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B437

The Sealed Room

By Edwin Baird.

CHAPTER II.

That Tom was pleased thereat denoted no lack of sympathy. He was pleased because he believed he could help her; pleased, too, because he at last had found a person who surely would not spurn his friendly overtrust.

He turned and stepped quickly to the box-office window and inquired concerning seats.

The box-office man consulted his files, and flipped two tickets beneath the brass grille.

"Two in the twelfth row's the best I got left. Five dollars, if you want 'em."

Tom went them and, plucking from his pocket a bank roll comparable to a yellow Aberdeen turnip, peeled therefrom a five-dollar bill, exchanged it for the tickets, and walked toward the girl, who was now conversing with a "Whitty-Girly" with grass, her attitude indicating ailed thought. She looked up over her shoulder, saw him, and, whether intentionally or not, he never knew, edged away and stood with her back to him.

Approaching, he doffed his straw hat and cleared his throat.

"I hope you will pardon me, I happened, maybe—you might——" He seen to have a pair of tickets—and I stammered into an embarrassed pause. She was looking at him inquiringly and quite unafraid.

"Haven't you made a mistake?" she asked with just a hint of amusement in her eyes, and she stepped forward to greet a stocky young man hurrying in from the street. This person possessed a prominent jaw, a diamond horseshoe, stickpin, flashy clothes, and a scowl of singular malice, which he promptly directed at Tom's direction.

Tom conceived an instant dislike for him, and departed swiftly, wondering "how on earth a girl like her could take up with such a roughneck," with masculine egotism quite forgetting that he had expected a "girl like her" to take up with himself, a perfect stranger! Vigorously destroying his theatre tickets, he scattered the fragments underfoot, and looked for a taxicab. Finding none, he started afoot for a street cars. His one desire was to board the next train for home.

His quest had failed, he was sure of that now, and it was a grinding disappointment. He had followed the rules laid down by the master, and it had proved futile. There was no romance in the city, no mystery nor adventure. He wished he was home with Yecam, if for no other reason than to burn the "Trimmed Lamp."

A street car rattled to a stop at the corner. He climbed aboard; and a minute later he was being jolted noisily along North Clark Street.

Meanwhile, the Girl with the Wistful Eyes and her escort had not moved from the spot where Tom had left them—and the curtain was up on the first act, too.

Both were visibly perturbed about something. The sporty young man was talking loudly, harshly, garnishing his speech with slang and stressing with violent, with indignant protests. Her voice, mingling with his, was soft, low toned and gentle, and her slender hand, touching his sleeve, was eloquent with tender appeal. She looked beseechingly into his wrathful face, entreating him to do a thing which he, arrarently, had no intention of doing.

"I tell you I won't!" he blustered, jerking his arm away. "You must think I'm crazy——"

"Listen, Frank——"

"Listen, nothing! We're missin' the best o' the show. Comin' in, or ain't you?"

"Frank, won't you please——"

"No, I tell you—no! You can stay here if you want to. I'm goin' in." And he swung on his heel and strode inside the theatre.

She took a faltering step after him, her hand outflung in hopeless entreaty, then stopped, her shoulders drooping, and watched him go from her; and then, as she at last realized that he was not coming back, her wistful eyes filled suddenly with tears of regret, and shame, and self-pity. Excepting a policeman, leaning against the box-office window and surveying her with tepid curiosity, she was quite alone in the rotunda; but she had the feeling that a million eyes were staring at her—a deserted, humiliated girl. And, panic-struck, turned and fled to the street. In a few moments she was on a northbound street car, traveling the selfsame route taken by Tom, not ten minutes ago.

Tom had journeyed ten blocks or more before perceiving that he, in his haste, had taken the wrong street car; he was travelling north when he ought to be going south.

Alighting at the next corner, he beheld a milieu of garish saloons, cheap hotels, and white-front restaurants. The same note was struck here as in the down-town district, only it had a more brazen tone.

He cast his gaze along the noisy thoroughfare, and it was then he saw the shabby gilt sign: Wah Sing Lo.

It adorned the second-floor level of a dreary brick building, and over the dingy door below, a yellow-and-red glass sign, illuminated by a flickering gas jet, proclaimed the upper region of a Chinese eating place.

Now, Tom McKay, for all his periodical trips to Chicago and his thirty years of bachelorhood, had never tasted Oriental food. Moreover, his train would not leave for at least two hours. He crossed the street, ascended the narrow staircase, and entered the establishment of Wah Sing Lo.

It was a queer-smelling, dimly lit place, and, since the hour was unripe for North Clark Street, it was totally devoid of patrons. Tom took a seat at one of the greasy marble-topped tables, and a shriveled, wrinkled little Chinaman unwrapped himself from a high stool behind the fly-specked cigar case, padded across the floor in a catlike fashion, and stood awaiting orders.

Tom drew a coffee-stained menu from between a bottle of tomato ketchup and a vinegar cruet, glanced about him, then bent a puzzled gaze upon the foreign words on the bill of fare. And then, for no apparent reason, there came between him and these meaningless words the dark blue eyes of a girl, and the eyes seemed wistful and full of sadness.

Strange, truly! And yet not half so strange as that which swiftly followed; he passed his hand before his eyes as if to erase the vision, and when he drew his hand away he saw, not two rods distant, the girl herself!

There could be no doubt of it. He would have known her in a million. She stood near the cigar case, glancing about in a frightened way, and even in that moment of mental turmoil he remarked an increase in her nervousness.

Himself agitated, he resumed contemplation of the menu, affecting to be oblivious to her. But his heart was pounding tumultuously, and the uninviting room wherein he sat was suddenly glorified. Her inexplicable presence had changed everything.

He looked up into the expressionless face of the Chinaman, and smiled in sheer exuberance: "Are you Wah Sing Lo?"

The Mongol nodded silently. His face was a yellow mask.

"Well, Mr. Lo, I think somebody wants to see you over there."

Without so much as a glance toward the girl, Mr. Lo answered tonelessly:

"I knew. She wait all light. What you want—huh?"

"See what she wants first," said Tom.

Still the Chinaman displayed no interest.

"Nevy-mine-gad. What you want eat—huh?"

Tom flung the menu on the table and half rose from his chair. At the same moment the girl came toward them, and when she drew near a new delight surged in his veins—for she couldn't disguise the recognition which leapt to her eyes when she saw him.

Ignoring his presence, however, she addressed the Chinaman. At their first words Tom saw that they knew each other.

"Lo," she said in her soft, musical voice, "I've come for Dora. Where is she?"

Lo was swabbing the table with a dirty towel, his back toward her.

"Nelly mind Dola. Dola all light. You mind own busine.s."

"I've come to take Dora home, Lo."

"Mind own business."

"Is she up-stairs?"

"Mind own tamn——"

At this junction Tom entered matters—and entered zestfully. Like the jaws of a steel trap his sinewy fingers closed on the Chinaman's shriveled neck.

"Speak civilly to this lady," he ordered, "or I'll shake the life out of you!"

With a dexterous movement Lo wriggled free and backed hurriedly away, his yellow face livid with anger and fright. He pointed a trembling talon at the door.

"Get out!" he croaked hoarsely. "Cheap skate! Get out!"

(To be continued.)

Serviceable Crockery.

Many a housewife who daily listens to the crashing clatter of china breaking in the kitchen will see something beyond humor in the suggestion of this housewife.

"John," said Mrs. Jenkins, looking up from the evening paper, "you know how many dishes Kate has broken lately?"

"Yes," replied John. "What of it?"

"Well," continued his wife, "there is something here in the paper about steel plates. I don't known just what they are, but I should think they would be indestructible, and the very thing we need."

Practically all of the late oats in Saskatchewan were damaged by the frosts of September 9, 10 and 11, but comparatively no damage was done to the wheat.

Reconstruction and Home Folks.

A great question—the greatest of the war—depends for its solution upon the folks at home. They, more than soldiers or military authorities, have to do with the successful working out of that wonderful thing of which every one talks and about which so very few seem to have even one definites idea—Reconstruction. It is not true that every one firmly believes that with the coming of peace there will also arrive that other great blessing, reconstruction? Is it not also true that with this placid assurance there exists the other assurance that some one else is managing that problem? No one feels personally responsible, but each one feels sure that some one else is working hard on this stupendous puzzle.

There are many reasons why every individual interested in this war should take a personal interest in reconstruction, and never allow that interest to lag until he has found the fountain head of reconstruction activity—either found it or created it. To begin with, individual homes must be thoroughly and consciously reconstructed. Habits must be reformed or abolished according to whether they are required for the model home. The men returning from overseas are bringing back thoughts and feelings to which they were utter strangers before enlisting. Most of them have grown, mentally and spiritually, by leaps and bounds. Have their women folks and their children kept pace? Will they understand what the men have gained. Will they appreciate its value? Will they agree or sneeringly criticise the attitude of the men towards life? Will they have such a broad outlook themselves that they can be both patient and tolerant with what seems a misguided view and finally either persuade back to the best way of their own narrow views? forsake their

There are many reforms which should be well on the way to being worked out before the men come back. They are reforms for which women are plainly responsible. No one has a better right than women to take full charge of every form of legislation affecting children. Baby welfare as a national requirement, instead of a local manifestation of sanity on the part of parents, is a form of reconstruction that leads straight to the doors of women.

The establishment of a national Board of Health belongs to the good times coming in the Reconstruction Period, and the responsibility for its establishment rests naturally on mothers of the land. The same is true of the entire educational system. Laws relating to food are women's work. There are what might be called housecleaning work which any reconstruction work would be hopeless and they should be wisely planned and started at once. In both France and England many of these reforms are already under way. made necessary and possible by the violent overturning of old methods found inadequate in war. Those countries have waged war and begun reconstruction simultaneously. Their women are cognizant of all these problems, and working on them honestly. Is there not a too general feeling that the absolutely necessary reconstruction will drop from the sky or come as the result of earnest wishing? The answer to any such attitude is the question: "How did the things reconstruction is to replace come into being—by wishing or, worse yet, by indifference?" Were the women responsible for them? No. But today the women are substituting at home as well as filling their own place. Have they begun substituting in the vital places?

The Crosses.

The little lonely crosses the crosses low and white,
They haunt me most in the silver hour
That lies against the night;
Or when the rose-dusk dawn comes with a star for candlelight.

The little lonely crosses in fields so far away
They cast a shadow on my path—
And, take which road I may,
It follows—follows—follows—
Throughout the livelong day.

O little lonely crosses that gentle hands have made,
You mean to us forevermore
The price that has been paid
For a heritage of Freedom,
And a people unafraid.

So, as a Pilgrim to his shrine, in dreams I rise and go
To find the poppied place of sleep,
And the crosses, row on row;
The crosses carved with names beloved,
The crosses white and low.

The Wrong Kind of Powder.

Madame Botchkavera, Colonel of the Russian Women's "Battalion of Death," has been describing to an Englishwoman her method of selecting recruits. Having obtained permission to form a battalion she speedily found herself overwhelmed with offers to serve. Elimination was necessary, and she told how one of her methods was to moisten the tip of a finger and draw it across the cheek of the would-be Amazon. If any powder or rouge became evident the candidate was rejected forthwith. By this and other Gideon-like devices she chose 2,000 stalwart women from over 15,000 applicants.

Syrup From Fruits.

Apple syrup made from apple juice contains about sixty per cent. of sugar. A gallon of apple syrup made from seven gallons of apple juice has approximately the sweetening value of three to four pounds of cane sugar.

Syrup from apples, pears and grapes can be used in cooking and on the table to replace sugar to a great extent. Try it with baked apples or pears. A little cinnamon adds to the flavor. This syrup is suitable for use on hot cakes and in making gingerbread. With ginger and butter it makes a flavory hot sauce for puddings. When the family demands sweets the inventive housekeeper will discover many other uses for her fruit syrups.

Cider Jelly.—Sweet cider jelly can be made without sugar. Boil apple syrup until the jelling point is reached. This jelly makes an excellent relish with meat.

Fruit butters can be made without sugar. Add one quart of apple syrup or grape syrup to one quart of fruit pulp. Boil down to a thick buttery consistency and seal hot. This is a tart butter and an excellent relish. If a sweeter butter is wanted add sugar, or molasses when these are available, reheat and seal. If there is no fruit syrup on hand proceed as follows in making fruit butter: Cook pecled and pitted fruit in enough fruit juice to prevent scorching; press through a sieve; to each quart of this pulp add three quarts of apple or grape juice and to each of the mixture add two teaspoons of ground cinnamon and one of ground cloves and proceed as above.

Fruit Preserved in Fruit Juice.—Any fruits may be preserved in grape juice, but apples, pears and sweet plums are particularly good. Boil six quarts of grape juice in an open preserving kettle until it is reduced to four quarts. Have the fruit washed and pared, and, if apples or pears, quartered and cored. Put the prepared fruit into a preserving kettle and cover generously with the boiled grape juice. Boil gently until the fruit is clear and tender, then put into sterilized jars.

For preserving in cider, prepare apples and pears in the same way, cover with boiled cider (boiled until reduced one-half) and cook slowly until clear and tender.

Personal Efficiency.

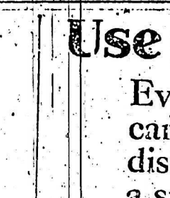
How many of you have read Prof. Grimshaw's new book, "Personal Efficiency?" There are heaps of good things in it, but one can't help wondering where a mere man secured so much knowledge of women's work and their way of doing it.

The good housekeeper works according to a time-table and plan, figured out beforehand, with reference to the various tasks to be performed, and the time, money and assistance at her disposal.

She saves much work and many a step by attending to things promptly. When she leaves her bedroom in the morning she turns the bed clothes back to air them while she prepares and takes her breakfast, instead of leaving the room untouched and wasting all the time during the morning meal. Before leaving the bathroom she wipes around the washstand, so that work will not want much more afterward.

Many a woman starts meals with table-laying. She should first get the fire all that has to be cooked or warmed; during this process she will find ample time to attend to the table.

The efficient housekeeper is through long before others, with much less to do and more means to do it with. have finished their task. The good housekeeper is through on time; the poor one only in time—an entirely different matter.



Use the left over meat.

Even the smallest portions can be made into appetizing dishes when combined with a small quantity of

BOVRIL

Food Control Corner

The world is apt to forget that there are 10,000,000 people, Belgian and French, who have to be fed and clothed by the sheer spirit of what we call humanity in the rest of the white peoples. Improving war news has not altered the position of most of them. There are children who have never known anything but the state of white slavery. Over 200,000 tons of shipping secured by arrangement from the Swedish Government for use in non-war zones, have been devoted to carrying in the coming year the food and clothing which we must send from this side of the Atlantic to this trampled on but unconquerable people. The following foodstuffs will have to be transported across the Atlantic in the next twelve months.

Wheat, barley, rye and corn for bread purposes	42	200,000 tons
Beans	2	200,000 bus.
Rice	3	200,000 lbs.
Corned beef	26	200,000 lbs.
Pork products	277	200,000 lbs.
Soap	66	200,000 lbs.
Coffee	26	200,000 lbs.
Food for children (No estimate)		
Cocoa	18	200,000 lbs.
Condensed milk	55	200,000 lbs.
Sugar	40	200,000 lbs.

At best, the cost will be nearly $280,000,000. The Dutch governments, through agents in Belgium, will see that these supplies are not misused by the German army.

How will the fair price work? In essence it is this: Each municipal area having its committee, will take exactly as in a public inquiry this it will learn the average price at which merchants buy. local factors into consideration, the committee will then decide on a fair price which the consumer would pay. This must give the retailer a reasonable profit. It the findings do not conform to the notion of the majority of consumers in the district the means either of a fresh committee decision, or of mediation revised in the light of knowledge. Is not this a step further than has been done in Canada?

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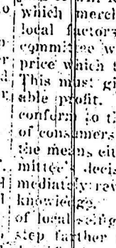

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