

### A Gasoline Road Agent

By Mary Roberts Rinehart

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"I don't know what possessed you to take the river road anyhow," Garretson's voice was distinctly aggrieved. "This is the fourth time we've been stuck in the mud, and it's getting worse every minute. Besides, we're going to be late."

Jimmy Garretson stooped and carefully turned up his dress trousers to a safe height.

"It's the deuce of a place to have a dance, anyhow. If people will entertain fool English noblemen, they might at least have the sense to do it in town."

Arbuthnot and Garretson peered into the machinery.

"I can't see anything wrong. Awful reek of gasoline, though. You'd better get out yourself."

Arbuthnot threw off his big leather coat and crawled cautiously down.

"Don't you know why I want to meet this English lord?"

"Not the least idea—cross my breast."

"It's not funny"—witheringly. "Don't you know Marjorie Lane is going to marry him?"

"Phew, you don't mean it! Why, I thought—that is, you know—"

"Yes, I know. I thought it, too. But it seems a little carries a good bit of weight. And there were other reasons. Let's have a look at this thing now."

"Engine nothing," he said wrathfully. "We've been leaking gasoline."

"I only it wasn't the river road we'd run a good chance of another car coming along. We might borrow some gasoline, or if they wouldn't give us any we could hold them up. I saw in the paper where some fellow did that not so very long ago."

"We might try it."

As the extent of the damage done to his clothing revealed itself to Garretson he became more emphatic.

"Stop swearing," said Arbuthnot, "and listen to me. Do you remember the night you were to take Edith Armstrong to the Adams theater party? And do you remember that that was the night of Graham's bachelor dinner?"

"I don't remember much about that night. Remember the next day, though—had an awful head. What about it?"

"Well, when it was time for you to go for Edith, you wouldn't go. Said you were having a good time where you were."

"I did?" Jimmy Garretson groaned.

"You did. So like a fool I made up a little story about your not feeling well, and took Edith myself. She may have understood, but Edith's a trump, you know. Never asked questions."

"Why don't you talk about something cheerful? This is the devil of a place to bring up a fellow's past sins to him. It's going to rain, too."

"Well, you wanted to know why Marjorie Lane has turned me down for this English fellow. I had an engagement to meet her at the club ball that night, and when I got there at midnight some lunatic had evidently told her, for she cut me dead, and I haven't seen her since."

"I'm awfully sorry, old man. I wish you had told me sooner—it was really up to me to fix things. My reputation is too far gone to be hurt, anyhow."

"Listen," Arbuthnot held up a warning hand.

In the distance could be heard the chug-chug of an auto, growing louder as it approached.

"Hello! Wait a minute," called Garretson. "We've had an accident and need a little help."

"Haven't time," came surlily back. "Fix it yourselves."

"You don't seem to understand what I said," Arbuthnot's voice was thick

with passion. "I told you to stop."

"Remove your hand, sir! What do you mean by detaining me?"

"You infernal little puppy!" He turned savagely on the stranger, and taking him by his ulster collar, tossed him into the mud. "Now walk."

Then Arbuthnot proceeded deliberately to empty the gasoline tank of the strange automobile.

"Edward!" Arbuthnot raised up in dismay. "Are you going to sit there quietly and allow an outrage like this?"

"A woman, by Jove!" Jimmy Garretson almost fell again in his astonishment.

"What can I do?" came weakly from the embankment. "Aren't there two of them? Do you think I'm a fool?"

There was a very audible sniff of disgust from the tonneau.

"I'm afraid I do. You brought this whole affair on yourself by being anything but a gentleman. It's a charming situation for me."

But Arbuthnot stepped forward, cap in hand.

"I assure you, madam," he said, addressing the voice, "we had not the slightest idea that the gentleman was not alone or this disgraceful affair would never have happened. The least we can do now is take you to your destination, if you will allow us that privilege."

"I much prefer to walk," said the voice stiffly.

"But it's damp here, and the roads are ankle deep with mud. It's going to storm soon, too."

The girl shuddered a little.

"I'm afraid it is going to storm, and I'm growing hoarser every minute. I suppose I am forced to accept your offer, although your conduct was been outrageous. I hope you do not think I countenance it by going with you?"

"Not at all," said Arbuthnot gravely, and Garretson chuckled.

"Good night, ah, Edward," he called, as they moved away in the darkness. "Have a pleasant walk, and don't hurry."

"In one way," began the girl constrainedly, "I owe you both a service. I didn't quite realize before what an awful cad that fellow was. And worse than that, he's a coward. I am pleased to find him out."

"Don't be too hard on him," Arbuthnot joined in the conversation—if such it could be called—for the first time. "Some people are constitutionally averse to playing the good Samaritan."

"Don't altogether blame him myself," Garretson was trying to put the girl at her ease. "There's never much in it for the good Samaritan. Fellow once took a girl to the theater for me—I had a headache, you know, and couldn't go—and, by Jove, didn't the girl he was in love with hear about it and give him the cut direct!"

"Indeed," said the girl languidly, "it must have been a bad headache."

"It was," said Jimmy untruthfully; "fearful, and the next morning—"

"There's the gate."

She had been gently lifted down and carried through the mire to the gate before she could remonstrate.

Arbuthnot bowed and turned back. "Now make it go like the devil." Mr. Garretson was plainly ill at ease.

A few minutes later Arbuthnot, clothed in evening garb, left Garretson to the tender mercies of Charlie Courtenay's man and started down the broad staircase.

Just at the curve he met a rather flushed, very pretty girl, still in her wraps, who was coming breathlessly up. She bowed to Arbuthnot's delight, and hurried on.

Whereupon that young gentleman sat down on a window seat and watched for the girl's reappearance.

She came soon. As she reached the landing Arbuthnot rose, and she was suddenly conscious of his presence.

"Marjorie"—his voice was very gentle, but even in the half light his face was pale and drawn—"won't keep you long, and if you tell me that you really care for that—that English fellow, I'll let you go at once. But Marjorie, if it's only the glitter of the title—I don't want to hurt you dear, but such things do happen—and I've been breaking my heart for you these last days—Do you love him, Marjorie?"

The girl looked up and down the stairs. There was no one in sight. From the lower floor came the soft strains of a waltz and the low murmur of many voices; but they were alone. With a little contented sigh she slipped her hand into his and leaned over to him.

"I detest him," she said softly. "You may kiss me if you like—you look as though you are going to anyhow—"

"I am," he said promptly, and did. A moment later she raised her head and laughed a little.

"Never, as long as I live, will I forget the way you threw that little cad into the mud."

"You knew me?" gasped Arbuthnot.

"From the first minute," she said calmly.

Later in the evening, Marjorie having been claimed for a dance, Arbuthnot met Jimmy Garretson in the smoking room.

"The Courtenays are growing anxious," said the latter, with elaborate carelessness. "Lord Hynes isn't here yet."

Arbuthnot looked him squarely in the eye.

"It was a long walk," he said. Mr. Garretson looked at him oddly and mysteriously.

"You knew him?" Upon my word, Arbuthnot, I believe you arranged the whole affair."

"I did," said Arbuthnot shamelessly. "Our gasoline tank was half full."

Harrington Jottings.

Harrington, Oct. 31. — Quarterly service is to be held in the Methodist church on Sunday. Charles Moore and family have moved to the village.

Messrs. Robertson and Nickle, of Kingston, spoke to quite a large audience in behalf of the Victory Loan. Miss Lillian Glow, Kingston, is visiting at her uncle's, John Moore's. Mrs. D. A. Barker and children of Arden, have returned home after spending a week at her



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The mother, the nurse, the woman with the needle, the ambulance driver, the canteen worker, the "farmerette" and the daughters of industry in factory, office and store—all-inspired the manhood and ennobled the womanhood of Canada by their labours of love and sacrifice in the days of the nation's anguish—now happily past.

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grandfather's, B. Campbell. Estella Trousdale and J. J. Lake are on the sick list. Frank Sigworth spent a couple of days in Arden this week. Mr. and Mrs. Edley Campbell and daughters were at Inverary Saturday attending the funeral of the late William Tolls, brother of Mrs. Campbell.

The young people are having a Halloween on chicken stew.

The frame of a mop patented by a woman inventor is U-shaped and made of resilient metal, causing the fabric portion to spread over a considerable area of the floor.

England's youngest and probably the prettiest woman owner of race horses, Mrs. Leslie Lynght, intends to pay her first visit to America in the near future.

Policewomen in Washington, D.C. have decided to not become members of a union.

A bill has been introduced in the United States senate which provides that women government workers shall be paid equal wages with the men.

In Sweden women have always been eligible for all the offices for which they vote.

Mrs. Alice M. French of Indiana, Ind., has been re-elected National War Mother of the American War Mothers.

The first woman to receive a degree from any Canadian university were Queen Mary and the Countess of Aberdeen.