

# LOVE FINDS A WAY.

BY JEANNETTE H. WALWORTH.

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Each one of these frightening sentences had dropped slowly from his lips in a husky whisper. Olivia was slipping into a dressing gown before he was half through. "You are safe," he said in another choked whisper and rushed from the room like a madman.

Mandeville did not lack food for gossip for weeks after the Matthews fire. There were those who pitied the old man for the loss of his books and papers, books he had been a lifetime collecting and papers that bore directly upon his business affairs.

There were others who thought he got off well in losing only the wing to his handsome house.

One set declared that the lawyer had displayed the calmness and the indifference of a Stoic while the flames were licking up his fine library, others that he had looked and acted more like a madman than a rational human being.

As the days wore on it was asserted in some quarters that Horace Matthews looked 20 years older since his mishap, in others that, having made his pile and secured Olivia's future, he could well afford to act as if nothing had happened.

It was all in the point of view, and the point of view where Lawyer Matthews was concerned had strange fluctuations in the town.

shining probe among his surgical instruments.

"Well, I should say pretty much all Mandeville stood for the enemy at this juncture, and I should be sorry to see my wife aligning herself with them and sitting in judgment upon a man who has never committed one overt act that man or woman could point to and say, 'That is wrong.'"

"Well, but, John!"

"Let me have the floor a little longer, if you please, my dear. I really feel as if Matthews needed a friend, a champion, if you choose. I will say to you in strict confidence I don't think he will be here many years longer."

"What, John? Oh, that poor girl!"

"Of course this is for no ear but yours."

"I have been a doctor's wife 32 years, John."

"And better one never doctor had."

An air kiss was floated from the doctor's mature fingers to bring a smile to Matilda's mature lips.

"But about Mr. Matthews?"

"Yes, about Matthews. I believe he is not unaware of the hostile attitude some of his old neighbors have assumed. Not all of them. The solid men of this community, the men who do their own thinking and can look at a subject all around, see Matthews as I do, a shrewd, close mouthed business man, with one object, and only one, in life."

"Olivia."

"Precisely—Olivia. I doubt if there's any man in Melton county who knows Matthews as well as I do. I knew him before his shell developed, knew him when he was in love with Lucretia Broxton and looked forward to marrying her. Matthews was all right then. He was changed by her death into a silent, almost morose, man. He was a fairly devoted husband to Olivia's mother, but nothing has ever come between him and his first love. All the pent up forces of his nature have expended themselves on this girl. He has slaved to make her rich. He would die to make her happy."

Mrs. Govan moved restlessly in her chair. John really was not telling her a single thing she did not know already.

"Yes, but, John, nobody has—that is, nobody should!"

She started and opened her mild blue eyes to their widest extent. John was positively pounding the arms of his chair with his clenched fist.

"I say it is an inhuman shame to damn Matthews because Tom Broxton's property has depreciated and his father's investments turned out badly. Are Broxton's riches the first that ever took wings to themselves? And because, by close attention to his business, Matthews has amassed a little bit bigger pile than the common run of Melton county attorneys the wise ones of the earth have added two and two together, with malicious chucklings, and decided that Matthews is a scoundrel of the blackest shade."

"All the same, it is a great pity that all of his papers are burned," said Mrs. Govan quietly.

"A awful pity," the doctor replied solemnly. "I do believe that it is the loss of those papers which has preyed on Matthews' mind until he is almost ready to take to his bed. You see, all of his vouchers as Tom Broxton's guardian went up in that fire."

"But Tom?"

"Oh, Tom is all right! Matthews showed me a letter he got from him in

ey expended on his education had been poorly placed. As it was not at all probable he should ever marry, the future did not cost him an anxious thought."

"Never marry! Why, he was up to his eyes in love with Olivia Matthews before he left here."

"Yes, but Westover got in the way of that."

Mrs. Govan pursued her own line of thought in an aggrieved voice.

"That would have made things a little more even, and somehow I have always looked forward to seeing another Mrs. Broxton at the old Hall."

"Even as having a provoking way of shaping their own course without any respect for our wishes or preferences, Matilda."

To which sententious bit of wisdom Matilda accorded a grave affirmative.

"But go on about Tom's letter, John."

"Well, it seems that Matthews had urged his coming here as his guest, to stay while they were going over the papers, to which Tom replied that as, owing to the unforeseen intervention of the elements, there were no papers to be examined it would scarcely be advisable for him to come to Mandeville just now. The visit could only be productive of pain to him and discomfort to others."

"Others, I suppose, meant Ollie," Mrs. Govan interjected.

"He wound up by telling Matthews that he begged to assure him of his unaltered affection and confidence. There was no room in his heart for any other feeling toward the man his father had loved and trusted."

"Did he say that, John? Poor Tom! Dear boy! Poor, poor laddie!"

Mrs. Govan's tears were dropping fast upon the sewing she had laid upon her lap.

"I think the reason Matthews showed me that letter," said the doctor reflectively, "was because he wanted me to know just how Tom felt about—about things."

"Yes; that was natural, I see. But Tom—where is he going to locate, John? Did the letter state? Mrs. Spillman was asking me this morning if I knew where Tom was."

"He thinks his chances as an electrician will be best out west in some growing place. He mentioned Kansas City. Shouldn't be surprised if he brought up there."

"And so that is the last of the Broxton name for Melton county. Dear, dear, what changes one does see in a short lifetime! Why, John, about the time you brought me here a bride the Broxtons were just everything in the county. The men couldn't project any county affairs of any importance without Rufus Broxton's opinion and help. Mrs. Broxton led in all the social and church movements, and half the unmarried men in the county were courting Lucretia."

"That's all so," said the doctor gravely, "but it only goes to prove the mutability of human affairs."

Mrs. Govan refused obstinately and always to mount her husband's rhetorical ladder. She preferred the safer if lowlier tableland of her own practical reflections.

"I'm not afraid, John, but what Rufus Broxton's son can make headway wherever he plants himself, but I do hope he will be careful about his flannels and things. Lucretia and his mother died so young, John. If I knew where the boy was, I would write to him in a motherly sort of way, you know. He may be slow making new friends out there, you see."

"And that's a kindly thought, Matilda. I'll find out from Matthews and let you know."

Then his office bell rang, and the doctor left the pleasant sitting room fire-side, made all the brighter by Mrs. Doctor's sweet old face, to answer it. Presently he put his head in the doorway to say:

"It is something of a hurry call from Matthews. I shouldn't be surprised if I paid him a good long visit, Matilda."

That was his formula—always to keep Matilda posted as to his movements. She had a formula too.

"And give my love to Olivia. Tell her if there's anything in the wide world I can do to send right back for me. I'll drive over anyway this afternoon with some salt rising bread and quince marmalade if you don't forbid them."

Mandeville would have been put to it to find man or woman who, having ever been sick enough to call in Dr. Govan, had not been treated to salt rising bread and quince marmalade by Mrs. Dr. Govan.

scious Olivia was of the impending catastrophe. But it was not for her to furnish enlightenment.

Some one, Miss Malvina decided, certainly ought to be within call at night in case—in case of the worst. Dr. Govan was out of the question. He was too old and too necessary to the well being of the rest of Mandeville to be risked. She thought of Tom Broxton, but Tom was hundreds of miles away, hard at work. Mr. Matthews had told her he was in an electrician's office in Kansas City. Ollie never heard from him at all nowadays. She thought of herself, only to think next of her mother. She could not stay away from the cottage at night. Why should not Clarence Westover stay? She gave Olivia the benefit of her views on this point.

"I think, my dear, you ought to have some one besides old Reuben in the house at night. It is just possible you might want to send for Dr. Govan during the night. I was thinking that Mr. Westover would be just the one."

"Clarence to sit up at night? Oh, then you must think papa very ill indeed!"

"I don't think anything of the kind," said Miss Malvina recklessly. "I was just thinking that naturally it would cheer you up some to have him about."

A soft glow spread over the girl's tired face. The mere suggestion had proved cheering.

"Oh, he is just as nice as can be! He comes every day and has wanted to help nurse from the very beginning, and—and—it would be immensely comforting to me just to know that he was within call, but papa seems to have such an aversion to any one being in his room. He has said over and over again that he hoped I would not take advantage of him when he was asleep to leave a stranger in charge of him. As if I would take advantage of him under any circumstances!" she added mournfully.

"The very best of men are selfish pigs when it comes to sickness," said Miss Malvina, with scorn in her eyes and a fixed purpose in her heart.

She found Clarence Westover tethering his horse to the Matthews rack. She went toward him eagerly.

"Well, I call this providential; that I do. I was just casting about in my mind how I could get a message to you."

"Worse?" He nodded gravely toward the house.

"No; I can't say that I see any change at all, but it is just this way: Things are in too critical a condition for that child to be left alone at night, with no one but old Reuben to call on in case of—of—"

"I understand. I have thought so all along. I have pleaded with her for permission to stay. She has refused me with singular obstinacy. I cannot stay in spite of her."

"That is just exactly what you must do. I know. It is all his doings. She would be glad to have you. I know it. But she wouldn't go against his wishes for the universe. I don't suppose a man can help being selfish, seeing he is a man. She needs you desperately, Mr. Westover. What are you going to do about it?"

A second of silent reflection fell between them, and then Westover solved the problem cheerfully.

"I have it. I can be on hand and be none the wiser for it. I don't suppose, now, any one is likely to visit the little side porch his room opens on after dark?"

"No. Splendid! There is a hammock swung there just outside his windows. You can hear everything that goes on in the room."

"I'll do it," said Clarence with decision. "I will come after dark. Fortunately there is no moon to tell on me."

"Nor any dog," Miss Malvina added reassuringly. "My dear Mr. Westover, what a load you have lifted off my heart!"

And as she trotted briskly homeward, with that much lightened organ warming toward Ollie's lover, she said to herself that she guessed they had all been unjust to this young man because they had dedicated Ollie to Tom Broxton and maybe because he wore patent leather shoes in the daytime.

Mandeville had its own standards, and Miss Malvina stood by them. Patent leather stood for holidays and holy days. Her loving heart was very full just then. What with pitying tenderness for Ollie, somber anticipations for Lawyer Matthews and growing anxiety for her mother it could not well be fuller. She had to admit to herself that her mother was growing queerer every day.

And the queerer she grew the more frenzied became her dislike for Horace Matthews. In her efforts to account for it Miss Malvina recalled the psychological fact that mentally unbalanced people frequently selected some one individual as the object of their especial detestation. Sometimes it was those they had most reason to love and admire. Her mother was certainly a monomaniac where the lawyer was concerned. When she had heard of the sale of Broxton Hall, for instance, she had laughed maliciously and said that Tom could send that business higher than a kite. She had all she could do to keep her mother from breaking out into her dreadful tirades of abuse before others.

So Miss Malvina in her little three roomed cottage and Olivia Matthews in her mansion of many rooms were each winning their way through the shadows with heavy hearts amid foreboding fears.

As ordered by Dr. Govan, Reuben was night nurse and Olivia tended the sick man during the day. Said the gentle old doctor:

"Reuben can stand loss of sleep better than you can, my dear, and it would distress your father to see you about him when you should be getting your proper rest."

But Ollie had her doubts about Reuben's superior powers of endurance,

and after stealing into the dimly lighted sickroom twice in one night to find patient and nurse both in a profound slumber she aroused Reuben and drew him cautiously out into the hall.

"It is nearly midnight, Reuben, and I have been sleeping nicely ever since 8 o'clock. You go now and rest until daylight. You say he does not get restless before then. Come back at first peep of day, and he will never have missed you."

This suggestion fell in so comfortably with Reuben's own desires that she did not have to urge it very strenuously. With yawning thanks he shuffled out of sight.

Olivia stole noiselessly into the sickroom to take his place. The sick man was in a profound sleep. She lowered the lamp on the hearth a trifle and moved the screen so that the shadows cast by it on the ceiling above the bed should take on fewer fantastic shapes. She shook the water pitcher softly to make sure of the presence of ice in it. She examined the tumblers of physic to be quite sure of the next dose in case she had to administer it before Reuben's return.

Gratified to find the patient remain unconscious of all this subdued activity, she curled herself up in the great armchair on the side of the bed next

"You have bedecked her with jewels, and you know it. You fastened Lucretia Broxton's pearl necklace about her pure young neck the night she was 18 years old, just the age which poor Lucretia died. It is a wonder it did not scorch the child's flesh."

"You see, I am old, but I do not forget my friends. They call me crazy. My own girl has joined in the cry against me. But I have mind enough left to remember the things that are worth remembering. I remember the love and gratitude I owe to every member of the Broxton family. I have tried to serve Thomas, but his faithfulness was not to be shaken. You know some papers the night his father died. You did not make a very thorough search for them. I think you preferred to have them lost. But they were found and brought to me. The Lord put them as a weapon in my hand. I read them, and I hid them."

"I meant to give them to Thomas when he should come of age and you control of him cease. But I lost them. I think I know how, but I can't say where. You see, my poor head plays me tricks sometimes. It is not as serviceable as it was when you were a boy, Horace."

"In the envelope you lost there was an unfinished letter from Rufus Broxton to his son. I went up to the house at night to give it to him. He was asleep, poor laddie, and I twisted about some flowers that I had laid over his father's picture as my poor tribute of love."

"You see, I wanted him to have the letter, but I did not want you to know about it, for then you would know where the other papers were. So I resorted to a clumsy trick to make him believe there was something supernatural about his getting the letter, and then I knew he would hold his tongue. Some time or other Tom and I will have a good laugh about the Broxton ghost."

"I carried all the papers with me when I went up to the Hall. I was afraid to leave them behind. I was afraid Malvina would get hold of them and give them to you. Malvina is on your side, so I had to be sly, oh, sly, Horace. But I lost the papers. They are lost, lost, lost!"

"I see the gleam of triumph in your glazing eyes, Horace. But I know the papers all by heart. I will tell all in open court some day if the dear Lord will only leave me here until Thomas comes back. I will swear that you could not give a title to Broxton Hall, and then Thomas can get it back. But, oh, I grow so weak, and Thomas carries so long!"

"I don't want to go before Thomas comes. I may die tonight. I may die tomorrow. I've used my last strength to drag myself to your bedside. He who forgave the dying thief upon the cross can forgive you, too, and he will, Horace, if you will only make restitution to that poor boy. He is a God of mercy, in whose name I make this appeal."

Gasping as one coming out of deep waters does, Olivia threw herself upon the bed and stretched sheltering arms about the sick man.

"Father, father, forgive me! I ought to have protected you better. I was so frightened I could neither move nor speak. It is just poor old crazy 'Mother' Spillman. I shall call Reuben to take her home."

He was breathing stertorously. His eyes were fixed on the stern white face of his accuser. Terror was legibly described on every line of his pallid face. He looked beyond Olivia, as if her loving voice had not reached him. It reached the old woman, who gave a start of surprise and said in gentler tones than she had yet used:

"I am sorry you were close by, child, but I had a duty to perform. It could not be put off any longer."

Olivia pressed her hands tenderly upon her father's wide stretched lips and whispered caressingly in his ear.

"There, dear, don't look at her. It is only poor old 'Mother' Spillman, who does not know what she is talking about. They ought to keep her under lock and key."

Stretching her hand for the bell on the table by the bed, she rang a sharp summons for Reuben on it. She rose from the bed and turned with gentle dignity toward the old woman.

"Mrs. Spillman, I have rung for Reuben to see you home. Miss Malvina will be dreadfully frightened about you."

She was as an autumn leaf in the strong current of the relentless old woman's will. As a candle will sometimes burn its brightest before flickering to its death, "Mother" Spillman temporarily recovered the strong individuality that had made her as the minister's wife the terror of every evil-doer in her husband's parish.

"Girl, I am sorry for you, truly sorry, but I have work to do. For his sake, nodding her white head toward the bed, 'keep your man at a distance. Your promise, Horace. There is yet time. Do not go into the presence of your Maker with a sin burdened soul. You know whether my words are the words of truth or the ravings of a crazy old woman. You know, and—' she raised one long arm to point solemnly upward—'he knows.'"

Her father's awful silence appalled Olivia. He was staring stonily at his accuser. The muscles of his neck and jaws twitched convulsively, but no words came from his parched lips. Olivia lost all control at the sight.

(To be continued.)

"I have been biding my time."

to the wall, where she would be completely hidden should her father open his eyes, but need no attention. Then she administered a small dose of comfort to her own anxious heart.

"He is better. He must be better. Dr. Govan said if he could only sleep better all would be well, and now he is sleeping splendidly."

With folded arms and closed eyes she fell to picturing things as they would shape themselves as soon as her father should leave his sick bed. She would tell him how Clarence was pleading for an immediate marriage so as to help her take care of him in his declining years. It was lovely to have her lover so fond of her father, but then everybody looked up to and revered her father. It would be terrible to have a father whom all the world could not look up to. And thus comforting herself after the manner of all things young and innocent she settled herself to keep vigil. In five minutes she was found asleep. Not for very long. She fell a-dreaming, an unpleasant, startling dream. She fancied some terrible, wild thing was standing over her father's sick bed with flame in its eyes and venom on its tongue. She writhed as one does in the conscious effort to shake off a nightmare and opened her eyes, only to cover them with her trembling hands as she smothered the impulse to cry out.

Standing close by the pillows of the sick man was the tall, white robed figure, never to be forgotten, that had once before deprived her of the power of reasoning. High over a tumbled mass of snowy white hair it held the small bedroom lamp that had been burning low on the hearth.

The Broxton ghost stood revealed in "Mother" Spillman! In that one frightened glance Olivia had made that discovery. But how was she to get this determined old woman, this avowed lunatic, away from her father's bedside quietly? Petrified by fear, helplessly casting about for a plan of action that would not react upon her beloved patient, the girl shivered with renewed terror as "Mother" Spillman, in a low voice, made intense by the concentrated passion of purpose, entered upon her awful arraignment:

"You are ill, Horace Matthews, ill unto death perhaps. I have been biding my time. Before another night passes over your head you may stand in the presence of your Maker and your Judge. What will you answer when he asks you how the orphan has fared at your hands, how the son of the man who loved and trusted you far beyond your deserts had been treated? Why has Rufus Broxton's son waxed poor and you rich, Horace Matthews?"

"You know me. Oh, I see that you do, for all you are staring at me as if you saw a specter. You've looked at me many a time that way, Horace, when I've caught you at some of your vicious boy tricks long ago. And I know you through and through. I laughed when I heard of your books and papers being burnt up. That was one of your old tricks. You burnt up a composition book when you were a boy when your theft of an essay was threatened with discovery. You burnt up your philosophy to escape an extra hard task. It has been a silly but a vicious practice of yours ever since you were 10 years old. It served you in good stead when vouchers that did not exist were to be produced."

"But I did not come here to rail at you for by-gones. I came here to plead the cause of the orphan son of the best friend you ever had. As you hope for forgiveness hereafter, Horace Matthews, make such restitution as is possible to that poor boy. You have ruined him, and you know it. The money you have piled up for your girl will never do her any good, never!

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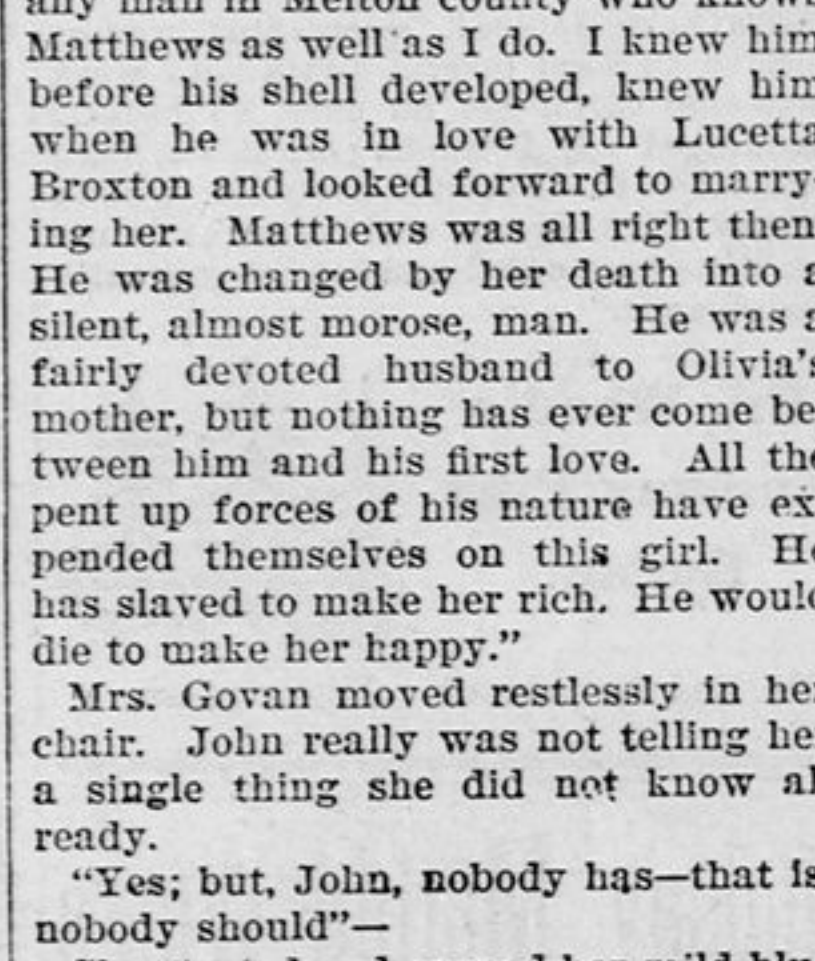
"I have been biding my time."

CHAPTER XIII.

"MOTHER" SPILLMAN SPEAKS OUT AT LAST.

Notwithstanding its capacity in the matter of mote magnifying and the building up of substantial charges from straws and wisps, Mandeville had a heart, and when it was known that Lawyer Matthews had actually taken to his bed and that Dr. Govan looked very grave when questioned about his patient's chances for recovery this heart swelled with a great pity for Olivia's prospective desolation, with the result that she was overwhelmed with neighborly offers of help and sympathy. Touching this widespread demonstration, she said to Miss Malvina, with shining, grateful eyes:

"I always knew papa deserved to be revered by his neighbors, and it makes me so proud to be assured of the estimation he is held in. But I don't think he would like any of them at his bedside. He told me so. I think Reuben and I can manage the case. He is not very sick, you know. It is just a nervous attack. He has been in a dreadfully nervous condition ever since the fire. He was so frightened for me that night, you know." To which Miss Malvina answered "No, of course," and then "Yes, of course," vaguely trying to meet all requirements. She was thinking of how very ill Mr. Matthews really was and of how entirely uncon-



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answer to the announcement that all the papers were gone. He is a grand fellow, Rufus Broxton's own son."

"I wish I could have seen it."

"Oh, it was short! But it had point to it—by Jove, it had! I do not suppose I could repeat it verbatim, but I could give you the sense of it."

"Try, John, just to give me the sense of it. I do so want to hear how the dear boy took it. I don't mean about the fire, but about his losses. He is so young."

The old man threw back his head with an air of pride in the son of his old friend.

"He took it grandly. I could not help thinking, when I was reading that letter, how proud it would have made Rufus. He said he did not suppose he was the first man who had met with disappointments just as great on the threshold of life; that the blow was softened in his case by the reflection that no one would suffer by his losses but himself; that if he could not provide for his individual wants the mon-

## CHAPTER XVII.

### MR. MATTHEWS CALLS FOR HIS PHYSICIAN.

Mandeville had the usual contingent of charitable and uncharitable people, of reticent thinkers and people given to speaking their minds plainly in season and out. In short, humanity was mixed there as elsewhere.

Dr. Govan had to rebuke old Mr. Langdon, the druggist, quite sharply more than once for asking him, "How comes it Horace Matthews has got rich practicing law in Melton county, where no other man has ever been able to more'n grabble a living at that business?" And Mr. Mills, the most progressive man in Mandeville, who had actually had the temerity to import a man who had something to do with an electric light system, with a view to seeing if Mandeville could not be seduced into discarding its old oil lamps, actually heard Lawyer Matthews talking to the electrician about his line of business, wanting to know if he could point out any opening for a young friend of his who would soon be returning from the other side and would want to go into that sort of business. Of course his young friend must be Tom Broxton. Mr. Mills was one of the reticent thinkers, so he did not confide even to his wife his great astonishment at hearing that Rufus Broxton's son would have to go into any sort of business. But, although he discreetly refrained from proclaiming it upon the house tops, his private conviction was that "Horace Matthews' end of the seesaw had gone up as fast as Tom Broxton's had gone down."

Dr. Govan would have scored Mandeville's most progressive man with the same severity he visited upon the irresponsible old druggist—a quacking quack," as he bitingly called him—only it is impracticable to wage active hostilities against a man who simply raises his eyebrows and shrugs his shoulders.

Dr. Govan's broad catholicity and gentle judgment of his fellow man were the logical reflex of his own sweetness of nature and abounding good health. It was natural that Horace Matthews should have come in for a goodly share of discussion at the time of the fire, for Mandeville was never so rich in sensations as to let one slip too rapidly through its mill. But it was time to create a diversion. The doctor began his missionary work at home. If he could convert Mrs. Govan into a partisan, Matthews would be reinstated with his neighbors. A man's wife is his best and surest safety valve. Mrs. Govan innocently immortalized herself.

"I was down to see the old lady yesterday, John. Malvina says she wishes you would stop in the first time you pass their gate."

"What's 'Mother' Spillman up to now?"

"Nothing new. Malvina just gets fretted over the way the old lady pecks on Horace Matthews. She says it's a regular monomania. She says she is almost afraid to let any of the neighbors mention Mr. Matthews' name in her mother's presence for fear she will blurt out something ugly about him."

"And yet," the doctor said gravely, "Matthews has been consistently kind to the old creature. He has kept up all the friendly services Broxton used to render her."

"I know it. I know that, John, but 'Mother' Spillman's a woman of strong convictions, and she is not to be bought over by any amount of flattery or substantial help."

"Bought over?" Dr. Govan gave his wife an "et tu, Brute," look and opened his battery without the preliminary of a curt challenge.

"Now, see here, Matilda! Have you gone over to the enemy?"

"Gone over to the enemy? Which enemy, John Govan?" She smoothed the white bands of hair on her temples nervously. John had such a dreadful incisive pair of eyes. He was using them just then as he used that sharp

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