The PRICE

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SYNOPSIS.

—5—

Wahaska Griswold, an unsuccessful [illegible] of socialistic tendencies, [illegible] friend Bainbridge at Chauncey's restaurant in New Orleans and [illegible] that if necessary he will steal to [illegible] from starving. He holds up Andrew [illegible], president of the Bayou State [illegible] in his private office and escapes with [illegible] in cash. By original methods he escapes the hue and cry and goes [illegible] the Belle Julie as a deckhand. He [illegible] confronts Charlotte Farnham of Wahaska, Minn., who had seen him cash Galbraith's check in the bank. Charlotte recognizes Griswold, but decides to write to Galbraith rather than denounce the robber to the captain. She sees the brutal mate rescued from drowning by Griswold and delays sending her letter to Galbraith. She talks to Griswold and by his advice sends her letter of betrayal to Galbraith anonymously. Griswold is arrested on the arrival of the boat at St. Louis but escapes from his captors. Griswold decides on Wahaska, Minn., as a hiding place, and after outfitting himself properly, takes the train. Margery Grierson, daughter of Jasper Grierson, the financial magnate of Wahaska, starts a campaign for social recognition by the "old families" of the town.

CHAPTER IX—Continued.

"Good-morning, doctor," she began cheerfully, bursting in upon the head of the First church board of administrators as a charming embodiment of youthful enthusiasm. "I'm running errands for poppa this morning. Mr. Rodney was telling us about that little First church mission in Pottery Flat, and poppa wanted to help. But we are not Methodists, you know, and he was afraid—that is, he didn't quite know how you might—"

It was an exceedingly clever bit of acting, and the good doctor capitulated at once, discrediting, for the first time in his life, the intuition of his home womankind.

"Now that is very thoughtful and kind of you, Miss Margery," he said, wiping his glasses and looking a second time at the generous figure of the piece of money paper. "I appreciate it the more because I know you must have a great many other calls upon your charity. We've been wanting to put a trained worker in charge of that mission for I don't know how long, and this gift of yours makes it possible."

"The kindness is in allowing us to help," murmured the small diplomat. "You'll let me know when more is needed? Promise me that, Doctor Farnham."

"I shouldn't be a good Methodist if I didn't," laughed the doctor. Then he remembered the Mereside receptionist's regrets and was moved to make amends. "I'm sorry we couldn't be neighborly last night; but my sister-in-law is very frail, and Charlotte doesn't go out much. They are both getting ready to go to Pass Christian, but I'm sure they'll call before they go south."

"I shall be ever so glad to welcome them," purred Miss Margery, and "I hope they will come before I leave. We are going to Palm Beach next week, you know."

"I'll tell them," volunteered the doctor. "They'll find time to run in, I am sure."

But for some reason the vicarious promise was not kept, and the Raymers held aloof, and the Oswalds and the Harrs relinquished the new public library project when it became noised about that Jasper Grierson and his daughter were leaving in it.

Miss Margery possessed her soul in patience up to the final day of her house staying, and the explosion might have been indefinitely postponed if on that last day, the Raymers, mother and daughter, had not pointedly taken pains to avoid her at the lingerie counter in Thorwalden's. It was as the match to the fuse, and when Miss Grierson left the department store there were red spots in her cheeks and the dark eyes were flashing.

"They think I'm a jay," she said with a snap of the white teeth. "They need a lesson, and they're going to get it before I leave. I'm not going to stay small all the time!"

It was surely the goddess of discord who ordained that the blow should be struck while the iron was hot. Five minutes after the rebuff in Thorwalden's, Miss Grierson met Raymer as he was coming out of the Farmers and Merchants' bank. There was an exchange of commonplaces, but in the midst of it Miss Margery broke off abruptly to say, "Mr. Raymer, please tell me what I have done to offend your mother and sister."

If she had been in the mood to compassionate, one of the deferred payments of vengeance might have been discharged on the spot by Raymer's blundering attempt at disavowal.

"Why, Miss Margery! I don't know—that is—really, you must be mistaken, I'm sure!"

"I am not mistaken, and I'd like to know," she persisted, looking him heavily in the eyes. "It must be something I have done, doing, and if I can find out what it is, I'll reform."

Raymer got away as soon as he could, and when the opportunity offered, was haunted enough to repeat the question to his mother and sister. Mrs. Raymer was a large and placid version of the immovable type, and [illegible] expressed her opinion of [illegible] that of her saying such a thing to you ought to be a sufficient answer, I should think," was her mild retort.

"I don't see why," Raymer objected.

"What would you think if Gertrude did such a thing?"

"Oh, well, that is different. In the first place, Gertrude wouldn't do it, and—"

"Precisely. And Miss Grierson shouldn't have done it. It is because she can do such things that a few think she wouldn't be a pleasant person to know, socially."

"But why?" insisted Raymer, with masculine obtuseness.

It was his sister who undertook to make the reason plain to him.

"It isn't anything she does, or doesn't do, particularly. It is the atmosphere in which she lives and moves and has her being. If it weren't for her father's money, she would be well, it is rather hard to say just what she would be. But she always makes me think of the bonanza people—the pick and shovel one day and a million the next. I believe she is a frank little savage, at heart."

"I don't," the brother contended, doggedly. "She may be a trifle new and fresh for Wahaska, but she is clever and bright, and honest enough to ignore a social code which makes a mock of sincerity and a virtue of hypocrisy. I like her all the better for the way she flared out at me. There isn't one young woman in a thousand who would have had the nerve and the courage to do it."

"Or the impudence," added Mrs. Raymer, when her son had left the room. "Then I do hope Edward isn't going to let that girl come between him and Charlotte."

The daughter laughed.

"I should say there is room for a regiment to march between them as it is. Miss Gilman took particular pains to let him know what train they were leaving on, and I happen to know he never went near the station to tell them good-by."

CHAPTER X

Good Samaritans.

Since she had undertaken to show Wahaska precisely how to depart itself in the conventional fled, Miss Grierson had telegraphed her father to meet her in St. Louis on her return from Florida.

When Jasper Grierson traveled alone he was democratic enough to be satisfied with a section in the back of the car; but when Margery's tastes were to be consulted the drawing-room was none too good. Indeed, as it happened in the hottest month and from St. Louis, the Atlantic Coast proved to be not good enough. [illegible] It's a simple [illegible] way they were out [illegible] down cars on us up here," she [illegible] to her father. "You ought to do something about it."

Jasper Grierson's smile was a [illegible] fallible acquirement, and some of his fellow-townsmen described it as [illegible] true. But for his daughter it was always indulgent.

"I don't wonder the rail-roads Maggie; you'd have to give me a [illegible] more time. He pinched off the tip from a black cigar, [illegible] portfolio and reaching for the [illegible] safety-match box.

"I'll begin [illegible] smoke that [illegible] stuffy little den [illegible] fort, and the [illegible] time and exchanged the [illegible] with its threat of [illegible] a seat in the body of the car [illegible] down the car [illegible] still curtained [illegible] course, the [illegible] section must be [illegible] her interest here [illegible] the sick [illegible] traveling without an attendant."

With Margery [illegible] was to be [illegible] conductor [illegible] grams in Section [illegible] most means of enlightenment. A few minutes later Margery rejoined her father in the private compartment.

"Do you remember the nice young man who sat at the table with me in the dining-car last night?" she began abruptly.

The great railroad builder did had an excellent memory for faces.

"What did you think of him?" the query followed the first like a sparring boxer's return blow.

"I thought he paid a whole lot more attention to you than he did to his supper. Why?"

"He is on this car, sick with a fever of some kind, and out of his head. He is going to Wahaska."

"How do you know it's the same one?"

"I made the conductor take me to see him. He talked to me in Italian and called me Carlotta mia."

"Humph! he didn't look like a dago."

"He isn't. It's just because he is delirious."

There was a long pause, broken finally by a curt "Well?" from the father.

"I've been thinking," was the slow response. "Of course, there is a chance that he has friends in Wahaska, and that someone will be at the train to meet him. But it is only a chance."

"Why doesn't the conductor telegraph ahead and find out?"

"He doesn't know the man's name. I tried to get him to look for a card, or to break into the suitcases under the berth, but he says the regulations won't let him."

"Well?" said the father again, this time with a more decided upward inflection. Then he added, "You've made up your mind what you're going to do—say it."

Margery's decision was announced crisply. "There is no hospital to send him to, which is Wahaska's shame. Maybe he will be met and taken care of by his friends. If he is, well and good; if he isn't, we'll put him in the carriage and take him home with us."

The cast-iron smile with the indulgent attachment wrinkled frostily upon Jasper Grierson's heavy face.

"The Good Samaritan act, eh? I've known you a long time, Madgie, but I never can tell when you're going to break out in a brand new spot. Didn't lose any of your unexpectedness in Florida, did you?"

Miss Margery tossed her pretty head, and the dark eyes snapped.

"Somebody in the family has to think of something besides making money," she retorted. "Please lend me your pencil, I want to do some wiring."

All other gifts apart, Miss Grierson could boast of a degree of executive ability little inferior to her father's, did boast of it when the occasion offered, and by the time the whistle was sounding for Wahaska, all the arrangements had been made for the provisional rescue of the sick man in lower six.

At the station a single inquiry served to give the Good Samaritan intention the right of way. There were no friends to meet lower six, but the Grierson carriage was waiting, with the coachman and a Mereside gardener for bearers. From that to putting the sick man to bed in one of the guest chambers of the lake-fronting mansion at the opposite end of the town was a mere bit of routine for one so capable as Miss Grierson, and twelve minutes after the successful transfer she had Doctor Farnham at the nameless man's bedside, and was telephoning the college infirmary for a nurse.

Naturally, there were explanations to be made when the doctor came down. To her first anxious question

Make Up Your Mind What You're Going to Do—Say It.

"How does the patient?" she received a reassuring answer. The man was not delirious now, but he was very weak, and he was not to be disturbed by questions of any kind. He was sleeping quietly under the influence of a hypodermic, and he was not to be wakened for the administration of food or medicine for two hours.

"Is he—is there anything in his pocketbook to show who he is?" she inquired, with a little shiver of anticipation.

The doctor was sorry, but there was not. The man had been robbed, of course, and he was evidently a stranger in the city, or he would have recognized some friend among the passers-by who had hurried to the station to see the ambulance unloaded.

"Then you think he will be able to tell us who he is and where we can find his friends when he wakes?"

The doctor was hopeful that he would be able to do so within a few hours.

"Very well, we will wait and hope for the best," she concluded, with a little sigh of relief. "In the meantime, we will do our best to make him comfortable and to—to—"

The doctor was quick to supply the missing word, and he was not slow to see that the girl was glad to have the responsibility of the stranger's welfare shared by others.

"You have done your part very well indeed, Miss Grierson, and you may safely leave the rest to us. We will do our best to make him comfortable, and we will let you know when he is able to see you."

Margery went to the sick-room door with her kindly counselor, giving the last orders for the care of the stranger to her own housekeeper, who was to be responsible for the nurse's comfort. When the doctor had gone she went slowly upstairs and let herself softly into the room of shaded grey. The sick man was resting quietly, and he did not stir when she crossed to the bed and laid a cool palm on his hot forehead.

"You poor castaway," she murmured. "I wonder who you are and to whom you belong? I suppose somebody has got to be mean and sneaky and find out. Would you rather it would be I than someone else who might care even less than I do?"

The sleeping man opened unseeing eyes and closed them again heavily. "I found the money, Carlotta mia; you didn't know that, did you?" he muttered; and then the narcotic seized and held him again.

His clothes were on a chair, and when she had carried them to a light that could be shaded completely from the bed and its occupant, she searched the pockets one by one. It was a little surprising to find all but two of them quite empty, no cards, no letters, no pen, pencil, pocketknife, or purse, nothing but a handkerchief and in one pocket of the waistcoat a small roll of paper money, a few coins and two small keys.

She held the coat up to the electric and examined it closely, the workmanship, the trimmings. It was not tailor made, she decided, and by all the little signs and tokens it was quite new. And the same was true of the other garments. But there was no tag or trademark on any of them to show where they came from.

Failing to find the necessary clue to the castaway's identity in this preliminary search she went on resolutely, dragging the two suitcases over to the lighted corner and unlocking them with the keys taken from the pocket of the waistcoat.

The first yielded nothing but clothing, all new and evidently unworn. The second held more clothing, a man's toilet appliances, also new and unused, but apparently no scrap of writing or hint of a name. With a little sigh of bafflement she took the last tightly rolled bundle of clothing from the suitcase. While she was lifting it a pistol fell out.

In times past, Jasper Grierson's daughter had known weapons and their faults and excellences. That places him, a little she mused putting the pistol aside after she had glanced at it. "Men from the East he doesn't know a gun from a piece of common hardware."

Further search in the tightly rolled bundle was rewarded by the discovery of a typewritten book-manuscript unsigned, and with it an oblong packet wrapped in brown paper and tied with twine. She slipped the string and uncovered the wrapping. The brick-shaped packet proved to be a thick block of bank notes held together by heavy rubber bands snapped over the ends.

[illegible] the fire [illegible] the morning [illegible] was shutting [illegible] through the hour she stayed [illegible] motionless as if the sight of it had fascinated her. Then she [illegible] and [illegible] the door [illegible] packet. The block was [illegible] the rubber bands [illegible] packet. The block was [illegible] the true name and standing of the man whose real identity—if she knew it—she had been careful to conceal in the unsigned note to Mr. Galbraith? Broffin read the note again—"a deck hand, whose name on the mate's book is John Wesley Gavitt," was the description she had given. It might, or it might not, be an equivocation; but the longer Broffin dwelt upon it the more he leaned toward the conclusion to which his theory and the few known facts pointed. The young woman knew the man in his proper person; she had been reluctant to betray him. That, he decided, was sufficiently proved by the lapse of time intervening between the date of her note and its postmark date, having finally decided to give him up she had told only what was absolutely necessary, leaving him free to conceal his real name and identity if he would, and could.

Having come thus far on the road to convincement, Broffin knew what he had to do and set about doing it methodically. A telegram to the clerk of the Belle Julie served to place the steamer in the lower river, and boarding a night train he planned to reach Vicksburg in time to intercept the witnesses whose evidence would determine roughly how many hundreds or thousands of miles he could safely cut out of the zigzag journeyings to which

You Poor Castaway, She Murmured.

the following up of the hypothetical [illegible] would lead.

CHAPTER XI

The Zwerhund.

[illegible] Miss Margery [illegible] Raymer at [illegible] a few minutes ago [illegible] with [illegible] Raymer's laughing [illegible] was grimly [illegible]

"[illegible] asking anything [illegible] the other [illegible]

"[illegible] business is good [illegible] all the other [illegible] anything and grow [illegible] He was [illegible] wides [illegible] put in new machinery [illegible] a bigger line of goods [illegible] been [illegible] and [illegible]

"[illegible] Mr. Raymer's [illegible] was with her [illegible] in paper [illegible] the thing [illegible] but she [illegible] and then [illegible] to her father.

"I don't know [illegible] goings and comings [illegible] home [illegible] had much [illegible] for him.

"[illegible] I can see for himself. [illegible] I know nothing about [illegible] himself at all. He has never seemed to take much [illegible] for me. I guess it's a stand-off so far as likings go. I [illegible] retrospective his outfit for [illegible] the age, and told him I'd take fifty per cent of the energy I [illegible] stock [illegible] but he wouldn't [illegible] a share. Had what little he had [illegible] was [illegible] and he proposed to keep [illegible]

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"[illegible] he is [illegible] for [illegible] he [illegible] and [illegible] stock [illegible]

"[illegible] sick and nobody knew him, and somebody had to take care of him."

Like the doctor, Raymer asked the inevitable question, "Who is he, Miss Margery?" and, like the doctor again, he received the same answer, "I haven't the smallest notion of an idea. But that doesn't make the slightest difference," she went on. "He is a fellow human being, sick and helpless. That ought to be enough for any of us to know."

Raymer stood watching her as she tripped lightly into the bank, and when he went to catch his car the conservative minority had lost whatever countenance or support he had ever given it.

True to her latest characterization of herself, Margery had a nod and a pleasant smile for the young men behind the brass grilles as she passed on her way to the president's room in the rear. She found her father at his desk, thoughtfully munching the unburned half of one of the huge cigars, and named her errand.

"I want a safety-deposit box big enough to hold this," she said briefly, exhibiting the paper-wrapped packet.

Jasper Grierson, deeply immersed in a matter of business to which he had given the better part of the forenoon, replied without looking up. "Go and tell Murray, he'll fix you out."

As on any other business day, President Grierson was solidly planted in his heavy armchair before a desk well littered with work. He nodded absently to his daughter as she returned, and knowing that the nod meant that he would come to the surface of things her surface when he could, she turned aside to the window and waited.

Though she had seen him develop day by day in less than three of the thirty-odd years of his western exile, her father offered a constant succession of surprises to her. When she opened the door to retrospection, which was not often, she remembered that the man who had stumbled upon the rich quartz vein in Yellow Dog Gulch could scarcely sign his name legibly to the paper recording his claim; that in those days there was no prophecy of the ambitious present in the man, half hobo and half outlaw, whose name in the Yellow Dog district had been a synonym for, but these were unpleasant memories, and Margery rarely indulged them.

Justice she put them aside by turning her face to the window and taking credit for the tasteful and luxurious appointments of the private office with its soft-piled rug and heavy mahogany furniture. Her father was careless of such things, totally indifferent to them in his business hours, but she saw to it that his surroundings kept pace with the march of prosperity. Here in Wahaska, as elsewhere, a little judicious display counted for much, even if there were a few jaded personas who affected to despise it.

[illegible] was in the model of a meditated attack upon the steamship lithographs on the walls, with romance and [illegible] of the anti-bellum period, which her father, when in his present [illegible] and [illegible] her with a gift [illegible]

"[illegible]"

[illegible] he turned the [illegible] and [illegible] of the big [illegible] for [illegible] and [illegible] Margery at