

THROUGH... GATES OF FIRE

Twenty pounds! The vivid red flamed and died in Ellice Winston's cheeks, and for the moment she could see no more; then, brushing aside with impatient hand the mist of ears that dimmed her eyes, she smoothed out the ill-written scrawl and read steadily to the end. Such a lot of money—more than she could possibly scrape together from her own resources! Five pounds, or even ten, she could have managed; but twenty—And yet that desperate, pitiful appeal. Impossible to pay no heed, to pass it by in stony silence as she had vainly threatened only a few short weeks ago. No; oh, no! A thousand times no! What had gone before was nothing—faded into sheerest insignificance beside this terrible, all-persuading need. She must ask Alan—at once!

Crushing the letter into her pocket, she summoned all the courage, tiptoed up the stairs, and tapped gently on the door of his study.

"Alan, are you busy? I want to speak to you a moment. Yes, it is important, or I would not trouble you. I—I want you to give me twenty pounds, please!" There, it was out! What would he say?

"Twenty pounds!" Alan Winston laid down his pen, pulled himself into a more comfortable position, and stroked his moustache in the characteristic way he had when thinking. "H'm! But you will tell me why? It is such—such a strange request, unaccompanied. I should like to know more."

"No; please do not ask me. I cannot tell you—I cannot, really. I—I am very sorry, but I want it to be quite a secret."

"I see!" What made him flash that sudden curious glance at her—the unexpected vigor of the answer, or something more remote, more sinister? "A wife should have no secrets from her husband, you know!" The smooth voice could say cutting things at times. "Do not mistake me, Ellice!" he continued. "The money you can have gladly—more if you wish; but give me something—your confidence—in return! Surely it is a little thing to ask!"

"To ask—yes; but not to give!" came back the answer. "Oh, Alan, do not press me! Be generous, big-hearted, as I know you can! Some day I may explain; but not now—not yet! Did I not tell you before we were married that I was a creature of strange whims—that my life held passages which it was better you should never know?"

"Yes; and like an idiot, I vowed they did not matter!" His voice shook passionately; he had risen now and stood before her with eyes that flashed dangerously. "But I did not know, could not know, that they would lead—where they have led! I am your husband—yes, in name; but how much more? In to your real life I hardly enter; I have no share in any but its veriest externals. You play hostess to my host, housekeeper to my wage-earner; but for all else—!" He broke off suddenly; turned on her with dramatic swiftness. "Is it to be wondered that I grow angry and—suspicious? Tell me who the man is you meet so frequently—the man you were talking to in the street for half an hour the other night!"

"Ah, you know that!" That startled little cry. Under his torrent of words she had stood there strangely quiet, with never a quiver, never a murmur, to show how they hurt; but now she was another woman, a creature of tingling, tense-strung nerves who thrust herself suddenly forward and seemed trying to pierce his very soul with her searching glance. "Alan, who has told you? What have they said? What else—merciful Heaven, what else?"

"Nothing!" He turned away coldly, sick at heart to note the all-to-plain dismay. "Not a syllable! I found out for myself by purest accident. Till now I have said nothing, asked no question, hoping against hope that you would take me into your confidence. But no! I am left in ignorance, in bitter darkness, to draw what conclusions I like. If they are wrong—unjust—who shall blame me? Ellice, what is this cloud that has come between us?" he demanded huskily. Tell me, and disperse it once for all; or—"

"Or what?" she echoed, dully. Once more she was the woman of meek submission, of apathy; like a prisoner waiting sentence she hung there on his words.

"Or—oh, why do you make me say it?" he urged, impetuously. "Ellice, this must end—must I say! We are wasting our lives, you and I. Every day we drift farther and farther apart; and sooner or later—oh, it is impossible, unthinkable, that we can go on longer as we are!"

"Very well, Alan!" Slowly she faced him. "Very well! I—I think I understand. It shall end—yes, at once! There—there is something else I wished to speak to you about, something I ought to say before—"

But he waved her away with a gesture. "No. No more—now."

"Very well, it shall be as you wish Alan. I am sorry to have disturbed you; I know that you are busy." She bent over and brushed his forehead with her lips. Next second the door had closed; he was alone. Soon afterwards a woman in dark hat and jacket, carrying a bag, hurried down the street. At the corner stood a man, obviously waiting, looking out for her. "Halloo, here you are!" was his rough greeting as she came up breathlessly. "I thought you were never coming! Well, have you brought it? You know what will happen if—"

"Yes, yes; I know," she panted back. "See, there's seventeen! It's all I have—yes, to the last penny! You must

stave them off with that; and I'll—I'll get the other to-morrow—somehow! Tell me how she is, Jack! Not—not dying? You didn't mean that?"

"Dying! No! What rubbish you do talk, Ellice! Always the black side of things, upon my word. We shall pull through right now, bet your life. Look here, I'll call round to-morrow for the other, and let you know—"

"To-morrow! Oh, I must see her to-night! I'm going now—at once. If anything were to happen I should—"

"Oh, well, just as you like," was the off-hand answer. "There's no need, I assure you; but please yourself. Women generally do. So long; I'm off to see to this other business." He turned on his heel abruptly.

Ellice Winston, her lip quivering, stood there an instant looking after him; then she, too, turned and made her way as fast as feet and bus could carry her to far-off Islington. Her heart beat painfully. What would she find there?

The house she sought was reached at last. A shivering, tentative knock at the door. Then—then it opened, and a woman was peering out of the darkness of the passage into her face.

"Mother! You!" That pitiful little cry. She tottered inside—leaned against the wall for support. The breath seemed choking in her throat. "Then—then you're not ill! It's all a lie! He has tricked me again; and I—I—Heaven help me! I've left Alan for this!" The older woman stretched forth a quick arm—just in time. Ellice Winston had fainted.

Dusk, and a fire that sent ghostly shadows playing round the book-lined walls. The trim servant entered, drew down the blinds, lighted the swinging centre-lamp, and withdrew; but the man huddled up in the low arm-chair sat on supremely unconscious.

He had promised faithfully to have that article ready for the morning; once he turned and wrote a few words, only to dash the pen aside next moment with an angry exclamation. No, he could not work to-night! Ridiculous, childish, absurd; but there it was. For the fiftieth time he told himself that he was a fool—a fool to care two straws about her.

What was she to him—he to her—now? Dead, alive, wanting, or affluent, what did it matter? She had chosen to go out of his life; she must pay the price. There could never be any going back. No—impossible! And yet—and yet—three years! It seemed incredible. Why, he had but to close his eyes—and—yes—there he was living through all that bitter night again, plain as any reality.

The white set face, the dawning fear in the round baby eyes, that sudden shrinking from him in absolute nameless terror—all came rushing back in vivid recollection.

"It—it shall be as you wish, Alan." Again the low words thrilled through him; again that feather-light, burning kiss was on his forehead; again he knew the sudden sense of loneliness that came with the closing of the door, and the swift impulse, swifter crushed, to rush after her, strain her to his breast, and cry out, with rain of fierce, hot kisses on the quivering lips, that it was all a mistake—blind, mad, senseless, folly! Ah, if only impulse had been followed!

Too late afterwards! Too late! The psychic moment had gone by. "Ellice, Ellice!" he had called, going hurriedly from room to room. "Where are you? Speak to me! Answer me, darling!"

And for answer—silence. Silence—and that growing agony of fear. Grim, absolute certainty it became next moment. He had found her note on the dressing-table in her room, torn it madly open with fingers that trembled like a palsied man's, and—yes, she had gone!

"Dearest, dearest Alan,—You must forgive me—you will forgive me! I have taken eleven pounds out of your drawer; but you shall have them back shortly. Please do not try to follow me to find me. I want to be forgotten, to sink out of your life altogether. It has been a mistake; that is all. I have never made you really happy; and this is the best for both of us. Do not think too hardly of me; and now good-bye, my Alan, for the last time.—Your sadly-failing wife, Ellice."

Gone! With that pitiful little legacy of over-wrought nature left to tell the tale! At first he could not realize it, could not believe it to be actual fact. Like a blind man groping painfully for direction, he stood there with the sheet of paper fluttering in his fingers trying to see through the blinding mist, to choke back the sobs that rose spasmodically in his throat. Gone! One long tragic moment while he gasped its deeper meaning; then he had dashed madly down the stairs, past the startled housemaid, and was racing hatless along the street, peering grimly into every passing face, shouting her name everywhere! People must have thought him mad.

Mad—yes! He swung up suddenly now from the low chair and thrust the sheets of manuscript into an untidy heap; no more whipping of the fired brain to-night! Out in the cool September night the breezes struck gratefully on his face. He walked quickly without any special direction; across the Thames, Hyde Park, then to the right, northwards from the Euston Road, past the Angel, and once more to the right. Soon he found himself in the neighborhood unfamiliar to him, Londoner born and bred though he was.

It was a region of small, squalid tenements, of narrow courts and blind alleys, where ragged loafers at the corners eyed him with looks of swift cupidity and quarreling women fung their angry gibes at one another to the accompaniment of shouts of encouragement from partisans dirty and dishevelled as themselves. He buttoned up his coat and felt the weight of his stick with a sudden sense of comfort.

All at once a shrill, prolonged blowing of whistles struck his ears. He had a brief vision of a panting, snorting thing

of burnished metal and flying sparks drawn by madly-galloping horses; then a miscellaneous rabble of men, women and children began to surge swiftly by him. "Fire!"

"Where? where is it?" The question rose on all sides.

"Parker's Rents," flew back the quick answer. "Whole row of 'em ablaze!"

A dull red reflection showed up in the sky; the acrid odor of smoke assailed the nostrils. Finding it impossible to press against the mob, Winston turned and allowed himself to be carried with the stream. Soon they reached the scene of the disaster. He had read of fires, he had written of fires; seldom had he seen one. The hideous nature of the thing fell upon him like a thunder-clap. The terrifying glare. The hissing of the streams of water striking the hot walls, the hoarse shouting of the crowd, and the quick movements of the firemen there, here and everywhere made up a picture that not his novelist's eye, his novelist's brain, had ever truly realized.

Soon a fresh tremor of excitement. A woman? Up there? Heaven help her, then, for man could never do so! A thrill of horror ran through the onlookers at sight of the clinging figure; strong men clenched their hands convulsively and women wept outright. And then—"He'll never reach her! He can't reach her! It's suicide—nothing else!" Breathless they saw the man dart forward, break through the corodon of restraining hands, and plunge headlong into the zone of fire. What impelled him he could never have told, never explained even to himself.

"Towards! towards!" were the words that rose to his lips; but even as he said them he knew that the accusation was unjust. Not a man there would have ventured had he seen the smallest chance of success.

The mad, quixotic rush carried him through the first belt of flame. The rear of the house was not so badly enveloped; dimly he realized that there was still a faint hope if he could but find the stairs. Then he had torn his handkerchief from his pocket, fashioned it roughly into a respirator, and was down on hands and knees searching grimly, anxiously. Ah! That terrible ascent was like some nightmare. Inch by inch, step by step, he fought the blinding smoke, the cruel, curling tongues of flame. Eyes, nose and mouth smarted with excruciating pain; every breath became a separate torture, a grim alternative with death.

Could he go on? Could he ever reach the top? The flames were fiercer now; the heat almost unendurable. Gaining the landing, he hesitated a second as to direction. . . . Yes—now! One more effort! A wild rush, a desperate hurling of himself across an ocean of roaring, crackling flame. . . . "Thank heaven!"

Yes, she was still there, clinging with frail hands to the narrow window-ledge. Wonders of wonders that she had managed to hold so long! Down below was a sea of faces, a jumble of winging, surging figures. A hoarse cheer broke out; he realized slowly that it was for him they cheered. What now? They were holding out an immense sheet.

"Jump! Jump!" came the cry from a thousand voices. Yes; of course! In a moment! He tried to steady himself, to still the mad, sledge-hammer thumping of his heart against his ribs. Then he had clutched the woman firmly, swung both arms around her, looked once more at the sea of white upturned faces and—jumped!

Lying there in the little white hospital bed, swathed from head to foot in cotton-wool, and painfully aware without the doctor's warning of the futility of trying to move, dim, hazy recollections of other happenings more than passing strange shaped slowly in his brain. Impossible to be sure, even now if real or only wild mad fancy; but ringing in his ears ever since the moment of being picked up by tender hands and lifted with his unconscious burden into the waiting ambulance was that anguished cry of "Mother!"—that low, startled exclamation forced from the woman's lips in sheer fateful wonder next moment: "Alan! Oh, it cannot be. . . . Yes, yes, it is Alan!"

Too wonderful—yes. No dream the daintily, well-remembered figure that came hurrying down the line of beds next morning to halt with a glad little cry beside his own; not fancy only the long, lingering kiss that told each of them of passion long pent up and suddenly released. No! Ellice—his Ellice—at last! She was there beside him, her hand was holding his her eyes were smiling brave, sweet messages into his own; all the radiance of her fresh young being called him back imperiously to health and hope and happiness.

Every day she came, her presence like a burst of glad sunshine into the drab-colored ward; every day his progress towards recovery grew more rapid. And then—

Bit by bit the mystery unfolded. He learned the story of the scapegrace brother, gambler, thief and worse, who terrorized the frail mother and the only sister, hesitated at no expedient, however mean, to possess himself of the means to gratify his evil passions. She had vowed never to tell him—Alan; how could she? The shame, the sordid miserable bitterness of it. . . . Every word was like a stab.

"Not yet!" she told him when he tried to take her in his arms, to sweep away remembrance of it in one long, fond embrace. No! When he was better! He must come then to her little home; she would like him to see her just once as she had been living these last three years. Afterwards—They smiled in happy union.

It was weary waiting; but the word came at last that the doctors said he might leave the hospital. Monday was the day fixed. She gave him her address; told him that she should not come to fetch him, but should expect him at four o'clock. Monday came, dragged its long hours away at snail-like pace; and at four o'clock he stood on the pavement outside the little house. He rang the bell—twice. No answer.

Impossible to wait longer. He tried the door, found that it opened, and went inside. The first floor, she had said. Up the stairs he went with quickening pulse, turned the handle of the door at the top in joyous anticipation, halted dead. What—what—That cot at the side of the fireplace—the curly-headed, rosy-cheeked little mite inside! His breath came jerkily; he gazed with a sudden strange fascination at the little pink hand lying outside the white coverlet.

And then—a light footstep, a sudden warm pair of hands before his eyes, and: "Well, what greeting have you for your daughter?" said the trembling voice. "I—I told you, if you remember—that night—that I had something—something else to say. . . ."

A sudden rush of crimson dyed his cheeks; he swayed unsteadily a second. "Ellice!" came the broken whisper. "Ellice!" . . . Suddenly she was in his arms, laughing, crying, looking up into his face with eyes like crystals dimmed with early morning dew.—London Tit-Bits.

WOMAN ON PERILOUS TRIP.

Wife of N. W. M. P. Officer Accompanies Expedition to North.

Mrs. Moodie, wife of Major Moodie, of the Northwest Mounted Police who accompanied her husband on the last government expedition to the Arctic possessions of Canada, the only white woman ever seen in those parts of the frozen north, has given a most interesting account of her expedition in the ice.

She found no inconvenience from the cold—which averaged 38 below zero and remained steadily at about that point most of the winter—being dressed entirely in furs and skins.

Nowhere had she met with more entrancing scenery, or such richly colored blooms as among the profuse low growths of wild flowers during the open season along the shores of Ungava bay.

Instead of the twenty hours night so often spoken of, she found there was really no night, for the twilight lasts so long, the sun dips such a short distance below the horizon and the northern lights are so vivid it is nearly always light except when heavy storms prevail.

The snow does not fall heavily as it does further south, but it comes in a sort of drifting fog and hardens on the ground and becomes solid ice from which is cut the blocks used to build the igloos. The natives of the region north of 64 resembles the Canadian and European types more than they do the Eskimo, but they are decreasing in numbers, owing chiefly to frequent seasons of scarcity of food in consequence of climatic conditions making it often difficult at long intervals to procure what is necessary to sustain life.

Mrs. Moodie thinks this might be remedied by the government arranging to supply food to the natives, as it does to the Indians in the Northwest. Young children are usually not clothed at all, but play around naked inside the igloos on skins spread on the floor, a custom which, in Mrs. Moodie's opinion, is responsible for many dying off before they arrive at the age when they are allowed to be clothed.

It is probable that in consequence of the report Maj. Moodie has made to the government of Canada these people will be brought down to the southern shores of Hudson Bay where they can be placed under the care of humane and trustworthy agents and be properly looked after. One of the harbors visited by the expedition in Ungava bay was christened Prefontaine harbor, after the late Minister of Marine and Fisheries. It is described as a magnificent land locked roadstead, nine miles in breadth and spacious enough to shelter the whole British fleet.

RADIUM'S POWER.

Radium, as explained by Professor Darwin, is a substance which is perhaps millions of times more powerful than dynamite. Thus, it is estimated that an ounce of radium would contain enough power to raise 10,000 tons a mile above the earth's surface. Another way of stating the same estimate is this: The energy needed to tow a ship of 12,000 tons a distance of 6,000 sea miles at fifteen knots is contained in 22 oz. of radium. The Saxon probably burns 5,000 or 6,000 tons of coal on a voyage of approximately the same length.

THRIFTIEST TOWN IN ENGLAND.

Which is the thriftiest town in England? Speaking at the foundation-stone laying at the new savings bank at Preston, Alderman Roper, the actuary, said that years ago Samuel Stiles stated that Preston was the thriftiest town in the country. This was true to-day. Through the medium of fifty penny banks and the savings banks the depositors totalled over half the population of the town, and during his connection with the bank the capital had increased from £170,000 to £1,700,000.

"What are you studying now?" asked Mrs. Cumrox. "We have taken up the subject of molecules," answered her son. "I hope you will be very attentive and practise constantly," said the mother. "I tried to get your father to wear one, but he couldn't make it stay in his eye."

Mabel (studying her lesson)—"Papa, what is the definition of volubility?" Mabel's Father—"My child, volubility is a distinguishing feature of your mother when, on account of urgent business affairs, I don't happen to reach home until after two o'clock in the morning." ()

"This shopping business is an awful nuisance." "Why, Henry? You have no reason to complain. I'm doing the shopping. All you do is to carry the parcels."

LONG STRUGGLE IS WON

ENGLISH INVENTOR ACHIEVES FAME AND FORTUNE.

Lord Masham Issues Book Giving Story of His Efforts to Perfect Big Plans.

Lord Masham, one of the greatest inventors of the last century, has published a handsomely bound and interesting volume, telling the story of his struggles and his triumphs in Yorkshire and in Nottingham, particularly where the very name of Masham is revered for his colossal schemes has meant food for thousands.

Wool combing and silk combing were special studies of Lord Masham, who, with his brother, commenced business in 1835 as worsted spinners and manufacturers under the name of J. & S. C. Lister.

The inventive genius of the man speedily asserted itself, and in 1844 he took out his first patent for fringing shawls. Many disappointments attended his early efforts to improve wool combing. He took out patents for washing and preparing long and short wool, and in 1853 finished his research in this direction by patenting a process for the treating of soapstuffs.

TELLS OF ACHIEVEMENTS.

"For many years," he says, "I used to boast that I kept my house out of my brain, as it made me several thousand a year in ten years from 1843 to 1853 I had left nothing much for anyone else to do except to improve on what I had done."

"The silk comb was the result of purchasing the silk waste. It looked to me to be nothing but rubbish at half-penny per pound."

Experiment with it meant a great expenditure, and Lord Masham tells an interesting story of the burden which he had taken upon himself. He wanted assistance, and the governor of the Bank of England sent for him, and with great kindness and consideration asked him questions with a view to affording him help. Finally came the question as to whether he thought he could pay his way. Lord Masham says his pride rose in a moment, and, with color in his face, said he thought he could.

"We are delighted to hear it," said the governor. "Good morning." And the visitor was bowed out.

PRIDE IS PUT ASIDE.

When in the street he saw his folly. "It would have saved me a world of trouble and immense loss if I had only pocketed my pride," he writes, "and asked for assistance."

Disaster followed, and the year 1857 ended in a loss of \$750,000.

In the year of 1864, at the age of 50, he had to begin life's battle over again, and then fortune smiled again.

"The special comb proved a godsend," he says. "There was an immense value in the jewel, regular silver that the comb produced, and one memorable year we had orders for all the yarn we could make at 23 shillings a pound, and we were only paying for the rubbish from 6 pence to a shilling."

The celebrated Nottingham plush loom was the result of the joint labors of Lord Masham and Mr. Reivach, and mainly through its use the profits of the business for several years were \$1,000,000 a year.

LAMA OF TIBET VISITS MINTO.

A Picturesque Visit to the Viceroy of India.

The Tashi Lama of Tibet and the Tongsa Penlop of Bhutan paid a state visit to the Earl of Minto at Calcutta recently.

Riding on shaggy ponies, the Lama's retinue proceeded through the streets of Calcutta blowing trumpets. The monks wore quaint hats of various shapes, some resembling Roman helmets, some church steeples, and others cart wheels with silken tassels attached.

The Lama himself was borne in a Sedan chair, gorgeously lacquered. His pony was led behind the chair, and reverent Buddhists kissed its tail repeatedly.

A retinue of bare-legged men, clad in garments of the richest silks, followed the Tongsa Penlop.

The Viceroy's visitors attended a race and were profoundly impressed by the spectacle. They say that they had never conceived that there were such numbers of people in the world.

Both the Lama and the Tongsa Penlop are evidently well supplied with money, for they have driven to numerous shops and made many purchases of toys, pictures and photographs.

The Tashi Lama of Shigatse who is 22 years of age is the spiritual head of the Buddhists of Tibet and Central Asia. He was invested with spiritual sovereignty of the country by the Emperor of China in September of last year, after the flight of the Dalai Lama. His attitude to the British expedition to Lhasa was most friendly, and he was one of the signatories of the Tibet treaty.

The Tongsa Penlop, who rules Bhutan, permitted the construction of a road through his country, and himself accompanied the British expedition to Lhasa. Last January he was made a K. C. I. E. Before these friendly relations were established Bhutan had been closed to Europeans for 40 years.

Many a man is unable to stand on his dignity because his wife sits on it.

Little Girl: "Please, have you a sheep's head?" Facetious Butcher: "No, my dear; only my own." Little Girl: "It won't do. Mother wants one with brains in it."