

The Spoilers.

By REX E. BEACH.

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[CONTINUED.]

into a portion of his clothes, with a storm of excited instructions. The lawyer had neither time nor opportunity for expostulation, for Glenister snatched a valise and swept into it a litter of documents from the table.

"Hurry up, man!" he yelled, as the lawyer dived frantically about his office in a rabbit-like hunt for items. "My heavens, are you dead? Wake up! The ship's leaving." With sleep still in his eyes, Wheaton was dragged down the street to the beach, where a knot had assembled to witness the race. As they tumbled into the skiff, wifing hands ran it out into the surf on the crest of a roller. A few lifting breezes and they were over the bar with the men at the oars bending the white ash at every swing.

"I guess I didn't forget anything," escaped Wheaton as he put on his coat. "I got ready yesterday, but I couldn't find you last night, so I thought the deal was off."

Glenister stripped off his coat and, facing the bow, pushed upon the oars at every stroke, thus adding his strength to that of the oarsmen. They swept rapidly out from the beach, cutting up the two miles that lay toward the ship. He urged the men with all his power till the sweat soaked through their clothes and, under their straining shirts, the muscles stood out like iron. They had covered half the distance when Wheaton uttered a cry and Glenister desisted from his work with a curse. The Roanoke was moving slowly.

The rowers rested, but the young man shouted at them to begin again and, seizing a boat hook, stuck it into the arm of his coat. He waved this on high while the men redoubled their efforts. For many moments they hung in suspense, watching the black hull as it gathered speed, and then, as they were about to cease their effort, a puff of steam burst from its whistle and the next moment a short toot of recognition reached them. Glenister wiped the moisture from his brow and grinned at Wheaton.

A quarter of an hour later as they lay heaving below the ship's steel sides he thrust a heavy buckskin sack into the lawyer's hand.

"There's money to win the fight, Bill. I don't know how much, but it's enough. God bless you. Hurry back!" A sailor cast them a whirling rope, up which Wheaton clambered; then, tying the gripsack to its end, they sent it after.

"Important!" the young man yelled at the officer on the bridge. "Government business." He heard a muffled clang in the engine room, the thrash of the propellers followed, and the big ship glided past.

As Glenister dragged himself up the beach upon landing Helen Chester called to him and made room for him beside her. It had never been necessary to call him to her side before, and equally unfamiliar was the abashment or perhaps physical weariness that led the young man to sink back in the warm sand with a sigh of relief. She noted that for the first time the audacity was gone from his eyes.

"I watched your race," she began. "It was very exciting, and I cheered for you."

He smiled quietly.

"What made you keep on after the ship started? I should have given up—and cried."

"I never give up anything that I want," he said.

"Have you never been forced to? Then it is because you are a man. Women have to sacrifice a great deal."

Helen expected him to continue to the effect that he would never give her up—it was in accordance with his earlier presumption—but he was silent, and she was not sure that she liked him as well thus as when he overwhelmed her with the boldness of his suit. For Glenister it was delightful, after the perils of the night, to rest in the calm of her presence and to feel dumbly that she was near. She saw him secretly caress a fold of her dress.

If only she had not the memory of that one night on the ship. "Still, he is trying to make amends in the best way he can," she thought. "Though of course no woman could care for a man who would do such a thing." Yet she thrilled at the thought of how he had thrust his body between her and danger, how, but for his quick, insistent action, she would have fallen in escaping from the post ship, failed in her mission and met death on the night of her landing. She owed him much.

"Did you hear what happened to the good ship Ohio?" she asked.

"No. I've been too busy to inquire.

I was told the health officers quarantined her when she arrived, that's all."

"She was sent to Egg island with every one aboard. She has been there more than a month now and may not get away this summer."

"What a disappointment for the poor devils on her!"

"Yes, and only for what you did. I should be one of them," Helen remarked.

"I didn't do much," he said. "The fighting part is easy. It's not half so hard as to give up your property and lie still while—"

"Did you do that because I asked you to—because I asked you to put aside the old ways?" A wave of compassion swept over her.

"Certainly," he answered. "It didn't come easy, but—"

"Oh, I thank you," said she. "I know it is all for the best. Uncle Arthur wouldn't do anything wrong, and Mr. McNamara is an honorable man."

He turned toward her to speak, but refrained. He could not tell her what he felt certain of. She believed in her own blood and in her uncle's friends—and it was not for him to speak of McNamara. The rules of the game sealed his lips.

She was thinking again. "If only you had not acted as you did." She longed to help him now in his trouble as he had helped her, but what could she do? The law was such a confusing, intricate, perplexing thing.

"I spent last night at the Midas," she told him, "and rode back early this morning. That was a daring holdup, wasn't it?"

"What holdup?"

"Why, haven't you heard the news?"

"No," he answered steadily. "I just got up."

"Your claim was robbed. Three men overcame the watchman at midnight and cleaned the boxes."

His simulation of excited astonishment was perfect, and he rained a shower of questions upon her. She noted with approval that he did not look her in the eye, however. He was not an accomplished liar. Now, McNamara had a countenance of iron. Unconsciously she made comparison, and the young man at her side did not lose thereby.

"Yes, I saw it all," she concluded, after recounting the details. "The negro wanted to bind me so that I could not give the alarm, but his chivalry prevented. He was a most gallant dandy."

"What did you do when they left?"

"Why, I kept my word and waited until they were out of sight; then I roused the camp and set Mr. McNamara and his men right after them down the gulch."

"Down the gulch!" spoke Glenister, off his guard.

"Yes, of course. Did you think they went upstream?" She was looking squarely at him now, and he dropped his eyes. "No; the posse started in that direction, but I put them right." There was an odd light in her glance, and he felt the blood drumming in his ears.

She sent them downstream! So that was why there had been no pursuit! Then she must suspect—she must know everything! Glenister was stunned. Again his love for the girl surged tumultuously within him and demanded expression. But Miss Chester, no longer feeling sure that she had the situation in hand, had already started to return to the hotel. "I saw the men distinctly," she told him before they separated, "and I could identify them all."

At his own house Glenister found Dexty removing the stains of the night's adventure.

"Miss Chester recognized us last night," he announced.

"How do you know?"

"She told me so just now, and what's more she sent McNamara and his crowd down the creek instead of up. That's why we got away so easily."

"Well, well—ain't she a brick? She's even with us now. By the way, I wonder how much we cleaned up, anyhow—let's weigh it." Going to the bed, Dexty turned back the blankets, exposing four moosekin sacks, wet and heavy where he had thrown them.

"There must have been \$20,000 worth what I gave Wheaton," said Glenister.

At that moment, without warning, the door was flung open, and as the young man jerked the blankets into place he whirled, snatched the six shooter that Dexty had discarded and covered the entrance.

"Don't shoot, boy!" cried the new-

(Continued on Page Six.)

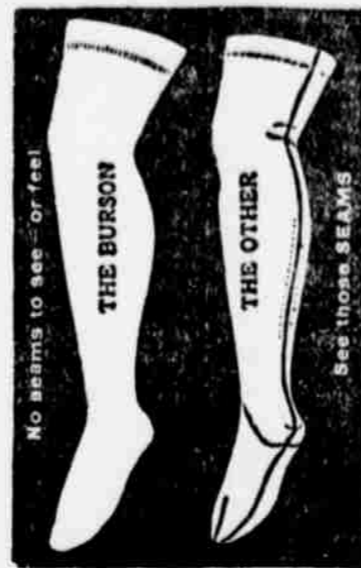
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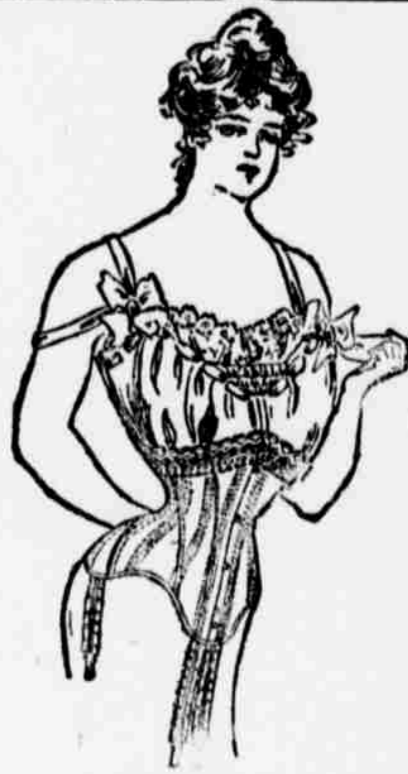
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