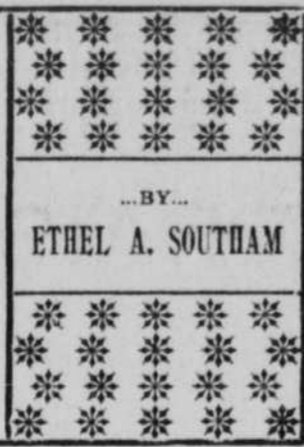


That Mysterious Major...



...BY...
ETHEL A. SOUTHAM

CHAPTER IX.—(Continued.)
"Is anything the matter?" she asked, glancing anxiously in the direction of her aunt.

"Nothing whatever," was the brusque reply; "it is merely a shawl which Lady Howard wished for. But you did not hear her call, I suppose; you were too much taken up with that fellow Brown."

Evelyn raised her eyebrows, and gave him a swift utterly disdainful look.

"It is strange what you see in that man," he went on, folding his arms; "and, whilst you persistently avoid my society, you seem everlastingly ready to enter into conversation with him. It is not fancy, Miss Luttrell—it is perfectly true. Three times to-day have I attempted to speak to you; three times have you made some trifling excuse and turned to leave me."

"And why have I," exclaimed Evelyn, her eyes flashing fire—"why? Simply because you persist in discussing the most ridiculous of subjects!"

"I have certainly made half a dozen attempts during the last few days to tell you that I love you, to ask you to be my wife; but perhaps that is a topic of conversation which you care to discuss only with your friend Brown, since you appear to find him so very interesting."

"Or rather perhaps it is that, whilst you talk such utter nonsense, he talks sense!" was the cutting reply.

"You call a declaration of love, a proposal of marriage, nonsense, then?"

"Yes; I call anything nonsense that is so contrary to all reason," returned Evelyn, her voice trembling. "And, since you know how much I hate it, I wonder you pester me as you do."

"Oh, very well! If that is the case, I will not attempt to renew the subject again—in that way, at any rate; my attentions shall annoy you no longer, and—"

"Thank you," interrupted Evelyn in

did write them, I know," answered Evelyn, with a vindictive little nod towards Gilbert Falkland.

"Oh, indeed! But, even if that is so, there are twenty other ways in which a clever forger could get hold of your signature. You have not written to anybody staying in the hotel, I suppose, Miss Luttrell?"

"Written to anybody? No—certainly not!"

"Nor lent any books in which your name is inscribed?"

"No," returned Evelyn, with the same decision. "I have not lent anything."

"Then, as far as your recollection goes, you can give us no clue to the mystery? You have no remembrance, for instance, of writing a letter and tearing it up, or of signing your name in any chance way which could possibly be turned against you?"

Again Evelyn answered "No," but this time there was less assurance in her tones. Standing with her arms folded on the back of her aunt's chair, she had started slightly at Falkland's question, and now, as she raised her head, a strangely perplexed look came suddenly into her eyes.

"I—I cannot remember anything," she added hurriedly.

"Not anything at all?" persisted Falkland suspiciously, quick to notice her evident hesitation.

"No—absolutely—nothing."

"Well, the only thing is to take care of that check," observed Falkland, watching her narrowly. "You see, it is really all that we have to go upon. If you would give it to me, though, I might be able to do something for you in the matter."

"Thank you, but I shall have no need to trouble you. I—the words were spoken in the same hesitating, almost faltering tones—have given it to Major Brown."

"You have given it to Major Brown?"

through the silent air, to echo round the dusky lawn! A moment before a horrible fear had possessed her, a fear which had sent all the blood coursing wildly through her veins; and then—Oh, impossible! Major Brown a forger! It was impossible! Mr. Falkland always had disliked him. From the very first he had been prejudiced about him, and had done his utmost to make both Lady Howard and herself share in his suspicions.

It was too terrible! In that one moment it seemed as though she lived through all the past fortnight again. One after another the various events of the well remembered days passed in rapid succession through her mind, whilst above all, as a climax, a crowning point to the whole, a certain afternoon, scarcely thirty-six hours before, stood out clear and defined from the confusion of the various occurrences. Every syllable which had been spoken, every subject which had been broached, came back to her as vividly as though once more she was sitting in the forsaken library, pen in hand, with Major Brown standing attentively by her side.

Oh, why had she been so dense, so blind as to see neither through his evident manoeuvres nor the strange yet palpable eagerness of his manner? If nothing else had roused her suspicions, she ought at least to have realized that Major Brown was not at all the kind of man to waste his energies upon a simple birthday book. A birthday book! How could she have allowed herself to be so easily taken in? She had certainly expressed some astonishment upon the occasion—she was undoubtedly somewhat dubious at first—but how quickly he had overruled her! Without appearing the least perturbed, he had explained away everything—yes, everything! He had even been able to find an excuse for the blankness of the pages, and she had actually believed him, had believed the whole of his fabrications, though in reality that horrible book had been purchased simply as a means for securing her signature!

"You hear what Mr. Falkland is saying, Eve?"

How far her thoughts had carried her, or how long she had been standing with her hands clasped tightly together, gazing out straight before her at the shadows growing deeper and deeper, Evelyn had no idea.

Did she hear what Mr. Falkland was saying? No, she had not heard a word, and, what was more, she was utterly indifferent as to what it might be; yet it was with a gesture suggestive rather of acquiescence that she sat down on the low bamboo chair and waited resignedly for anything further that had to come.

"You see, Miss Luttrell—it was Falkland himself who claimed her attention this time—we can do nothing without the check; we have no proofs whatever as to the forgery. Brown is safe as if he had never put pen to paper at all."

"Is he?" observed Evelyn calmly. His words seemed to imbue her with a sense of strange undefinable relief. "Ah, yes—I suppose that would have been the only evidence against him! But of course it does not matter. It is really not of much importance," she added in a voice particularly free from any suspicion of regret.

"It does not matter! Why, Miss Luttrell, I have just been pointing out to you the greatest importance of this affair, and have been saying how easily the whole thing can be managed! But no time must be lost. You ought to ask the Major for the check this evening without fail."

(To be continued.)

The Census of Germany.

The Times publishes a careful analysis of the German census, taken on June 14, 1895, from which it appears that the population amounted on that day to 51,770,000, of whom 24,400,000 were males and 26,360,000 females, the excess of females being, therefore, nearly a million. This population increases at the rate of a little more than a million a year, for which new means of maintenance, education and housing must be provided. The rush is, of course, to the towns, the general urban population having increased since 1832 by 36 per cent, while the population of towns with more than 100,000 persons had more than doubled. Of the total, 8,292,000 are occupied in agriculture, 8,281,000 in industry, 2,238,000 in trade, 794,000 in the professions, 621,000 as soldiers or sailors, and 1,399,000 as servants. The proportion of servants is the lowest in the census-taking world, not half the proportion in Great Britain. The Catholics are about a third of the population, while of the whole a considerable class 5.71 per cent are Jews.—London Spectator.

Ik Marvel's Home.

Donald G. Mitchell, known far and wide as Ik Marvel, lives on a 200-acre farm upon a hill near New Haven. From the road the house is invisible, a high evergreen hedge concealing it, but from the porch a fine view of New Haven is afforded. For many years Mr. Mitchell has lived there, indulging in his love for nature and agriculture. It is an ideal place. The house is covered by English ivy, and evergreen trees surround it. The fields are level as floors, and the stone walls have been built with neatness and accuracy. A little house on the farm is built from stones gathered from the fields and cost only a trifle over \$1,000. Mr. Mitchell is 72 years old, but he walks in the woods every day. He is very fond of walking and thinks that it owes his life, for when young he was told he had consumption. For two years he tramped over Europe, walking 600 miles in England alone. He successfully stayed off the disease, but has always kept up his walks.

CISSY'S BUSINESS VENTURE.

The tall young man at the desk by the big window looked up with a start. There was something strangely familiar about the little figure in the doorway. He arose hurriedly from his chair.

"Why, it's Cissy," he cried, and stepped forward. The child's figure swayed toward him and he caught it in his arms.

"George Henderson," a tired little voice panted, "why don't you live up to heaven and be done with it?"

"What is it, Cissy?" cried the young man, as he placed the child in the great padded chair in the corner and unloosened her big hat and anxiously looked her over.

"It's these eight flights o' stairs, George," the faint voice panted, "but I'm all right. Just gimme time to get my breath."

"Gracious, Cissy, did you walk up?" The tired head weakly nodded.

She was a slender girl of perhaps a dozen years. Her features were prominent, her eyes keen, her chin aggressive. Her light hair was brushed tightly back from her face, and this emphasized the sharpness of her features and her look. She was very neatly dressed, and under one arm carried two handsomely bound books.

"Why in the world didn't you take the elevator, Cissy?"

Her breath was coming back now, and she smiled up at the young man and lifted one eyebrow in a whimsical way.

"I'll tell you, George," she answered, "I went into the vestibule, way down by the sidewalk, you know, and I was just goin' to step into the elevator when the fresh kid in brass buttons that runs it pointed to a sign on the wall. While I was readin' it he runned the elevator up. You know the sign. It's the one that says, 'No book agents, peddlers, nor dogs allowed in this building.' I read it and walked up."

"But I don't see—" began the puzzled young man.

"George Henderson," cried the girl, "don't you look at me as if you thought I took myself for a dog! I'm a book agent."

"A book agent, Cissy Jayne?"

"Yes, a book agent, Georgie Henderson; is there anything the matter with my being a book agent?"

"Certainly not," laughed the young man. "It's an ancient and honorable profession, even if a rude and unap-

pealing young man."

"Somebody told Ethel that they saw you and Annie riding together in the park, didn't they?"

"I believe so," admitted George.

"Yes," said Cissy calmly, "that was me."

"You told her that?" cried George.

"Yes," said Cissy, sweetly, "I told her. She wouldn't let me wear her second best hat."

George looked black for a moment, then his face cleared. He turned abruptly and stepped to the phone.

"E. 7301 L," he called.

"Knows it by heart," murmured Cissy.

"Is Miss Ethel there?" inquired George. "Yes, I wish to speak to her."

"George," cried Cissy, "don't you forget that the girl at the exchange is listenin' to every word you say."

"Is that you, Ethel?" inquired George at the phone. "Yes, it's George. I wanted to tell you that Cissy is here with me—yes, she's all right, and I hope you didn't worry much—"

Yes. She came on business. She had a little confession to make."

"George Henderson!" cried Cissy.

"I will explain it all to you when I come up. Yes, I'm coming to dinner if you will let me. Cissy is going with me to a matinee and then we'll come up together. What's that? Cissy isn't dressed to go anywhere? Why, I fancy she's got on her best clothes."

"Much you know about it," snorted Cissy.

"Anyway, she is looking charming."

"Ring off!" cried Cissy.

"I—I think that's all until we meet—good-by," and George reluctantly rang off.

"If I hadn't been here," said Cissy, "you'd have most likely melted that wire."

"All ready?" queried the smiling George as he took up his hat.

"All ready," said Cissy, with great alacrity. "And my stock—the books, you know?"

"I'll take care of them," said George. "Two more excuses for coming up," giggled Cissy.

"Come along," cried George.—W. R. Rose in Cleveland Plain Dealer.

THE PERFUMED WOMAN.

He Goes Into Ecstasies Over Her Genuine Femininity.

"I observe," said a coarse, brutal man who doesn't know the difference between the higher and nobler and a load of ash coal, according to the Washington Post, "that the advertising ends of this month's magazines are publishing a testimonial as to the merits of a certain brand of toilet soap, written by one of the ladies who has been doing her little bit during the last half century toward securing the franchise for woman. Her picture is run in with the ad and her testimonial is surely a heap fulsome for a voluntary contribution. In the course of her remarks she says, 'I abhor a perfumed woman.' It is to take a short, jerky biff at this remark that I emerge from my cave and leap into the fracas. I love a perfumed woman. I think a perfumed woman is the real thing in femininity—the daintily perfumed woman, who, when she swishes by you, has something about her that makes you vaguely remember the old honeysuckle covered porch that you knew a quarter of a century ago; who carries with her the suggestion of asphodelian daisies and starlit meadows. It isn't particularly because of the elusive, hop-smoky, garden-of-Daphne fragrance that the perfumed woman daintily emits that I think she's the one and only real thing in long draperies. It's because she typifies the feminine woman. Gimme a lyre, or a harp, or a fiddle, or a kazoo—any old thing—that I may sing the praises and the glories of the feminine woman! She was here in the world's early dawn, and she's going to be right here alongside of us when we're having \$2.48 round trip excursions to Mars! It's because she's feminine that she's adorable! It's because every once in awhile she gets her work done early so she can go upstairs and have a good cry; it's because she crushes us into pulp with her 'because'; it's because she admits our premises and denies our conclusions; it's because she'll begin to purse her lips for baby talk when she sees an infant a block away; it's because she loves roses and lacey things and only \$2 per pound candy; it's because she gives us the reproachful eye when we ought to be sewed up in a blanket and clubbed; it's because she'll dig and delve and scrape and scarp for her husband and her little ones until icy stalactites hang from the roof of Gehenna; it's because she dabs her eyes with a little wad of mouchoir until her nose is red when she sees real human suffering; it's just because she's feminine, Bill, and therefore such a derved big sight better than we are, that she had us on the lops and plum loco over her ever since the days of the Hyksos kings of Egypt! Gimme a lute that I may chant of the physical, mental, moral and spiritual loveliness of the perfumed, who is also the feminine woman! May she be with us until the grand bust up of all things!"

"Well, I heard some of it," said Cissy, "and even if Ethel is my sister I don't think you ought to put all the blame on her. She felt awful bad about it. I slept with her that night, 'cause Aunt Laura came to see us, and I heard her crying. An' yesterday—well, you know there's a basket of photographs on the piano, and she expects me to keep the piano dusted, an' sometimes I forget it, and I sneaked in the parlor and there was Ethel looking at your photograph, an' when she saw me she shoved it in the pile and walked away, an' I looked on the top of the piano an' there was four big tear drops in the dust. Say, what was it you quarreled about—Annie Pleasanton?"

"I believe her name was mentioned," said George. "Somebody told Ethel that they saw you and Annie riding together in the park, didn't they?"

"I believe so," admitted George.

"Yes," said Cissy calmly, "that was me."

"You told her that?" cried George.

"Yes," said Cissy, sweetly, "I told her. She wouldn't let me wear her second best hat."

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CHINAMEN FEED THEIR DEAD.

Curious Custom of the Orientals That Is Observed Twice a Year.

Twice a year, in the first week of April and October, the Chinese feed their dead. They think that once their friends and relatives leave this mortal coil they ought to stay away from this world, and to prevent their return they faithfully transmit to them all the necessities of life. It has been discovered by oriental wisdom that the way to transmit servants, songs, plays, books and money is to manufacture them in paper and burn them. But actual eatables must be carried to the grave. The Chinese are not stingy, and wagon loads of roasted chickens, pigs, ducks, various sweetmeats and fruits are taken to the cemeteries. The food is piled before each grave, amid burning red, carrot-shaped candles and joss sticks. Then the living prostrate themselves before the dead and beg them to rise up and enjoy themselves. Chinese wines are then sprinkled liberally over the graves, while some graves receive boxes of cigars and packages of cigarettes. But you must not suppose that the eatables are left on the graves. Oh, no! That would be throwing too much temptation in the way of heaven's tramps. In about two hours it is believed that the ghosts got the essence of the eatables conveyed to them, and then the devotees gather up the offerings and carry them home again to feed their own material bodies. But the cigars and cigarettes are burned on the graves.

To Clean Diamonds.

Just at this season, when the world is full of brides, and sunbursts and stars and other dazzling "gifts of the groom" seem as common as plain gold wedding rings, a hint on how to clean diamonds artfully may not come amiss. The stones should first be washed in warm water and yellow soapsuds, with a small but not too hard brush. Rinse and dry them carefully with a soft cloth or silk handkerchief, and put them into a box containing boxwood dust. Move them about in this for some time until they seem perfectly dry, free them from the powder and polish with tissue paper.

A Queer Lot.

Stranger—I have heard that you have a good many queer people in this town. Citizen—As odd a lot as you'd find in a year's travel. They are a queer set, the whole of 'em, outside my family. And my wife is almost as bad as the others; but then, you know, she wasn't originally of my family.—Boston Transcript.

The heir to the Russian throne is said to be a good shot, but this will not be as useful in his future business as to be a poor target.



AGAIN EVELYN ANSWERED "NO."

low angry tones—"that is all I care about," and, without another word or look, she turned to the open window and disappeared, leaving Falkland with ruffled brows and lips set in angry determination gazing drearily into vacancy.

CHAPTER X.

It was certainly true. Miss Luttrell had not been mistaken in declaring that the forged check was not one of those which she had lost some months before; and a careful investigation quickly revealed the fact that the check in question had been dexterously extracted from the book in such a manner as to leave no blank counterfoil to raise the suspicions of its owner.

"It is clear that the forgery has been effected quite recently, and, no doubt, during our stay here," declared Lady Howard, looking towards Evelyn and Mr. Falkland for confirmation of her words, the latter having, despite her niece's protestations, been called in for consultation upon the weighty matter. "But the thing is, who can have done it? There are half a dozen men in the hotel who may be really professional forgers for all we know; but I do not suppose that one of them even knows Evelyn's Christian name, much less her signature."

"I beg your pardon, Lady Howard—you forgot the visitors' book," suggested Falkland promptly.

"The visitors' book? Ah, yes—her name is there, certainly! But who would dare to forge a check with such doubtful assistance? And, now that I think of it—Lady Howard tapped her gold-rimmed fan against her forehead—"I fancy I myself was the one to write our names. Can you remember, Evelyn?"

"Yes, I remember quite well. You

Had a thunderbolt fallen at Falkland's feet, greater dismay could not have been depicted on his countenance.

"Yes; he suggested it ought to be put in the hands of an expert at once; and so he is taking it up to London in the morning," she added, giving the necessary explanation as tersely as possible, and then turning away quickly, as though she could not trust herself to utter another syllable.

"He is taking it! Great heavens, Miss Luttrell, you cannot mean it! Surely you have never been so foolish as to allow such a thing!" gasped Falkland, starting forward, his face livid, an expression of absolute incredulity in his eyes.

A faint nod—a very different one from that with which she had favored him a moment before—was Evelyn's only reply.

"Oh, Miss Luttrell, this is worse than madness!" Falkland passed his hand across his forehead with a gesture of despair, of dazed indescribable bewilderment. "Did not instinct, your own common sense, tell you the truth? If nothing else, the very fact of his anxiety to secure that check should have aroused your suspicions. You might have guessed whose handwork it is!"

"Guessed?" repeated Lady Howard. "Good gracious, Mr. Falkland, you do not mean to say that you have found a clue to this affair already?"

"Yes, Lady Howard, I believe—he gave a triumphant glance towards Evelyn—"our suspicions"—with a very decided emphasis on the plural pronoun—"are correct. That fellow Brown is the forger!"

"That fellow Brown is the forger!" Falkland's voice sounded miles and miles away yet how the words reverberated in Evelyn's ears—with what clear distinctness they seemed to ring