Gems of Peril

By HAZEL ROSS HAILEY.

SYNOPSIS.

Rich Mrs. Jupiter is robbed and murdered during the engagement party she gives her secretary, Mary Harkness. Mary's scapegrace brother, Eddie, who may have been in the house at the murder hour, is run down and killed.

Bowen of The Star discovers a race-track gambler and crook called The Fly to whom Eddie owed money. Bowen gives Mary a coat he found in the Jupiter house the night of the murder. It is her brother's. The butler recognizes it as having been worn by a "gate-crasher" he ejected that night.

Dirk forbids Mary to go on with the investigation because of the notoriety. They quarrel, make up, and Mary promises to marry him at once. While shop-ping for her trous- ... crashe ... later ... They ... room.

"On, ... Mike ... called him back. "Where is he?"

Mike jerked a thumb toward the door at the rear of the room—the one leading into the private dining room through which Mary had passed in leaving the place that afternoon.

"He's the one Jack's been hiding?" Mike nodded.

"We'll have to work fast," Bowen told Mary. It was plain that he was disconcerted by the news. His eyes glittered under their sleepy lids and the hand that plucked a fresh cigaret and lit it trembled. As for herself, Mary knew that she ought to feel terrified, but she did not. She was merely tremendously excited and filled with a kind of hard joy. Crisis was at hand!

"They took me through that room this afternoon," she whispered. "There were some men in there then. How does he look, The Fly?"

Bowen answered absently, "I don't know. What I'd give for the nerve to walk through that door and poke him one!" He flicked a match away.

"Oh, don't! He'd kill you," Mary gasped.

"Don't worry. I'm no Jack the Giant-killer. If he got away, he might go gunning for Jack, as a squealer. Can't let anything happen to Jack, the Newspaperman's Hope." He gnawed his underlip in a frenzy of concentration.

"You said you had an idea," Mary reminded him timidly.

"An idea for flushing him when we didn't know where he was," Bowen replied. "It's not necessary now."

"What was it?" she probed.

"Why—" he leaned forward and traced a pattern on the tablecloth with his forefinger thoughtfully. "Simply this: that crook would give his soul for another chance at that necklace. I know it. I'd bet on it. And I'll lay you another bet—I don't know who his playmates are in there, but ten to one they're hatching some scheme to get that necklace right now!"

"It's locked up!" Mary interposed quickly.

"No doubt," he answered dryly. "But there are ways of getting around that. Of course, if it's in a safety deposit box there isn't much to worry about—"

Alarm widened the girl's eyes.

"It isn't," she confessed. "It's in Mr. Jupiter's personal safe. He wouldn't take it to the bank. No use locking the door after the horse was stolen, he said."

Bowen nodded. "But that's no place for it. Somebody will be knocking him off one of these nights."

"I told him. Mr. Ruyther did, too. He just says, 'Let them come.'"

"Well, they say lightning doesn't strike twice in the same place. But just the same he's taking an awful chance.

Suddenly he sat up and slapped the table with his hand.

"By George!" he said. "Why not? Let him come and be damned to him. And while he's grabbing the necklace we'll grab him!"

Patiently he explained. "We haven't got anything on The Fly as it is. You and I may be ... witness," he went on. "Bookies, gamblers, touts. Can you see Mike there going on the witness stand and impressing a jury? They'd vote to hang him instead of the defendant.

"No, we've either got to spend a lot of time and money digging for evidence, finding the jewels, finding the car, and the man who drove it, and maybe not getting anything conclusive after all, or getting him red-handed, if we can. If we get too hot on his trail—hot enough to really get the dops on him—he may skip the country and then where would we be? Tied up with extradition proceedings and a long-drawn-out legal battle. We'd both be old and gray before we got a conviction.

"This trick isn't as dangerous as it sounds, either. And you've got to remember this—if we get him to come to us we can choose the time and be ready for him. If he comes when he pleases, we're stumped."

"But are you sure he'd make another try for it? I should think he'd be too frightened!"

"He's not frightened at all. That's the point! Why, do you think he's hiding from the police in there? He threw back his head and laughed. "Don't you believe it? Why, every cop on the beat knows Shay's is a hang-out for crooks. If Kane asked the metropolitan police to bring him in it's the first place in this district they'd look. He'd be safer standing on a street corner. No, he's keeping out of sight for another reason. And a good one.

"This is what I figure: you know criminals are as vain as actors. They're as proud of a good smooth job as any sandlot Hamlet. If they muff a trick they get razzed by the rest of the boys. And they're human—they don't like it.

"Now you remember what a ragging Kane gave this bird in the newspapers? Called him an amateur and a bungler, and said he pulled the biggest boner of all time in passing up that necklace? That must have got under The Fly's skin! He'd give his soul for a chance to make a fool out of Kane! Give him another chance at that necklace and he'll jump at it."

"But how?" Mary was all attention.

"Through Mike. Or Shay, perhaps. I can do a little discreet talking after you're gone. It'll go straight to the mark."

"Nothing must happen to excite Mr. Jupiter! That's doctor's orders."

"With the place surrounded? They'd probably nab him without a shot being fired. When can I see the old man and put it up to him?" he asked briskly. "I'm positive The Fly doesn't know he's under suspicion. As a matter of fact he isn't, except by you and me, and who else have you told?"

"Mr. Jupiter. And Dirk. And Spence. Oh, how stupid of me! I forgot to tell you—" She recounted the story of the buteler's encounter with the mysterious "gate-crashing" stranger that night Mrs. Jupiter was killed, and the strange coincidence of the coat.

Bowen seemed electrified at the news.

"There's identification when we need it!" he exclaimed gleefully.

Mary's nerves gave way. "Oh, let's call the police! I'd feel better if he was behind bars!"

"It wouldn't be easy, though," Bowen said. "There'd be a shoot-out, and somebody would get hurt. Why? Because you can burn in this state for one murder, and he's got two to answer for. Even if they took him, he might stay in jail and he might not. He'd never confess. He'd brazen it out. He knows he can beat the rap if he keeps his mouth shut. And once he knows we're onto him every other way is closed to us. We'd have to convict him in court, or let him go. If he got off free you'd have to accept the fact—and like it. There wouldn't be anything more you could do."

Mary began reluctantly to feel the strength of his reasoning.

"But he may get away anyhow," she faltered.

"Sure. Maybe. But there are more powerful chains than the ones you see sometimes. Pride, revenge, cupidity. Rank, stupid vanity. If we try, we can make him want to stick around! He won't run away. On the contrary, we won't be able to shake him. If he acts on his own initiative, he'll have the advantage of us, surprise us. But if he acts when we choose we'll be ready for him. Ever hear of strategy?"

The girl's eyes were soft, gentle, as they rested on him. There was something endearing about his very earnestness.

"You're funny," she said gently. "You sound—wise. I hope you are."

"I hope to tell you I am!" he said. "Listen to me, girl, could you beg, borrow or steal that necklace for one evening?"

It took her breath away. "Oh, I don't think so!" she gasped. "What for?"

"I'd like to rub his nose in it. It'd be like a red flag to a bull. Tantalize him into action before he has time to plan."

"What do you want me to do?" Mary asked. "Wear it where he can see it?"

He nodded. "Let him sniff blood, and then you could run home quick with the necklace. You'd be protected every step of the way."

"Oh, but that would be insane. And what if I lose it, or it was stolen?"

Bowen clung to the idea. "That would get action, though. We haven't got all summer to fool with this cluck. You're getting married pretty soon, aren't you?"

Mary said "Heavens, I'd almost forgotten—I'm getting married tomorrow!"

Bowen sat as if struck.

"You can get married any time! This is important. We've only got a few days—hours—minutes, maybe. But Hell—if you haven't got the nerve—"

Mary brought her small fist down on the table with a bang.

"I've got the nerve for anything that will help get that man!" she cried. "If you'll promise to protect that necklace, I'll get it, somehow!"

A door opened at the rear of the room and footsteps approached. Bowen's eyes narrowed suddenly; his face became tense and set. Mary did not turn her head, but watched him with dilated eyes.

"All right, Barrymore," he muttered under his breath. "Now's your big moment. Here comes The Fly. Let me see you do your stuff!"

(To be continued.)

This lady says her curtains look like new

A letter from a lady in Quebec tells about the wonderful success she had freshening and recoloring her old living room curtains. "They were so grey and dull looking they made the whole room look shabby. Yet they were perfectly good and I couldn't afford new ones. A neighbor told me about a new kind of tints called Diamond Tints, made by the makers of Diamond Dyes. I know the splendid quality of Diamond Dyes—have used them often for dyeing dark garments. My neighbor explained that Diamond Tints are for lighter shades ... I got a ... my curtains ... ter. When she asked ... ins! They ... d fresh as ... cheer up the whole room!"

DIAMOND TINTS
AT ALL DRUG STORES

In Defense of Levity

The serious page I only scan,
The light I read with zeal,
Just why, in truth, should any man
Continued sadness feel?

If by being so we could improve
The earth and all about it,
Temper the powers that grimly move,
And all the evil, rout it.

Why then 'twould pay to moan and weep,
Favor sackcloth and ashes,
Seek out and climb the stony steep,
While all about us crashes.

But when, alas, such course will lead
To deeper ills and sorrows,
Let's seek of joy to speak and read,
And hope for brighter morrows.

—Clarence Milligan, in the Chicago Tribune.

Miracle of Broadcasting

(Sir Alfred Ewing at the British Association.)

"Do you ever reflect, when you pick and choose among the multitude of airs and voices, or shut out all from your solitude of thought, that they are still there, physically present, individual, distinct, crowding yet not interfering, besetting you though you do not perceive them, silent until you determine that one or another shall catch your ear? Go where you will, to the ocean or the wilderness or the Pole, you cannot escape that vast company of attendants; they come to you, unheard, unseen, from every quarter of the globe with a swiftness no other messengers approach. Is any fairy tale so strange as that reality? In all the wizardry of science surely there is nothing more wonderful than this.

Not So Dusty

Willie was on the hunt for information. He had been set to entertain a portly visitor, who, having no inquisitive children of his own, had answered all his questions with unusual patience and good-nature.

"And what," was Willie's 198th question, "are houses made of?"

"Houses," replied the stout man, "are made of bricks."

"And what are engines made of?"

"Engines, my little fellow, are made of iron.'

"And what is bread made of?"

"Flour." Then, as the anticipated light step and soft rustle of Willie's sister sounded outside, he added, "Now, Willie, I can answer only one more question."

Willie decided that it should be a good one. After a pause, he asked: "Well, what are we made of?"

"Dust and earth, my son!"

"My word," said Willie, "they must have made a whacking big hole when they took you out!'

A Thread

Mark how there still has run enwoven
from above,
Thro' thy life's darkest woof, the golden thread of love.

Mr. B.—"My business was run down; I'm having it wound up by a receiver."

Mrs. B.—"That's good. I suppose it will run all right after its wound up."

Quality Has No Substitute

"SALADA" GREEN TEA

"Fresh from the Gardens" 257

Cost and Cure Of Soil Erosion

(By Arthur M. Hyde, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, in American Forests Aug., '32.)

Some pages in human history reflect no credit upon mankind. First in importance is that page which describes man's treatment of the soil. Man was placed in a garden. He has transformed vast areas of it in to desert. He has destroyed the cover on thousands of acres; he has laid waste wide stretches of pleasant country; he has made human life all but impossible in many places. Mediterranean nations now eke out a bare existence where once they maintained a flourishing civilization. The Orient, notably China, provides the classic example of how whole regions can be devastated by the destruction of forest and resulting soil erosion.

We, too, in America have inherited a garden. We have been too busy with our works to take stock of our possessions, what has been or is now happening to them. It is time to give serious thought, from a national standpoint, to the land. Our farm lands are impoverished by erosion, and consequent abandonment. In the more arid regions where we supplemented rainfall with irrigation and boastetd that we had made the desert to bloom, by overgrazing the grasslands and by cutting and burning the forests, we have endangered the very existence of the engineering works of which we boasted. More, we are threatening the future of the people as ground waters are lowered and cities must go miles for their water supply.

Erosion is the eating away of the soil, caused, as a rule, by unrestrained water flowing downhill, transporting stones, sand, and fine soil matetrial, with its invaluable organic matter and available plant food, and depositing it on the surface of lower-lying areas or in the streams. Often, it is the coarse sand, boulders, and stones carried down by moving water which are deposited on the fertile land of another farm

This sort of erosion, largely man-made, can be measured in years. According to the erosion experts, it takes nature not less than 400 years to build up one inch of the rich top-soil characteristic of the rolling parts of the Corn Belt. By planting corn continuously in that area, man has permitted erosion to remove that inch of rich topsoil in from 10 to 50 years, depending on the steepness of slope. The average depth of topsoil in much of this region is only about seven inches. In other words, 2800 years of soilbuilding by nature is utterly destroyed by man in little more than two generations.

Man achieves his fatal efficiency as a destroyer by processes which are entirely preventable or controllable. He cuts off the forest over large areas. He burns the ground cover, exposing the land to the washing of surface water He overgrazes the original prairies and by destroying much of the grass vegetation, leaves the soil to the mercy of the running water; and he plows the slopes against rather than with the contour of the land

All the crops in the United States annually remove about six billion lbs. of plant food from the soil. Erosion annually removes about 21 times as much. Already in this country 21,000,000 acres have gone entirely out of cultivation because of destructive erosion. This exceeds the total area of arable land in Japan proper.

But the transportation of great masses of sand, silt, or rocks from one place to another is merely the first cost to the nation. Other and larger costs suceed that. Destructive erosion changes the water relationships of a whole locality. It works in this way: Suppose the whole Lake States region, for example, were covered with a concrete floor, slightly sloping towards the lakes and streams. Every drop of rain or melted snow would rush immediately towards the lakes and streams. We would have no ground water; no water for plants; no steady flow for waterpower; and the streams would rise rapidly after each rainfall and subside to nothing in a short time.

Normally, part of a rainfall may run rapidly off towards streams and lakes, but a very large part is absorbed into the soil, where it forms the sheets of ground water, from which we derive water for wells and springs. It is this part of the railfall which sustains life for both plants and animals. The capacity of the soil to absorb and retain water depends in considerable measure upon the presence of humus organic matter in the soil. If a forest is cut off and burned, if a field is allowed to lose its topsoil and the contained organic matter, the absorptive capacity of the soil is reduced.

The water resources or water capital of the country can be regarded as of two parts, the currency and the reserve. The rain, snow, and dew are the currency. The water accumulated within the ground, within reach of growing plants, forms the reserve. It is this reserve water supply which makes streamflow possible, farming feasible, and sustains production and population the the greater part of the settled country.

Some years ago the U.S. Department of Agriculture examined about 11,000 wells in ten central States. In more than half of the wells examined, the water level had dropped on an average 14 feet during the 80 years of settlement. Consumption of water for crop and animal production, and for the use of man and animals, accounts for only 30 per cent. of the actual loss of water indicated by the lowering of the wells The dominant cause of that depleted water supply is the loss of rain and snow water through surface run-off unretarded by adequate cover, particularly during the non growing season. The depletion of our reserve water capital, upon which the agriculture of this country depends, is therefore intimately connected with soil erosion.

Let me complete this indictment of erosion by briefly listing these additional consequences: By depositing silt in the streams, erosion pollutes them, and menaces public health, fish life and fishing industries. Erosion can be held largely accountable for disastrous floods, on the one hand, and drought on the other. Silt deposited in major streams can render great investments in power and irrigation reservoirs useless after a very few years. It can likewise impede navigation during low stages of water and aggravate flood conditions at high stages.

Much of this damage to our soil and water supply can be prevented. We can so alter cultural methods in farming as to increase percolation of water into the soil, returning to the soil every available bit of organic matter. We can make it a matter of general policy to discourage the cultivation of overgrazing of lands too steep or escape erosion except when protected by a cover of vegetation. It may be wise to develop our National Forest policy to provide for maintenance of a dense forest or grass cover on critical watersheds. When finances permit, it may be wise to extend our froest policy to cover soils subject to excessive erosion.

In part, an individual problem for the farmer, erosion is also in large part a problem for community, state, and national action. In the permanent improvement of water ways and water supply, in the conservation of soil resources, in our attempts to achieve a balanced agricultural production, and to maintain an industrial civilization, our efforts must begin on the land. It is for that reason that a sound national policy of land utilization—of which erosion control is a vital part—is so basic to a solution of our major agricultural problems.

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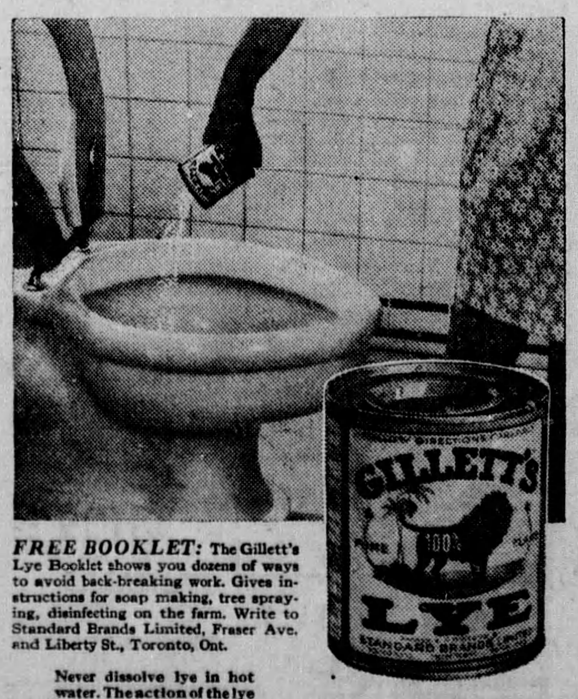

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