

Complete Story.

# The Heroism of Lord Thornhill

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## THE STORY OF A SCHEME THAT FAILED.

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## I.

Lord Thornhill flattered himself he had made an impression.

Mabel Anstruther, for such he learnt was her name, had actually smiled upon him, which was quite sufficient foundation for this conclusion.

That there can be other reasons for a smile, besides admiration, never crossed his mind for a moment.

At first Mrs Thompson, Mabel's aunt, had looked upon his attentions to her niece's welfare, especially on the boat crossing the Channel, with that pitying contempt which elderly matrons so often assume in the presence of young men, when the responsibilities of a pretty eligible American girl, who is the possessor of a still prettier little fortune, is weighing heavily upon their shoulders.

However, this attitude was taken up before she was aware of the adjunct to his name, and after exhaustive inquiries of the chief steward, the very steward, let it be said, who not two hours before had felt a small round coin pressed into his willing palm by the subject of her inquiries for information received regarding Miss Anstruther's affairs, Mrs Thompson suddenly came to the conclusion that he really was "a most desirable young man, and a charming companion for Mabel."

The same night at the Hotel de l'Europe, Paris, where by a curious

coincidence Lord Thornhill happened also to be residing, Mrs Thompson determined to sound her niece's feelings on the subject, but her castles in the air were shaken to their foundation, when for her pains she was rewarded by a merry laugh of indifference.

The climax came when, a few days later, having followed his quarry with all the tenacity of the proverbial bull-dog for exactly a week, under the influence of Mrs Thompson's encouraging eye, Lord Thornhill thought fit to propose.

It was a moving sight, and took place in the conservatory, Lord Thornhill did not hesitate, on bended knee he poured forth a torrent of eloquence, eloquence that had taken such hours of silent anguish to concoct, and had just reached the crucial point in the oration when he was rudely interrupted by a hearty laugh.

"I guess you'll spoil your clothes down there, Lord Thornhill; the floor's rather dirty," laughed Mabel, good-naturedly.

Lord Thornhill's consternation was ludicrous, for a full minute he remained dumbfounded. Then, waking to the full indignity of his position and throwing a look at his tormentor that was intended to convey silent and tender reproach, he retired as gracefully as circumstances would permit.

At dinner the next evening Mrs.

Thompson threw out a gentle hint that was not lost upon the intended recipient.

"Yes, my dear," she exclaimed in an audible stage whisper to her niece, "I think we couldn't do better than pay a visit to Switzerland for a week or two. Zermatt is a pretty little village, there are lovely walks all round, and I have heard that one can get very comfortable accommodation at the Hotel Mont Cervin."

Lord Thornhill flashed a look of gratitude at Mrs. Thompson and attacked his fish with unnecessary violence.

The following morning after a warm farewell from Mrs. Thompson, and a somewhat chilly one from her niece, which, however, in no way upset his equanimity, Lord Thornhill left Paris for a little village in Switzerland known as Zermatt, and it even occurred to him at the last moment that he might do worse than stay at the Hotel Mont Cervin.

## II.

Horace Cranbourn flung aside the novel he had been attempting to read, and lighting a cigarette, leant carelessly out of his bedroom window.

His reveries, however, were cut short by the slamming of a door in the next room, and the sound of voices, raised as if in argument, wafted through the open window a few feet from where he stood.

"But my reputation, sir. Vat dey say ven I come back? Dey all sneer and say Benois, de great guide, fears to cross von simple ice bridge, vile de English heer he guides goes over widout de fear. Vat dey say den?"

Horace at once recognised the voice of the most experienced guide in Zermatt, and a remark regarding loss of reputation from such a source at once aroused his attention.

"But my good man," broke in a second voice, with a slight drawl, "supposing the lady promises to keep quiet about the little incident, natural modesty on my part, you

know."

"But heer, de risk, de risk, vat if she break her promise? My reputation."

"Well, if she breaks her promise I double the amount agreed, that's all."

There was a pause, and the smoke from the listener's cigarette floated upwards in the still air as he leaned farther forward to catch the answer.

"Do you agree," continued the first voice, but with a perceptible tremor.

"Vat you going to do, eef I agree?"

"That's my business; all you've got to do is to go to-day and find a safe ice bridge, mind it's perfectly safe, over a deep crevice on some easy peak, and report it to me."

"She will most likely arrive tomorrow, and in a day or two we shall engage you to guide us up a mountain."

"We shall arrive at the summit in safety, but in the descent, by a different route, we come to the ice bridge you have selected."

"You test it carefully and return to us terror-stricken, to inform us that it has melted during the past week, and is now too brittle to cross; you also tell us there is no other way back to Zermatt, and it is too late to return the way we came."

"You must shake with terror, fall upon your knees and cross yourself, and then—well, then you leave the rest to me; don't take any notice of what I say, and keep quiet. You see it's as simple as A B C."

"But she will know dere are oder ways down."

"She's never been on a mountain in her life, and she'll believe every word you say."

Another pause, during which the sound of rustling notes is heard.

"Do you agree?"

"Yah."

"Good man," in a relieved tone. "That's right. Now we'll go down and drink to the success of my scheme."

# PEARS

## Soapmakers

### By Royal Warrants

TO

## THEIR MAJESTIES

. THE .

# King and Queen

