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THE THIEF

BY EDEN PHILLPOTTS.

PART II.—(Cont'd.)

Susan ministered to Joanna and fetched her round; and then young Tom came in again to hear the fatal news, and his father spoke like the trump of doom to the sinner. He thanked heaven as the poor fox hunter was taken from the evil to come and hadn't lived to see his daughter a thief, and then, after a lot of fierce justice that fell like hail on the ears of the frantic woman, he inclined to mercy as his way always was.

"You're young yet, and for your sake," he said, "and for your mother's sake, and your father's memory, I'm going to spare you, Joanna. I say this in the solemn minute, Joanna Toms. Be out of my house in five minutes, and I won't proceed against you. The awful wickedness you've done shall be hid in your heart and ours, and I pray God to have mercy upon you and turn your soul to righteousness before it's too late. And you can send for your box in the morning."

PART III.

Then she spoke. "But I say here afore you all, and I'll swear to it in the name of my dead father, that I never touched one of them things and I don't know more than you how they got in my box."

"I could wish for your peace and hope of heaven you'd take another line," replied her master, but she only shook her head. She was calm now and steadfast as a rock. Then she went up to her room, under the roof of Four Ways, took her packet of letters and went straight away out of the farm without another word to any of 'em.

But the night work wasn't done with, for while the girl tramped home, with death in her heart, no doubt, Thomas Turtle debated on the matter.

To her parents' great astonishment, Susan stuck up for her ruined friend, and despite the glaring facts, vowed that Joanna never could have done it.

"This beyond her nature," she said. "And I wouldn't believe it if an angel said she'd stole our things. She couldn't—she's not built to do it. There's a wicked plot hatched against her, for she could tell a lie, or act a part. I never knew such a downright truthful girl in my life."

"Then, if not her, who?" asked Mr. Turtle. "Who under this roof would seek to ruin her this way?"

"But Susan couldn't tell. 'I'll never believe it. We've got her word,' she answered. 'And her word's her bond. And God will right her,' she declared.

But Farmer was impatient at this, and who shall blame him? He thought he'd been uncommon Christian about it and gave it as his opinion that few would have acted so kindly as he had. They talked to no purpose and was just going to their beds when old Nat Lucas, head man at Four Ways, came running in to 'em from his tallet, where he slept over the stables. He was clad in his trousers and shirt and no more.

"God's goodness!" he said. "Us be afire! 'Tis the new ricks in the corner of Jacob's field, or else 'tis the cow byre under."

They ran to the door and there, sure enough, they see red fire blazing not half a mile off and lighting the dark sky. The farm sloped down to Hart vale, and on the edge of the hill, where was Jacob's field—a five-acre croft under wheat that year—rose up a great glare with flame flickering through it. The night was still and starless and the blaze arose steady out of the dark.

Farmer got into his boots so quick as he could and Susan ran and roused her brother, who'd gone to bed, and Lucas called up another man that dwelt hard by. Then they went down to find the two brave wheat stacks, only piled a fortnight before, was both alight and burning to the fire.

They could do naught, for the fire had got a start of 'em and their buckets of water only turned to a puff of steam afore they reached the trouble. Indeed, none durst go very near, for the heat was tremendous, and, even so, young Tom got his mustache very near burned off and Nat Lucas was singed from his scant thatch to his knees all down one side.

I don't think in the full flush of the fight, nor yet after, that anybody

ever connected Joanna with their great disaster. Certainly if any heart harbored the thought, it was on no lip till other things happened; but at cocklight Farmer Turtle went down to his burned-out corn ricks, and Nat Lucas with him, and it was Nat, poking about in the char, as found what threw a cruel, ugly light on the job. For he came across a piece of paper half burned with writing upon it, and he also picked up a handkercher, and he gave them to Thomas Turtle.

Farmer looked at 'em, then put 'em in his pocket and stood like a stone man staring at the rising sun. He could hardly believe his own eyes; but there weren't a shadow of doubt, and, after he'd sent Nat off to Lower Town for the police, he went to his house place and called his wife and put the handkercher in her hand.

"Who's be that?" he asked. She looked at it and answered: "One belonging to Joanna Toms. There's 'J. T.' worked in the corner. Susan gave her six for her birthday last July."

"And read what be on this scrap of paper, mother, please."

Mrs. Turtle took the burned sheet and read so much as was left to read. "My darling Jo: I may get home a bit after Christmas and then with luck it's—"

"Turn over," said Mr. Turtle. "His wife done so and read:

"No more sea for me then, but farming and a cottage and Mrs. Joanna Truscott. Then we'll—"

"Found alongside where the stacks was," said Farmer. "That's how I've been paid for my mercy. But now 'tis all over and she'll go where she belongs—wicked, young devil."

And that night Joanna slept in clink at Ashburton lockup.

She stood her trial at the assizes and the case went against her from the first. Everything came out, of course, and to them skilled in such affairs, who only look at the facts and don't take no count of human character, there could be but one end of it. She said, so far as the things in her box were concerned, that she knew naught about 'em and had never put 'em there; while, as to the stacks, she could only swear that she knew naught about 'em neither. She said that when she come to look at her lover's letters one, the last, was missing from her parcel, and, as for the handkerchief, she said she'd never used any of 'em, but kept 'em stored among her treasures as being too good to use, and for that matter the other five was found in her box, and they had not been used. Her mother took her oath that Joanna came home, on the night she was sent off from Four ways, by 11 o'clock, and Nat Lucas swore he'd first caught sight of the fire through the little window in his sleeping place at a bit after 10, so the time fitted exactly right, and nobody in his senses ever doubted that she'd gone off in her rage and set fire to the ricks on her way home. It was a simple, everyday sort of arson, according to the law, with everything in its place, all very orderly and according to human nature and no mystery anywhere. But arson is a very serious business, as the culcrit found, for she got three years and no sympathy from anybody on earth but her mother and Susan Turtle.

The poor girl vanished accordingly, and when Bob Truscott came home from sea after the New Year and went first thing to the lodge where Mrs. Toms still dwelt, he didn't surprise her by no means so much as she surprised him. 'Twas a very cruel shock for the poor chap when he listened to the girl's downfall and heard she was put away for three mortal years. He was a good sort of man and wouldn't believe a word. In truth, he properly raved about it and didn't rest, hand or foot, till he'd got permission to see Joanna. And he did see her, with two policemen in the room, and found her calm and steadfast, but thin and long ways less beautiful than when last he'd said good-bye.

She told him she was innocent, and no doubt 'twas a great light in her darkness that he believed it, and swore he'd wait for her and leave no stone unturned meantime to right her against the world.

So he left her and took work on the land not far from Ashburton; but as for righting her, or doing anything to clear up the business at Four

Ways, of course he soon found that no power of man could work that.

"'Tis a case for God Almighty," said Mrs. Toms, "and you know she's innocent, Bob, and so do I, and so do Mrs. Blades—her that was Susan Turtle. She was a very faithful friend to Joanna and never believed a word against her to the last. And, trusting in Providence, same as I do and same as my husband always did. I believe a time must come when Joanna will be cleared."

Mrs. Toms, you see, had great faith, and she was so well thought upon that, despite Joanna's disgrace, none turned away from her mother, though none but felt only too sure that things were, as they seemed to be. For if Joanna had looked to be married before long, what more terrible likely than that she wanted a little bit of money against her young man's return and had took this wicked way to come by it?

(To be continued.)

A Test of Nerve.

While hunting in the Canadian Rockies one day a woman showed a rare presence of mind. With her guide and companion, she was spending the day on a high mountain waiting for a grizzly bear that they had sighted the day before. About five o'clock in the afternoon they saw the bear far down the mountain feeding on moss berries, and they immediately started on a wide detour to stalk him. After they had dropped down to a lower altitude they followed a little ledge round the steep mountain.

Meanwhile bruin had changed his plans, and was climbing the mountain to the same shelf on which the hunters were walking. As they made their way cautiously round a projecting point, with the woman in the lead, they met him face to face at a distance of less than thirty paces. The moment he came into full view the woman threw her rifle to her shoulder and took a quick shot. The bear crumpled up and rolled far down the mountain side, and when the hunters reached him he was stone-dead. What would have happened if the shot had missed is hard to conjecture. No hunter would choose to shoot a grizzly at thirty paces. The guide was well armed, but if the woman's shot had failed, he would have been at too close quarters to have done anything effective. It all happened so quickly that there was no chance for comment or advice.

Big Medical Fees.

The \$60,000 fee said to have been paid to Dr. Deblet, the famous French surgeon, for attending the late King of Greece, although a big sum as medical payments go, by no means establishes a record.

A famous British physician, Sir Morell Mackenzie, received just about double this—\$100,000, with extras for travelling and hotel expenses—for attending the Emperor Frederick of Germany.

Dr. Lorenz, of Vienna, the "bloodless surgeon," was paid \$160,000 by Phillip J. Armour, the Chicago "meat king," for curing his little daughter of hip disease. But then he was detained in America for four months over the job.

Another famous bloodless surgeon, Dr. James Gale, was offered \$250,000 by a wealthy patient suffering from lameness, on the principle of "no cure, no pay." Gale accepted the conditions, effected a complete and permanent cure, and received his fee—probably the biggest on record.

The first Baron Dimsdale, for a very brief attendance on the Empress Catherine of Russia, received his title, \$50,000 in cash, an annuity of \$2,500 a year for life, and \$5,000 for the expenses of his journey between London and St. Petersburg and back.

The tongue of a giraffe measures, on an average, two feet in length.

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Harnessing the Sun for Power.

Any physicist will tell you that this talk about converting the static electricity of the atmosphere into dynamic current is just silly nonsense. Pure bunk, in other words. But the question of transforming the energy of sunshine into electrical energy is wholly different, and the hope that this will eventually be accomplished economically to furnish power for running machinery, etc., is not without substantial basis.

Prof. A. A. Campbell-Swinton urges that, by methods analogous to those which have produced such fruitful results in wireless communication, it may be possible to convert the energy of sunshine directly into usable electrical energy.

The glowing surface which the sun presents to us (considering it as a flat disk) has the enormous area of 585,750,000 square miles, each square foot of which emits energy equivalent to 12,500 continuous horsepower. The average radiant energy delivered on the surface of the earth at noon on a clear day in middle latitudes is about 5,000 horsepower per acre.

"Keep Sweet and Keep Movin'."

Hard to be sweet when the throng is dense,
When elbows jostle and shoulders crowd;
Easy to give and to take offence
When the touch is rough and the voice is loud;
"Keep to the right" in the city's throng;
"Divide the road" on the broad highway;
There's one way right when everything's wrong;
"Easy and fair goes far in a day."
Just
"Keep sweet and keep movin'."

The quick taunt answers the hasty word—
The lifetime chance for a "help" is missed;
The muddiest pool is a fountain stirred,
A kind hand clinched makes an ugly fist.
When the nerves are tense and the mind is vexed,
The spark lies close to the magazine;
Whisper a hope to the soul perplexed—
Banish the fear with a smile serene—
Just

"Keep sweet and keep movin'."
—Robert J. Burdette.

France to Preserve Battlefields.

Certain sections of the French battle fronts, including dugouts and trenches, are to be preserved as historic monuments if the proposal being prepared by Senators of the devastated regions get Parliament's approval. Whether this will include any of the ruined cities is not yet known, but it is not considered likely, in view of the fact that the State would have to pay the owners of the land involved huge sums without having any definite assurance that it would be refunded by the Germans in indemnities.

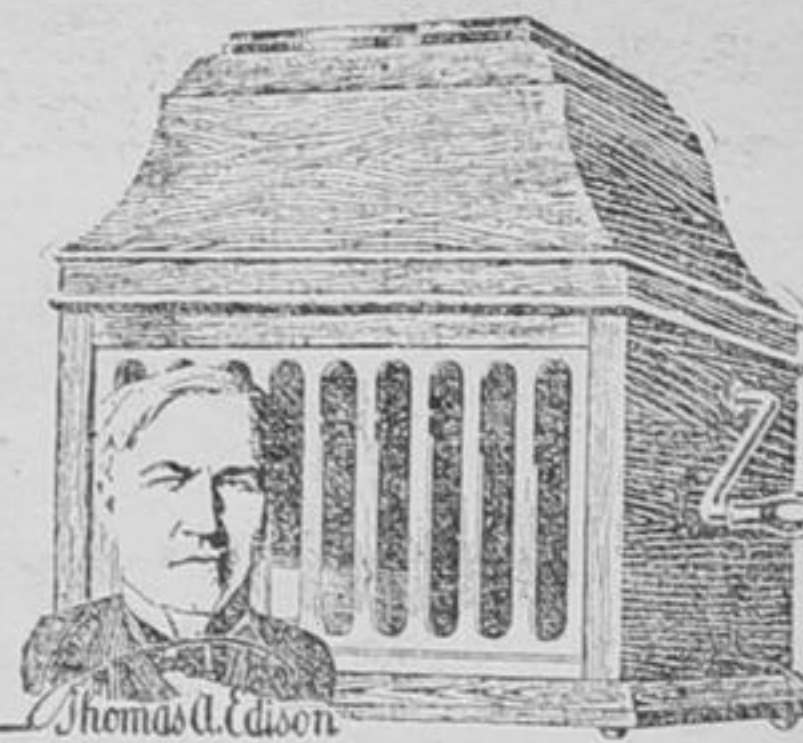
There is a constant demand that future generations have something definite to see of the war's horrors besides a depleted treasury, and the Senators believe this is possible by buying several thousand acres and appointing caretakers to prevent the trenches, tunnels and mine craters from being worn away by the ravages of time or filled with weeds, as now is the case all along the battle fronts.

The cost of purchase and operation would be recovered by imposing a fee on all visitors to the reservation, this to be increased by a systematic organization of visits of school children from all parts of France. The tentative arrangements call for at least 500,000 francs from this year's budget allowances, which seems to be the only argument against Parliament's approval.

A Desert Ice Pack.

With the thermometer registering at noon one hundred and thirty degrees Fahrenheit, says Popular Mechanics, a party of professional men made ice near an oasis in the Sahara Desert and saved the life of a comrade who suffered from malignant fever.

At seven o'clock in the evening the men shoveled down through the hot sand to a cooler stratum and formed a pit about eighteen inches deep. On the level bottom of the depression they placed a blanket that measured about five by eight feet. Then, drawing on the supply of camel fodder, they covered the blanket with chopped straw. From the oasis they drew water and covered the blanket to a depth of half an inch. As the night advanced the crystals formed, and at midnight frost crystals formed on the floating straw. At three o'clock the straw was embedded in a sheet of ice.



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Increase in Fur Values.

Five years ago the wholesale price of a good muskrat skin was thirty-seven cents. To-day it is \$5.10. Other kinds of furs have gone up in an astonishing way.

The United States Biological Survey cites the case of a man who in 1913 bought a mink-lined coat for \$500. After wearing it four years he sold the lining for \$1,000 and replaced it with nutria at a cost of \$150. In 1917 he sold the nutria lining for \$250 and put in a muskrat lining at a cost of \$75. Last year he sold the muskrat lining for \$300 and he still has the coat, with a clear profit of \$845.

Naturally, the high prices obtainable for furs have incited trappers and gunners to extra efforts in the pursuit of fur-bearing animals, which in consequence are decreasing in numbers at an accelerated rate. The draining of marshes has a tendency to wipe out the muskrats. The only hope for fur-bearing animals lies in their domestication—i.e., in establishing preserves for them where they will be safe from molestation.

Louvain Receives Books.

Personal libraries of German savants are being purchased to restock the shelves of the Louvain Library looted by the Germans in the war, says a despatch. The German professors are hard hit by heavy taxation and the high cost of living and many rare and valuable volumes have thus come into the market.

M. Louis Stainier, director of the library restoration committee, told a correspondent of the London Daily News that Louvain was very grateful for the conservation of books from American well-wishers although, as he put it, the American collection being an essentially modern one had more of a "universal" than a "university" character.

No building yet exists in Louvain adequate to house the new library, and the books thus far obtained, including 35,000 volumes from England, are scattered wherever temporary accommodations can be found for them.

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