Gems of Peril

By HAZEL ROSS HAILEY.

SYNOPSIS.

Rich old Mrs. Jupiter is robbed and murdered during the engagement party she gives for her secretary, Mary Harkness. Mary's scapegrace brother, Eddie, was to have been admitted at the murder hour. Mary tells her fiance, Dirk Ruyther, who arranges a rendezvous with the boy, but oversleeps. Bowen of The Star drives Mary to meet Eddie, who is run down and killed as he crosses the street toward them. Bowen tells Mary of a racetrack gambler called The Fly to whom her brother owed money. He gives Mary a coat he found in the Jupiter house the night of the murder. It is her brother's.

CHAPTER XV.—(Cont'd.)

"Oh, my dear, I've so much to tell you," Cornelia burbled breathlessly to Mary during one of the silences that fell like a blight on the dinner-table. It was ostensibly an aside, but since a pin-fall could have been heard in the room, she might have been speaking into a microphone.

"The grandest man, my dear! Ethel met him, and she introduced him." The two girls exchanged enchanted glances. "He's a marquis or something, whatever it is they have in South America. Handsome, and so—so brutal! He has what they say Peggy Hopkins Joyce's fascination is, only the other way 'round, of course—he looks at you as if you were the only woman in the world!"

Ethel nodded confirmation. "You know it's a line, but you swallow it—and my dear, you love it! Positively!" She sighed blissfully.

Cornelia's veiled eyes held dislike. Mary was sure. The strain of playing up to them was wearing on her, and no wonder. Vivacity was not Cornelia's manner and she did it badly. She abandoned it suddenly and turned on her friend with one of those quick changes of feeling which were characteristic of her.

"She's ga-ga about him. Simply gone" she smiled wryly around the table her eyes lingering on Dirk's. "I can't say as much myself. After all he's stony broke and he was once a dancing teacher or something, wasn't he? Well, imagine!"

"But he gave it up!" Ethel pouted. "He said the strain of holding up drunken debutantes was too hard on him. So now he just sits in night clubs and sulks."

She seemed to have run out of breath, and to be waiting for comment.

Mary was only half listening. She had a funny, far-off feeling as if she were not quite present, or were dreaming. She was sensitive to every movement, every expression of Dirk's—the rest was merely a backdrop for her own love drama.

Mrs. Ruyther dutifully made conversation. "You might have brought him along tonight. I should like to have met him," she remarked surprisingly.

"Oh, he really doesn't rate that," Cornelia laughed. "I think he's a gunman. There's something rather—sinister about him.

Heavens, thought Mary, he's probably just some little gigolo of the speakeasies, some collegiate "sheik" with a flair for dramatizing himself. Had she ever been as silly as these two girls now seemed? She was exactly Cornelia's age, but she felt much older—more like a settled matron, nowadays.

"He can't be broke if the night clubs take him in," Mr. Ruyther observed.

"Oh, well, not stony," Ethel rebuked Cornelia's description. She shrugged a sulky shoulders at her friend. "She only says that because she's got bucketfuls herself. Be just like her to step in and take him, just because she can, and leave poor little me out in the cold."

Ethel's effervescence had its nadir, also, Mary noted with amusement, in a sulky ill-humor which must make a friendship with her a rackety business. Or was she merely flattering Cornelia cleverly? Mary didn't know and really didn't care. Oh let the time go by quickly so that she and Dirk could go.

"I don't want him" Cornelia sneered. She turned abruptly to Mary.

"Well when are you going to have another murder at your house?"

Mary was completely taken aback. "My dear," Cornelia rattled on, "don't apologize. I haven't had such a good time in years." She turned to Ethel with a resumption of her vivacious air but Mary felt the sting underlying her words.

"Searched, if you can believe it, by the best-looking policeman! Nothing ever happens at our house like that." She sighed. "We have to be content with marquises and such. Synthetic thrills. Just a hollow life of pleasure, *n'est ce pas?*" She laughed, and rested her head against the back of the chair laily, half-closing her eyes.

In the uncomfortable silence that followed, broken only by Ethel's giggle, Dirk spoke to Cornelia for the first and last time during the meal.

"Cut it, Con," he said.

Cornelia's veiled eyes glittered angrily for a second, but she made a quick recovery. She waved a negligent hand in his direction, and spoke through a mouthful of ice, as if she had just remembered something.

"Oh, Dirk, don't let me forget to give you your lighter. It's in my c[illegible]," she said lightly and flicked malicious eyes in Mary's face.

Mary felt herself flush. Did Cornelia just think that up, or had Dirk really been seeing her? She would have liked to be a little girl again and fly at that slyly triumphant face and scratch it. Instead, she lifted her water-glass with steady fingers and prayed that her face did not betray the way she felt.

"Lighter?" Dirk was saying in honest perplexity. "But I don't own a lighter!"

"Dirk, my dear!" Cornelia protested, in a small shriek. "I gave it to you!"

Dirk was obviously performing a feat of recollection. "Oh, that one! It's been lost so long I'd forgotten I ever had it. Thanks! Thanks a lot!"

It was Cornelia's turn to flush now, and from the way the angry color beat in her cheeks Mary felt actual fear of her. She looked dangerous. And when a dangerously angry woman is coupled with several millions of dollars, almost anything can happen—though Mary at the moment had no clear idea what, nor had Cornelia, perhaps.

After dinner there was no opportunity for the lovers to be alone, for Dirk was suddenly inspired to a coltish sort of gayety with the bubbling Ethel as playmate. They walked imaginery chalk-lines with a basket of glazed nuts on their carefully poised heads, while Mrs. Ruyther pleaded for her expensive rugs; they pummeled each other with pillows and juggled mints and wax fruits from the sideboard. Mrs. Ruyther looked faintly gray of countenance, as if she thought her carefully reared son was losing his mind. Never again, Mary guessed with amusement, would she give a dinner of this kind!

Cornelia played Chopin wistfully in the music-room. It finally became apparent that no one was coming in to lean romantically on the piano and she came out again sulkily, and sat down with her dress high, smoking furiously. Turning the pages of a magazine busily, she watched the breathless antics of Dirk and Ethel out of the corner of her eye.

Mary simply sat. It was all a play to her, which did not amuse her much. Perhaps if she looked sufficiently bored, Dirk would take her home.

She had never liked her father-in-law-to-be so much as when he said, with a humorous quirk of the eyebrow which seemed to make them confidantes, "They tell me you're not a bad cribbage player?" And brought out the board.

She was tired and sleepy enough to drop before the girls went home. Cornelia won out simply by sitting on the davenport until Dirk fell upon it in sheer exhaustion, the madcap Ethel and her grim-faced hostess having retired to effect repairs on Ethel's shattered stockings. Mary played cribbage mechanically for what seemed hours, while Dirk and Cornelia smoked and held low-voiced commune on the davenport.

At last Cornelia rose.

"Drive you home, Con?" Dirk asked.

"No, thanks."

Well, he'd asked, and perhaps that was all she wanted. And a moonlight drive with the bright-eyed Ethel for companion would have been sour fruit anyway. No one mentioned the lighter, if it had ever existed.

Mary suffered Mrs. Ruyther's good night kiss with good grace. She thought there was a shade more enthusiasm in that icy salute than usual, but she couldn't be sure.

Hatless, under the dim porch light, her coat laid lightly about her shoulders, she looked like a nice, sleepy child and not at all like the weary, emotion-worn woman of the world she was feeling. But she couldn't know that. No wonder her future mother-in law's eyes rested on her with unwonted gentleness. It was hard to remember at the moment just what those "undesirable" matters were that had steeled her heart against the girl until now.

Mary caught the glance and thought ironically: "Wouldn't it be funny if she began to like me now that Dirk and I have quarreled?" Her heart was heavy with premonition. Dirk's aloofness all evening had utterly humbled her spirit. She was sure now that he had stopped loving her, that on the way home he was going to tell her their marriage would be a mistake. It was ridiculous, but how else could she explain his terribly changed manner? She climbed into the little coupe feeling like Marie Antoinette going to her doom.

But they did not quarrel—at least not then. Dirk settled beside her with a comfortable sigh, adjusted the window, and gave her hand one hearty squeeze before setting the little engine to thundering.

"Sleepy?" he asked.

Mary murmured assent.

"Well, don't go to sleep yet, kid. You and I have got a lot to talk about."

Mary's heart skipped a beat. Now what did that mean? They passed the Jupiter gates as if they had not been there and Mary saw that Dirk was guiding the car off the highroad onto the small road that led to the Point, which overlooked the moonlit sea.

(To be continued.)

Story-Book Romance

Barbara Robbins (Irma Theobald in real life) makes a stage romance come true by marrying Robert Bell, her stage director.

How to Not Pay Your Bills

By Lewis Carroll

"Only the tailor, sir, with your little bill," said a meek voice outside the door.

"Ah, well, I can soon settle his business," the Professor said to the children, "if you'll just wait a minute. How much is it, this year, my man?" The tailor had come in while he was speaking.

"Well, it's been a-doubling so many years, you see," the tailor replied, a little gruffly, "and I think I'd like the money now. It's two thousand pounds, it is!"

"Oh, that's nothing!" the Professor carelessly remarked, feeling in his pocket, as if he always carried at least that amount about with him. "But wouldn't you like to wait just another year and make it four thousand? Just think how rich you'd be! Why you might be a king, if you liked!"

"I don't know as I'd care about being a king," the man said thoughtfully. "But it dew sound a powerful sight o' money! Well, I think I'll wait—"

"Of course you will!" said the Professor. "There's good sense in you, I see. Good-day to you, my man!"

"Will you ever have to pay him that four thousand pounds?" Sylvie asked as the door closed on the departing creditor.

"Never, my child!" the Professor replied emphatically. "He'll go on doubling it till he dies. You see, it's always worth while waiting another year to get twice as much money!"

Summer

This is the half of year to be
  In an old frame house. I want to go
Where homely things are enough to see—
  Cows and trees and geese in a row.

The sea's too vast and the mountains high,
  And the city loud—and the hills are best,
Hills that lie low beneath the sky
  With room for clouds to go over the crest.

I shall lie out there where the world is wide,
  And watch the loaded, creaking wain
Tip perilously down a mown hillside,
  And hear the silence come up again.

And I shall not count how the days accrue,
  Nor care for sun or for crusted drouth,
While the well is deep, and the cider new,
  And the sweet grass drips from the horse's mouth.

—Mary Finette Larber, in New York Sun.

IN OTHER WORDS

A Chinese landed in England for the first time. At Dover an official asked him his name.

"Sneeze," replied the Oriental.

The customs officer stared hard at him.

"Is that your native name?" he asked.

"No." The Chinese shook his head. "I had it translated into Engleesh."

"Then let's have your native name," persisted the officer.

"Ah Choo it is," replied the other.

Thrill Makers

Jack O'Donnell in Elks Magazine

When the big, dangerous moment comes in the filming of a screen play the "star" steps aside and lets a member of the "suicide squad," take the bumps.

Billy Jones, Hollywood's greatest stunt man, has never been known to refuse an assignment because of the danger involved. He has, however, refused to do stunts which his "sixth sense" has told him were impossible. And he has the distinction of never having had another member of the suicide club successfully do a stunt he deemed impossible.

"I've seen 'em all," Jack Holbrook, a veteran "bumps," told me, "but none of 'em ever cut her so fine as did Billy Jones while they were shooting 'Dude Ranch' for Paramount. Billy has to jump out of a truck just before a fast train hits it. Frank Tuttle, who is directing, is afraid that Billy will cut it too fine. So, he walks up to the track about 150 feet and puts down a marker. 'Now, Billy,' he says to Jones, 'when the engine gets right here you jump!' Billy says he will but I know he won't. So I go up the track about 50 feet and I make a marker. Then I tell Bily I know what he's up to, and I tell him he's simply gotta jump when the engine gets to my marker.

"The camera starts to grind, the train comes along, doing the ball and jack, and Billy is crouching in the truck. The director's eyes begin to pop. Then the engine comes to my marker and still no Jones. Boy! My heart misses a beat. Still no Jones. I am petrified.

"A split second later Jones dives out of the machine. There's a crash and a crunch, then no more truck. Jones is still in the air when engine and truck come together. The picture shows that. Jones had timed it to one-thousandth of a second."

"That stunt was a case of timing," Jones explained. "Most stunts are simply that. Without a perfect sense of timing most of us wouldn't last a year in this racket. We've got to judge to a fraction of a second and sometimes to a fraction of an inch. In a pirate picture, I was supposed to scramble up the rattling 60 feet above decks, grab a rope that dangled from the top of the main mast and escape my pursuers by swinging out over the water and dropping. When I came to do it, the rope slipped and I found myself falling before I was clear of the decks. As I whizzed through the air I calculated that there was one chance in a thousand that I was out far enough to miss the rail of the ship. Everybody turned away to avoid seeing me splashed all over the deck. Even the camera man quit grinding.

"As I came near the rail I drew in my chest and straightened out my toes. Whizz! I shot past that rail but so close that it tore the buttons off the costume I was wearing. When I hit the water I went down deep—so deep that before I could reach the surface I had to exhale and ship a lot of water."

Jones had to think and act fast in a comedy called "Hot News," one sequence of which was taken on a high building. Jones and another stunt man—Johnny Sinclair—were working with piano wire, which doesn't register in films, attached to their safety belts.

Now, while piano wire will hold several hundred pounds of weight so long as there is no sudden jerk, it will not hold a good-sized boy if it becomes kinked. And in the midst of the stunt, with Sinclair hanging head down, Jones' wire kinked.

"Grab my hands!" yelled Sinclair.

Jones managed to get hold of one of Sinclair's hands just as the wire snapped.

"Your hand is sweaty and I m slipping!" Jones called to Sinclair. "I've gotta grab your hair, Johnny!"

"Grab ahead!" called Sinclair.

Jones managed to reach up with his free hand and take hold of his partner's thick locks. The strain on Sinclair's scalp was terrific. But finally the two stunt men were pulled to safety. When Jones let go a handful of Sinclair's hair stuck in his hand. Seeing this Sinclair let out a yell!

"You dirty so and so! Now I'll be baldheaded!" he screamed. "And just to save a lousy stunt man!"

Stunt men notoriously are underpaid. Often they risk their lives for as little as $25. The best pay Jones ever received for a stunt was $350. Then he had to turn over a racing automobile while it was going 65 miles an hour!

When deep-sea sailors get shore leave they are apt to spend their freedom piloting a rowboat about a lake. Stunt men are likely to be found diving off cliffs, hanging head down from high buildings, or shooting apples off each other's heads.

One of the classic pieces of foolishness indulged in by members of the suicide squad was the death-tempting ride Billy Jones and Eddie Diggins took over a cliff near Hollywood. Jones and Diggins were joint owners of an automobile they had salvaged from a junkyard, christened the "Overland Wonder"—the wo der being that it would function. They were rolling along on Mullholland Drive arguing about which could stick longest in a car going down a mountain side—not a mountain road.

"Betcha a buck I can stick longer than you can!" bet Diggins. "Betcha can't!" retorted Jones.

At that moment they were driving along the most dangerous section of the road. To the right of the highway was a young mountain-side which location men usually select when a spot is desired on which to film a really dangerous scene.

"Well, hang on!" yelled Jones, turning the car off the road and over the side.

Hundreds of feet below a picture was being made and somebody spied the car coming down the hill. Women shrieked and men gazed at the swaying, bumping auto with horror in their eyes. Then the watchers below saw one of the men go flying through the air to land in the top of a tree. The other stuck to the car half a minute longer, then he too was thrown just a second before the machine landed on its back and burst into flames.

The first man to leave the car was Diggins. But he swore to his dying day—he was killed a few months later—that he didn't jump; that he was thrown out when the car hit that big bump.

Although the mortality rate is pretty high among stunt men, serious accidents almost invariably are caused by others than the participants themselves. Somebody cuts a rope too soon, or waits too long to give a signal. As a rule an experienced stunt man will "walk away" (which is their way of saying one escapes unhurt) even when the man he depends upon does somethng wrong. This is attributable to the fact that good stunt men think fast, know the art of falling without being hurt, and keep cool in the face of great danger.

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An Indian Builds His Birch Bark Canoe

They launched forth in their primitive craft, which, as before intimated, was the once noted birch bark canoe built by the hunter agreeably to the exact rules of Indian art. Few, who have never seen and observed the process of constructing this canoe, which, for the thousands of years before the advent of the white man, was the only craft used by the aborigines in navigating the interior waters, have any idea how, from such seemingly fragile materials, and with no other tools than a hatchet, knife, and perhaps a bone needle, the Indian can construct a canoe so extremely light and at the same time so tough and durable.

In building his canoe, which is one of the greatest efforts of his mechanical skill, the Indian goes to work systematically. He first peels his bark from a middle-sized birch tree, and cuts it in strips five or six inches wide and twelve, fifteen, or twenty inches long, according to the length and size of the designed canoe. He then dries them thoroughly in the sun, after which he nicely scrapes and smooths off the outside. He next proceeds to soak these strips, which are thus made to go through a sort of tanning process, to render them tough and pliable, as well as to obviate their liability to crack by exposure to the sun. After the materials are thus prepared he smooths off a level piece of ground, and drives around the outside a line of strong stakes, so that the space within shall describe the exact form of the boat in contemplation.

Inside of these stakes he places and braces up the wet and pliable pieces of bark, beginning at the bottom and building up and bending into form the sides and ends, till the structure has attained the required height. In this situation it is left till it is again thoroughly dried and all the pieces become fixed in shape. A light inside framework is then constructed. The pieces of cured material are then numbered and taken down; when the architect, beginning at the bottom, lapping and sewing together the different pieces, proceeds patiently in his work, till the sides are built, the ends closed nicely up, and each piece lashed firmly to the framework, which though of surprising lightness, is made to serve as keel, knees, and ribs of the boat. Every seam and crevice is then filled with melted pitch.

The Indian then has his canoe fit for use; and he may well boast of a boat, which, for combined strength and lightness, and especially for capacity of burden, no art of the shipbuilder has ever been able to surpass, and which, if it has not already, might serve for a model of the best lifeboat ever constructed, in these days of boasted perfection in marine arts and improvements.—D. T. Thompson, in "Tales of the Canadian Border."

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