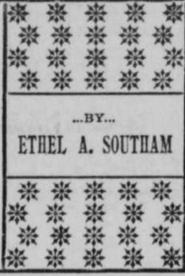


That Mysterious Major...



...BY...
ETHEL A. SOUTHAM

CHAPTER XI.—(Continued.)

In an instant, however, she had recovered herself. Quick as lightning, she turned to the table again, seized the china stop basin, and, raising the cup, was just about to empty the whole of the contents, when, as though detecting her intention, a detaining hand was laid upon her arm, and Falkland, in his suavest tones, said—

"Ah, that is for Major Brown! Will you not give it to him?"

"Oh, do not trouble, please, Miss Luttrell!" exclaimed Brown, who at that moment appeared in the window. "Let me fetch it myself!"—and before Evelyn was even aware of what was happening he had taken the cup of coffee from her hand and, turning to the sugar basin, was carefully searching for a piece of sugar of the exact size he required.

"You—you will not like that!" gasped Evelyn, making a quick movement forward, with an expression of absolute perplexity upon her face. "Let me get you another cup—that is not strong enough!"

"No, certainly not, thank you! This is delicious!" declared the Major, helping himself to some cream; and, before she had even time to utter another word, Evelyn saw him pass out on the veranda and, to her horror, actually raise the cup to his lips.

It was too terrible! She made one despairing effort to reach him, one vain attempt to dash the cup from his hand. But what was it seemed suddenly to hold her back, to rise up like a cloud before her eyes? She passed her hand in a dazed, bewildered manner across her forehead, made one staggering step forward, and then, with an instinctive sense of preservation, grasped hold of the arm of a chair and sank back among the cushions perfectly unconscious.

CHAPTER XII.

"Yes, Evelyn—it is quite true. I never saw you looking so pale before."



"BEG PARDON, MISS, IS THIS FOR YOU?"

That affair of last night has quite upset you. You had better take Sambo for a good run this morning. In the hope of bringing back some color to your cheeks; and, as Mrs. Courtenay has just told me that her husband has been called suddenly to London and will not be able to accompany her to the theater to-night, I shall send to say you will be delighted to accept the offer of the ticket if only she will be so good as to chaperon you. I believe, child, a little excitement will do you all the good in the world."

Evelyn's only answer was a faint sigh as she leaned back in her chair and clasped her hands above her head. At that moment, with her head throbbing continuously and the feeling of utter weariness, which was the result of a sleepless night and hours of inexplicable worry, the very idea of play was intolerable to her. She seemed to have lived days instead of hours since the events of the previous evening—since that terrible moment when she had suddenly lost consciousness, to remember nothing more until she found herself lying on her own bed, with her aunt's maid, who had evidently been left to keep watch, fast asleep in a chair by her side.

And then how utterly helpless she had felt when vivid recollections of all that happened rose up in horrible distinctness before her mind! What could she do? Alas, nothing—nothing whatever! She had no actual knowledge that Falkland had administered anything to Major Brown. She could give no reasons for supposing that the coffee which he had handed to him had been drugged. If she roused the whole hotel she could not possibly state anything for a fact. Yet at the same time she was haunted by the

thought of the fearful alternative—the thought that even then Major Brown might be lying under the influence of some frightful narcotic, perhaps perfectly unconscious.

As long as she lived never would she forget the wretchedness she endured as hour after hour she lay awake, watching wearily for the first streaks of dawn to break through the closely-drawn blinds. Still, when even eight had been struck in muffled tones from the depths of the little leather traveling case—even then, what was there to be learned?

Parker looked thoroughly puzzled when questioned for news of Major Brown.

"Major Brown, miss? Why, there is nothing amiss with him!" she had returned decidedly. "He looked as well as anybody need last night when I saw him fanning you down stairs."

But what small comfort poor Evelyn derived from this information was speedily destroyed by the maid's announcement a little later that the major had evidently overslept himself that morning, as, in passing down the corridor, she had noticed that long after the usual time his door was closed, and his boots and hat water were waiting on the mat outside.

It was thus that Evelyn, in a state of strange hopelessness, had dressed and gone downstairs. She had prepared herself for the worst. She felt she would not be astonished then whatever happened, and yet every step which sounded on the corridor, every time a waiter entered the room, she started up as white as ashes, dreading the news that might come.

It was, therefore, almost as great a shock when, chancing to look out of the window, she beheld, strolling leisurely across the lawn, a tall, well-built figure, which she recognized at a glance as the major's. And this had been the cause of Lady Howard's remark concerning the necessity for some little

excitement as a diversion from her thoughts!

And perhaps Lady Howard had never spoken with greater wisdom; for, having satisfied herself on the score of the cup of coffee, which she had quite made up her mind had been fatally drugged, all the feelings of horror which Evelyn had experienced when the suspicion of the forgery had first fallen upon Major Brown, but which she had forgotten in the alarm that followed, returned to her now with a force which seemed ten times increased in its intensity.

Never before in her life had Evelyn known a day which proved itself so interminably long as did this particular morning and afternoon. To see, to speak to, Major Brown again was impossible; and so, rather than undergo the risk of a meeting with him she absolutely shut her ears to all of Lady Howard's entreaties and remained in strict seclusion in her own room, never once during the whole of the day venturing out of her customary rambles.

It was thus probably through sheer weariness that Evelyn, tired to death by her own society and conflicting thoughts, at last gave in to Lady Howard's persuasions, and allowed herself to be driven off under the chaperonage of Mrs. Courtenay to the little seaside theater.

The house was packed to overflowing and a loud burst of applause was greeting the appearance of the principal actress, when Evelyn, bending forward to catch her program, which had fallen to the ground, caught a glimpse of the occupant of the seat next but one to Mrs. Courtenay.

Instantly a flash of annoyance rose to her face as she recognized the individual in question as Gilbert Falkland. Turning away quickly, she fixed

her eyes upon the stage, where they remained for the rest of the scene.

She had held herself aloof from him most carefully all the day, never venturing downstairs at any time when he was likely to be about, and, though in one instance she had had the misfortune to encounter him, she had preserved the strictest silence regarding the previous night's proceedings, not even asking if he had managed to secure the forged check, nor evincing any curiosity as to the means he had adopted.

"Beg pardon, miss, but is this letter for you? A messenger has just brought it from the 'George,' and asked for it to be given to you immediately."

The words borne to Evelyn's ears about the strains of one of Sullivan's most popular airs made her look up in surprise, to find herself confronted by a small program boy, who was holding out for her inspection a note directed in her aunt's handwriting to "Miss Luttrell—Stalls, No. 14."

"Dear me, I hope there is nothing wrong!" murmured Mrs. Courtenay in agitated tones.

(To be continued.)

TOLD OF ANIMALS.

The two zebras sent by the emperor of Abyssinia to Queen Victoria have reached England, to the climate and fare of which the zoological gardens is now doing its best to accustom them.

Here is a dog story. A short time ago a sheep dog owned by a person at Robin Hood's bay, near Whitby, England, was dispatched by train to Liverpool and from there was removed to Egremont, where it was housed in the back yard of the residence of Mr. Coulson. The following morning the dog had disappeared, and notices were distributed about Liverpool, Birkenhead and district elicited no response. Rover, however, arrived in a week or so at Robin Hood's bay, weary and lame, and bearing an unmistakable appearance of having had a long journey. The dog had jumped a high wall in order to escape and afterward crossed the Mersey, and subsequently traveled 170 miles in order to reach his destination.

A remarkable case of animal eccentricity has been discovered near Cayuga lake, New York state. In a high tree a large white cat, which would weigh probably twenty-five pounds, has taken up its abode, and from all observation has been there for several years. It is seldom seen in daylight, but prowls about at night after food, living on birds, squirrels and other animals that it can master. It is shy of any of the human kind, and cannot be approached. In its midnight peregrinations it visits the cottages and anything eatable left outside generally disappears. A few days ago the cat was seen lying stretched out on a limb, like a squirrel, and when a stone was thrown at it the animal rose up and jumped, like a flying squirrel, from limb to limb and tree to tree, until it disappeared.

Not Beecher's Prayer.

One of the older newspaper men told a story the other day. "Browning was one of the best reporters to get out of work that ever broke into the business," he said. "The city editor sent him down to report Henry Ward Beecher one time, and he came in about 11 o'clock with his 'stuff' ready for the printer. He had taken no notes, but had made a running long-hand report. He told how the church looked, who were on the rostrum about the pulpit, and how Mr. Beecher rose and lifted his hands and said, very solemnly: 'After this manner, therefore, pray ye.' Then Browning added, in parenthesis, 'Turn rule for Lord's prayer.' He meant to copy that verbatim from the office Bible when he got to his desk, but forgot it, and the parenthesis was only to guide the printer. So the paper came out in the morning with a good picture of Brooklyn's famous preacher, and his impressive manner of saying, 'After this manner, therefore, pray ye. Turn rule for Lord's prayer.' Which really wasn't what the eloquent orator had said at all."—Chicago Post.

Don't Cry.

The mere giving away to tears, or to the outward expression of anger, will result for the moment in making the inner grief or anger more acutely felt, says Prof. James of Harvard. There is no more useful precept in one's self-discipline than that which bids us pay primary attention to what we do and express, and not to care too much for what we feel. If we only don't grieve the complaining or insulting word that we shall regret as long as we live, our feelings themselves will presently be calmer and better, with no particular guidance from us on their own account. Action seems to follow feeling, but really action and feeling go together; and by regulating the action which is under the direct control of the will we can indirectly regulate the feeling, which is not.

His Misfortune.

Teacher—Try to remember this: Milton, the poet, was blind. Do you think you can remember it? Bobby Smart—Yes, ma'am. Teacher—Now, what was Milton's great misfortune? Bobby Smart—He was a poet.—Columbus (Ohio) State Journal.

To dread danger from the progress of any truth, physical, moral, or religious, is to manifest a want of faith in God's power, or, in His will to maintain His own cause.

PICKLES, MUSTARD.

Such a discussion as developed on the piazza at the home of the Ellisons, that summer afternoon, would have been of serious import had it not been for the personality of the disputants. But a wrangle involving only a half dozen pretty women gowned in the light, breezy, fluffiness appertaining to a perfect June day, becomes prettier in proportion to its earnestness.

It came about through Emily Hastings' proposal for a picnic on the Desplaines river.

"No one of those formal, cut-and-dried, lemon-pie affairs," she explained, "but just a rollicking, jolly party of us young folks, who want to have a good time in the woods."

"And the young men?" queried someone, doubtfully. "This isn't leap year, you know!"

"Leave that to me," returned Emily reassuringly. "If I can't make Herbert Winslow take up the idea and carry it out as his own, then I'm not up to enough snuff to make a baby sneeze!" "Oh, Emily, how can you?" came in a deprecating chorus.

"I'm not going to him and bluntly ask him to hire a picnic wagon, pay for the provisions, and generally act as field manager for the party," insisted the young lady. "You ought to give me more credit than that. I'm simply going into a little psychological suggesting. He'll think he did it all himself. When the idea has taken, I expect him to invite your humble servant as his own particular side-partner, after which I'll propose that we girls make up the luncheon."

"What a pig!" exclaimed pretty May West, disconsolately; "you'd monopolize the attentions of Mr. Winslow, and leave the rest of us to any Tom, Dick and Harry."

"O, that comes of my being the promoter, you know," laughed Miss Hastings, lightly; "as a simple stockholder, you'll have to wait for dividends."

"But how about a chaperon?" suggested Blanche Fielding, the demure.

"A chaperon!" exclaimed the promoter tragically; "my kingdom for a chaperon! You, of all soberladies in Christendom, to suggest a chaperon!" she continued, argumentatively. "Goodness knows, you don't need one, and as for casting such an aspersion on the rest of us—what shall we do with her, girls?"

When the little levy had gone into individual pieces, the picnic was assured, if only Emily Hastings' psychological equipment did not fail. And it did not—at least in part. Herbert Winslow took up the scheme like an original enthusiast. A railroad trip to



IT WAS A GAY PARTY.

Riverside, and a picnic wagon to take the party down the river, were fixed upon. The luncheon scheme was excellent. A list of the young ladies was made up and a corresponding number of escorts were considered. The day was set—

But that night Herbert Winslow wrote an informal invitation, asking for the company of demure Blanche Fielding.

If Emily Hastings was keenly disappointed she did not show it. Her interest in the picnic did not flag. Out of her inventive genius she even improved on the original plans.

"This is to be a novel picnic," she said, "nothing else will do. Now, as the designer of it I am going to be the chef. I'm going to write out a list of just what each girl is to bring in a covered basket. These lists must be kept in secret, and not till we get to the woods, ready to spread the table, is any one but myself to know what we're to have for dinner."

Everybody was pledged to the compact of secrecy and when the bill of fare had been made out and distributed, preparations began for the outing. Saturday, July 1, was an ideal day. Gathered in the union station in the early morning, only Emily Hastings and her escort were missing. Five minutes before train time Edward Austin, breathless, came up to the anxious group with the news that Miss Hastings was ill and could not go.

"Nothing serious," he assured them. "Miss Hastings sends a thousand regrets and asks that we fill the program without her."

It was a gay party in spite of the disappointing fact that Mr. Austin was a bit of overplus, community property. The swift, thundering train; the jaunty picnic wagon, trailing its cloud of dust; the silence of the wooded banks of the Desplaines—nothing was lost to the senses of the group, left at last to themselves, while the wagon lumbered back to Riverside, five-miles away.

"Don't forget to come for us in time for the 1 o'clock train," young Austin had impressed on the driver, and with his disappearance hammocks were swung for the busy ones, while the naturalists, in pairs, wandered at will.

Basket opening at 1 o'clock was to be a feature of the outing. Under a spreading elm a grassy spot was cleared.

"Who has the linen?" called Eva Best, who, in the absence of Emily Hastings, took the lead.

"Here," and Anna Hunt opened the hamper in which a pile of snowy napery lay banded. Nothing else was there. With the opening of the one, others turned to their baskets unsuspectingly. It was a surprise, in fact. One basket had only knives, forks, spoons, pepper, salt, and the et ceteras of the ordinary table. Another had only dishes. On down the list the baskets were opened upon only table paraphernalia—on until Blanche Fielding's hamper yielded the first edible things in the party—pickles, mustard, Worcestershire sauce, and one full quart of vinegar.

"But there are lots of pickles," said Blanche, breaking the long, breathless silence that fell on the party. Somebody burst into a shriek of laughter, the keynote of the spirit in which all day long the members of the party fasted, save as their teeth were put on edge by pickles.

"Never speak of it to Miss Hastings, mind," was Blanche Fielding's parting injunction, as, tired and hungry, they separated at the Union station that night. "And really, we have had a lovely time."

Not every one assented to this, but it was noticeable that Herbert Winslow did so emphatically. Less than a week ago this emphasis had a new meaning for the members of the group who marked it. It was brought about from the results of a tete-a-tete in the Fielding's front parlor, during which Herbert Winslow had turned nervously back and forth on the piano stool.

"Did you know," he said huskily, "I've been thinking a good deal of that picnic of late."

"I hope you don't let that bother you," she replied evenly, as if she did not know what was coming.

"Worry me!" he repeated. "You don't understand—that was the happiest day of my life. I've been wondering ever since why—as we could be so happy for one day on a pickle and mustard diet—why we couldn't be happy always in a home that had a better and more varied bill of fare?"

She was thrusting the golden point of a scarf pin into the broadened surface of a settee, regardless of the damage that she was doing.

"Blanche," he said, appealingly. She looked up and let him read the answer in her eyes.

QUICKSANDS OF ARIZONA.

Masked Pitfalls Are Frequently Found in the Desert.

Curious but dangerous freaks of nature frequently found in the desert of Arizona are called *sumideros* by the Mexicans and Indians. They are masked pitfalls of quicksand that occur in the dry plains and are covered with a treacherous crust of clay that has been spread over them in fine particles by the wind and baked dry by the sun. The peculiar properties of the soil retain all the moisture drained into them after the infrequent rains, and allow it to be filtered to unknown depths, so that a man or a horse or a cow or a sheep that once steps upon that deceptive crust instantly sinks out of sight beyond hope of rescue. The *sumideros* are on a level with the surface of the desert. There is no danger signal to mark them, and their surface cannot be distinguished by the ordinary eye from the hard clay that surrounds them. They occur most frequently in the alkali-covered flats, and are often fifteen or twenty feet in diameter. Sometimes they are only little pockets or wells that a man can leap across, but the longest pole has never found their bottom. A stone thrown through the crust sinks to unknown depths, and no man who ever fell into one of them was rescued. They account for the mysterious disappearance of many men and cattle.

Small Praise.

A young man who had disappointed his grandfather by displaying no fondness for New England farm life made his way through college, and the law school, and in time became a judge. His grandfather watched his progress with a sort of unwilling pride, but never by word or look gave young John the least encouragement or praise. When the appointment to the judge's bench at last came, the grandson took heart and asked for the old man's congratulations. "Aren't you glad for me, grandfather?" he asked, almost wistfully, glancing at the stubborn old face beside him. "Well, yes, I am glad for ye, John," admitted the octogenarian in a grudging tone. "I am glad for ye, but I don't want you should feel set up and imagine you amount to any great shakes jest on account of being made judge. I want you should always recall when anything like this comes to ye that there's plenty of folks that when they're in need of a stopper and haven't got any cork, they'll make shift with a corn-cob! You jest hear that in mind."

Reasonable.

The reasons for orthography are among the things which pass man's understanding. Some explanations, however, have a plausible sound. A minister was recently called upon to marry a couple in private, and had occasion to ask how the name of one of the witnesses was spelled. "M-e-H-u-g-h," replied the man. "Haven't you a sister Margaret?" inquired the clergyman. "Yes, sir," "Well," said the minister, "she spells her name, 'M-e-C-u-e.'" "That," said the witness, "is because my sister and me, we went to different schools."

QUEER CHINESE CEREMONY.

Strange Rites at the Graves in Mount Olivet Cemetery.

A delegation of Chinamen visited Mount Olivet cemetery recently and in the presence of a crowd of onlookers performed a number of rites over the graves of their countrymen buried there, says the Baltimore Sun. They also visited the cemetery on the previous Sunday and went through the same ceremonies. Usually they visit the graves twice during the year, but this year seem remarkably solicitous as to the welfare of their deceased brethren. When the Chinamen reached the Chinese lot, which is in the northwestern part of the cemetery, they began to spread edibles of all kinds on the graves. There were chickens, pork, bananas and oranges. A fire was built in a sheetiron oven, which rested in the roadway not far from the lot. When the fire began to blaze high the Chinamen gathered around it and started to throw into the flames huge bundles of papers, on each of which had been inscribed different characters. These papers are supposed to bear misleading directions to the evil spirit and enable the deceased to cross in safety the river Styx. As the fire burned fiercely, some of the Chinamen hurried around to the different graves and close to each headstone planted a thin stick, on the end of which was incense. The incense was then lighted, but its perfume was in part deadened by the smell of the smoke, which by this time had become almost blinding. When all these preparations had been completed, the celestials started to perform the more important ceremonies. They swayed their bodies to and fro over the graves, all the time holding their hands together and muttering unintelligible words, but which were no doubt prayers in the Chinese language. Next they knelt at the sides of the graves, still continuing their mutterings. After a few minutes they arose, and to the surprise of every one about, gathered up the edibles which they had brought out and placed them in their carriages. Usually at the funerals of Chinamen the food is allowed to remain on the graves, so that the deceased would not starve on the journey to the Chinese heaven. Another feature in which the ceremonies differed from the funeral services was that cups of tea were poured over the graves of the Chinamen. Some irreverent persons ventured the opinion that the Chinamen believed their deceased brethren were thirsty and had accordingly brought the liquid to quench their parched palates. A number of boys were present at the ceremonies and after the departure of the Chinamen unceremoniously carried off the incense sticks to a spot under a shady tree, where they proceeded to enjoy themselves watching the sticks burn out.

She Rattled Dewey.

Dewey once attended a wedding breakfast at which the affable Baroness de Struve, wife of the Russian minister at that time, was present. Dewey had met this famous woman several times before. The facial plainness of the baroness was quite beyond belief, but she was one of the most brilliant, lovable and kindly women ever elected to guide the social affairs of the diplomatic corps in Washington. A lady who overheard it tells of an amusing passage which the baroness and Dewey (who, if memory serves, was then a commander) had at this particular wedding breakfast. "Referring to leather," said the baroness amiably, after some playful remark as to the spick-and-span polish of Dewey's sword-belt—he was in dress uniform—"the most remarkable bit of Russian leather in the world is my face." Dewey was as quick a thinker then as he is now, but this stalled him. "Madame," he said, after a pause, "I am but a rough sailor man, and this is a heavy demand which you make upon me. I am not equal to the emergency." "Of course," said the baroness, tapping him with her fan, "I should have to consider you hopelessly rude were you to agree with me. But you can preserve your neutrality—naval officers are taught to do that, are they not?—by telling me what really fine eyes I have. They are fine, are they not?" Thus assisted, Dewey rose to the occasion. The baroness's eyes were, in truth, magnificent.—Washington Post.

A Japanese Geisha Girl.

A geisha must be highly accomplished, because her chief duty is to amuse. While not by any means a musician, she must be able to perform on the samisen, koto, tsumuzumi (a drum) and other musical instruments. She dances, sings, and talks on the lightest subjects, and always holds herself in readiness to entertain her guests according to their mood. A witty geisha, one who is a good talker, pretty and graceful, will not lack for employment at any time, and generally makes a very good living. While it is not at all necessary for her to arouse mirth, her object must be to beguile the time that is irksome to her guests. Thus it often happens that one feeling depressed will send for a geisha girl. The geisha is a natural actress and her taste in dress is exquisite, her movements incomparable in grace.—Onoto Watanna, in the November Woman's Home Companion.

The Brute.

Mrs. Cooke—"Do you know, dear, I like to go out occasionally and try some other person's cooking." Mr. Cooke—"Well, I can't blame you, dear."—Yonkers Statesman.

The blush is nature's alarm at the approach of sin—and her testimony to the dignity of virtue.—Fuller.