of skirts in the darkness, and after a moment a faint, muffled clank as of one heavy metal striking dully against another.
 "Goodness!" exclaimed the Girl. "It's heavy enough. What's in it?"
 "What's in it?" echoed the Burglar, and he chuckled. "A fortune, nearly. It's worth being punctured for. Let me see!"

In the darkness he took the bag from her hands and fumbled with it a moment. She heard the metallic sound again, and then several heavy objects were poured out on the ground.

"A good fourteen pounds of pure gold," commented the Burglar. "By George, I have but one match, but we'll see what it's like."

The match was struck, sputtered for a moment, then flamed up, and the Girl, standing, looked down upon the Burglar on his knees beside a heap of gold plate. She stared at the glittering mass as if fascinated, and her eyes opened wide.

"Why, Dick, what is that?" she asked.
 "It's Randolph's plate," responded the Burglar complacently. "I don't know how much it is worth, but it must be several thousands, on dead weight."

"What are you doing with it?"
 "What am I doing with it?" repeated the Burglar. He was about to look up, when the match burned his finger, and he dropped it. "That's a silly question."
 "But how came it in your possession?" the Girl insisted.

"I acquired it by the simple act of—of dropping it into a bag and bringing it along. That and you in the same evening—" He stretched out a hand toward her, but she was not there. He chuckled a little as he turned and picked up eleven plates, one by one, and replaced them in the bag.

"Nine—ten—eleven," he counted.

"What luck did you have?"
 "Dick Herbert, explain to me, please, what you are doing with that gold plate?" There was an imperative command in the voice.

The Burglar paused and rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"Oh, I'm taking it to have it fixed," he responded lightly.

"Fixed? Taking it this way, at this time of the night?"

"Sure," and he laughed pleasantly.

"You mean you—you—you stole it?" The words came with an effort.

"Well, I'd hardly call it that," remarked the Burglar. "That's a harsh word. Still, it's in my possession; it wasn't given to me, and I didn't buy it. You may draw your own conclusion."

The bag lay beside him, and his left hand crossed it idly, lovingly.

"What luck did you have?" he asked again.

There was accusing indignation in the Girl's voice.

"You—you stole it!"

"Well, if you prefer it that way—yes."

The Burglar was staring steadily into the darkness toward that point whence came the voice, but the night was so dense that not a trace of the Girl was visible.

"It seems to me it was lucky I decided to take it at just this time and in these circumstances," he went on tauntingly—"lucky for you, I mean. If I hadn't been there you would have been caught."

Again came the startled gasp.

He was still peering unseeingly into the darkness. The bag of gold plate moved slightly under his hand. He opened his fingers to close them more tightly. It was a mistake; his hand grasped—air.

"Stop that game now!" he commanded.

He struggled to his feet. His answer was the crackling of a twig to his right. He started in that direction, and brought up with a bump against the automobile. He turned, still groping blindly, and embraced a tree with undignified fervour. To his left he heard another slight noise, and ran that way. Again he struck an obstacle. Then he began to say things—expressive things. The treasure had gone—disappeared into the shadows. The Girl was gone. He called; there was no answer. He drew his revolver fiercely, as if to fire it; then reconsidered and flung it down.

"And I thought I had nerve!" he declared. It was a compliment.

III.

Extravagantly brilliant the sun popped up out of the east—not an unusual occurrence—and stared unblinkingly down upon a country road. There were the usual twittering birds and dew-spangled trees and nodding wild flowers; also a dust that was shoe top deep. The dawny air stirred lazily, and rustling leaves sent long, sinuous shadows scamp-ering back and forth.

Looking upon it without enthusiasm or poetic exaltation was a Girl—a pretty Girl—a very pretty Girl. She sat on a stone beside the yellow roadway, a picture of weariness. A rough burlap sack, laden heavily, yet economically as to space, wallowed in the dust beside her. Her hair was tawny gold, and rebellious, vagrant strands drooped listlessly about her face. A beribboned sombrero lay in her lap, supplementing a certain air of dilapidated bravado, due in part to a short skirt, heavy gloves and boots, a belt with a knife and revolver.

A robin, perched impertinently on a stump across the road, examined her at his leisure. She stared back at Signor Redbreast, and for this recognition he warbled a little song.

"I've a good mind to cry!" exclaimed the Girl suddenly.

Shamed and startled, the robin flew away. A mistiness came into the Girl's blue eyes, and lingered there a moment, then her white teeth closed tightly, and the glimmer of outraged emotion passed.
 "Oh," she sighed again, "I'm so tired and hungry, and I just know I'll never get anywhere at all!"

But, despite the expressed conviction, she arose and straightened up, as if to resume her journey, turning to stare down at the bag. It was an unsightly symbol of blasted hopes, man's perfidy, crushed aspirations, and—Heaven only knows what beside.

"I've a good mind to leave you right there," she remarked to the bag spitefully. "Perhaps I might hide it." She considered the question. "No, that wouldn't do. I must take it with me, and—oh, Dick! Dick! What in the world was the matter with you, anyway?"

Then she sat down again and wept. The robin crept back to look, and mod-

estly hid behind a leaf. From this coign of vantage he watched her as she again rose and plodded off through the dust with the bag swinging over one shoulder. At last—there in an act to everything—a small house appeared from behind a clump of trees. The Girl looked with incredulous eyes. It was really a house. Really! A tiny curl of smoke hovered over the chimney.

"Well, thank goodness, I'm somewhere, anyhow," she declared with her first show of enthusiasm. "I can get a cup of coffee or something."

She covered the next fifty yards with a new spring in her leaden heels, and with a new and firmer grip on the precious bag. Then—she stopped.

"Gracious!" and perplexed lines suddenly wrinkled her brow. "If I should go in there with a pistol and knife they'd think I was a brigand—or—or a thief, and I suppose I am," she added as she stopped and rested the bag on the ground. "At least, I have stolen goods in my possession. Now, what shall I say. What am I? They wouldn't believe me if I told them. Short skirt, boots and gloves—I know! I'm a bicyclist. My wheel broke down, and—"

Whereupon she gingerly removed the revolver from her belt and flung it into the underbrush—not at all in the direction she had intended—and the knife followed to keep it company. Having relieved herself of these sinister things, she straightened her hat, pushed back the rebellious hair, yanked at her skirt, and walked bravely up to the little house.

An Angel lived there—an Angel in a dizzily belowered wrapper and a crabbed exterior. She listened to a rapidly constructed and wholly inconsistent story of a bicycle accident, which ended with a plea for a cup of coffee. Silently she proceeded to prepare it. After the pot was bubbling cheerfully and eggs had been put on and biscuits thrust into a stove to be warmed over, the Angel sat down at the table opposite the Girl.

"Book agent?" she asked.
 "Oh, no!" replied the Girl.
 "Sewing machines?"

"No."
 There was a pause as the Angel settled and poured a cup of coffee.

"Make to order, I s'pose?"
 "No," the Girl replied uncertainly.
 "What do you sell?"
 "Nothing, I—I—" She stopped.
 "What you got in the bag?" the Angel persisted.

"Some—some—just some—stuff," stammered the Girl, and her face suddenly flushed crimson.

"What kind of stuff?"

The Girl looked into the frankly inquisitive eyes, and was overwhelmed by a sense of her own helplessness. Tears started, and one pearly drop ran down her perfect nose and splashed into the coffee. That was the last straw. She leaned forward suddenly and wept.

"Please, please don't ask questions!" she pleaded. "I'm a poor, foolish, misguided, disillusioned woman!"

"Yes'm," said the Angel. She took up the eggs, then came over and put a



"There was a suggestion of defiance as well as determination on her pretty mouth."

occur to him—impressed itself on his mind. He raised one hand to his face, and touched the mask which had been pushed back on his forehead. Then he recalled the ball, the shot, the chase, the hiding in the woods. He opened his eyes with a start. Utter darkness lay about him—for a moment he was not certain whether it was the darkness of blindness or of night.

"Dick, are you awake?" asked the Girl softly.

He knew the voice, and was content. "Yea," he answered languidly.

He closed his eyes again, and some strange, subtle perfume seemed to envelop him. He waited. Warm lips were pressed to his own, thrilling him strangely, and the Girl rested a soft cheek against his.

"We have been very foolish, Dick," she said, sweetly chiding, after a moment. "It was all my fault for letting you expose yourself to danger, but I didn't dream of such a thing as this happening. I shall never forgive myself, because—"

"But —" he began, protestingly.

"Not another word about it now," she hurried on. "We must go very soon. How do you feel?"

"I'm all right, or will be in a minute," he responded, and he made as if to rise.

"Where is the car?"

"Right here. I extinguished the lights and managed to stop the engine for fear those horrid people who were after us might notice."

"Good girl!"

"When you jumped out and fainted I jumped out, too. I'm afraid I was not very clever, but I managed to bind your arm. I took my handkerchief and pressed it against the wound after ripping your coat, then I bound it there. It stopped the flow of blood, but, Dick dear, you must have medical attention just as soon as possible."

The Burglar moved his shoulder a little and winced.

"Just as soon as I did that," the Girl went on, "I made you comfortable here on a cushion from the car."

"Good girl!" he said again.

"Then I sat down to wait until you



"On which appeared the name, 'Mr. Richard Hamilton Herbert.'"