

The Sight of a Young and Attractive Woman Coming Out of a Home for Con



CHAPTER I. Dust.

In the dull hot dusk of a summer's day a green touring car, swinging out of the East drive, pulled up smartly, trembling, at the edge of the Fiftyninth street car tracks, then more sedately, under the dispassionate but watchful eye of a mounted member of -the traffic squad, lurched across the Plaza and merged itself in the press of vehicles south bound on the avenue.

Its tonneau held four young men, all more or less disguised in dust, dusters and goggles; forward, by the side of the grimy and anxious-eyed mechanic, sat a fifth, in all visible respects the counterpart of his companions. Beneath his mask, and by this I do not mean his goggles, but the mask of modern manner which the worldly wear, he was, and is, different. He was Daniel Maitland, Esquire; for whom no further introduction should be required, after mention of the fact that he was, and remains, the identical gentleman of means and position in the social and financial worlds, whose somewhat sober but sincere and wholehearted participation in the wildest of conceivable escapades had earned him the affectionate regard of the younger set, together with the sobriquet of "Mad Maitland."

His companions of the day, the four in the tonneau, were in that humor of long, hard drive over country roads. Maitland, on the other hand (judging him by his preoccupied pose), was already weary of, if not bored by, the hare-brained enterprise which, initiated on the spur of an idle moment and directly due to a thoughtless remark of his own, had brought him 100 miles (or so) through the heat of a broiling afternoon, accompanied by spirits as ardent and irresponsible as his own, in search of the dubious distraction afforded by the night side of

Az, picking its way with elephantine nicety, the motor car progressed down upon their bronze columns blossoming ceased to respond, ceased even to give land's own circle and acquaintance. (largely personal) which amused his a cigarette, he lounged upon the green and exceptional occasions (as when he was nothing keen for the evening's put his consciousness. leather cushions, half closing his eyes, one of the bachelors felt called upon enjoyment, Maitland made profit of and heartily wished himself free for to give a tea in partial recognition of the interval to wander through his the evening.

But he stood committed to the hu- never crossed its threshold. mor of the majority, and lacked entirely the shadow of an excuse to desert;

particularity the programme of the coming hours.

To begin with, 30 minutes were to be devoted to a bath and dressing in called down: his rooms. This was something not so unpleasant to contemplate. It was the afterwards that repelled him: Dinner at Sherry's, the subsequent tour of roof gardens, the late supper at a club, and then, prolonged far into the small hours, the session around some greencovered table in a close room reeking with the fumes of good tobacco and hot with the fever of gambling. . .

Abstractedly Maitland frowned, tersely summing up: "Beastly!"--in an undertone.

At this the green car wheeled ab ruptly round a corner below Thirtyfourth street, slid half a block or more east, and came to a palpitating halt. Maitland, looking up, recognized the entrance to his apartments, and sighed with relief for the brief respite from boredom that was to be his. He rose, negligently shaking off his duster,

and stepped down to the sidewalk. Somebody in the car called a warning after him, and turning for a moment he stood at attention, an eyebrow raised quizzically, cigarette drooping from a corner of his mouth, hat pushed back from his forehead. hands in coat pockets; a tall, slender, impraculately in flannels.

When at length he was able to make subdued yet vibrant excitement which himself heard: "Good enough," he said merely been his impression, honest is apt to attend the conclusion of a clearly, though without rasing his voice. "Sherry's in an hour. Right. Now, behave yourselves."

"Mind you show up on time!" "Never fear," returned Maitland over

his shoulder. A witticism was flung back at him from the retreating car, but spent itself unregarded. Maitland's attention was temporarily distracted by the unusual-to say the least-sight of a young and attractive woman coming his employer.

out of a home for confirmed bachelors. The apartment house happened to and old-fashioned edifice, situated in the middle of a quiet block, it conthe avenue-twilight deepening, arcs tained but five roomy and comfortable suites-in other words, one to a floor; suddenly, noiselessly into spheres of and these were without exception tenepalescent radiance-Mr. Maitland anted by unmarried men of Mait- night, called upon the janitor to underheed, to the running fire of chaff The janitor, himself a widower and a which O'Hagan could be counted upon convinced misogynist, lived alone in to do very acceptably. companions. Listlessly engaged with the basement. Barring very special

In this circumstance, indeed, was comprised the singular charm the that every article of furniture and layer of dust, was the silhouette of a in addition to which he was altogether house had for its occupants. The bric-a-brac seemed to be sadly in want too lazy for the exertion of manu- quality which insured them privacy of a thorough dusting. In the end he unmistakably feminine of contour. facturing a lie of serviceable texture, and a quiet independence rendered brought up in the room that served And so abandoned himself to his fate, them oblivious to its many minor him as study and lounge—the drawing even though he foresaw with weariful drawbacks, its lack of many conven- room of the fiat, as planned in the for-

lences and luxuries which have of late grown to be so commonly regarded as necessities. It boasted, for instance, no garage; no refrigerating system maddened those dependent upon it; a dissipated electric lighting system never went out of nights, because it had never been installed; no brassbound hall bey lounged in desuctude upon the stoop and took too intimate and personal an interest in the tenants' correspondence. The inhabitants, in brief, were free to come and go according to the dictates of their consciences, unsupervised by neighborly women folk, unhindered by a parasitic corps of menials not in their personal employ.

Wherefore was Maitland astonished, and the more so because of the season. At any other season of the year he would readily have accounted for the phenomenon that now fell under his observation, on the hypothesis that the woman was somebody's sister or cousin or aunt. But at present that explanation was untenable; Maitland happened to know that not one of the other men was in New York, barring himself; and his own presence there was a thing entirely unforeseen.

Still incredulous, he mentally conned the list; Barnes, who occupied the first flat, was traveling on the continent; Conkling, of the third, had left a fortnight since to join a yachting party on the Mediterranean; Bannister and Wilkes, of the fourth and fifth floors, respectively, were in Newport and Buenos Aires.

"Odd!" concluded Maitland.

So it was. She had just closed the door, one thought; and now stood poised as if in momentary indecision on the low stoop, glancing toward Fifth avenue the while she fumbled yet. with a refractory button at the wrist of a long white kid glove. Blurred though it was by the darkling twilight and a thin veil, her face yet conveyed an impression of prettiness; an impression enhanced by careful grooming. From her hat, a small affair, something green, with a superstructure of gray ostrich feathers, to the tips of her russet shoes-including a walking skirt and bolero of shimmering gray silk-she was distinctly 'smart" and interesting.

He had keenly observant eyes, had Maitland, for all his detached pose; you are to understand that he comprehended all these points in the flickering of an instant. For the incident was over in two seconds. In one the lady's hesitation was resolved; in another she had passed down the steps and swept by Maitland without giving him a glance, without even the trembling of an eyelash. And he had a view of her back as she moved swiftly away toward the avenue.

Perplexed, he lingered upon the stoop until she had turned the corner; after which he let himself in with a latch key, and, dismissing the affair temporarily from his thoughts, or pretending to do so, ascended the single flight of stairs to his flat.

Simultaneously heavy feet were to be heard clumping up the basement steps; and surmising that the janitor was and even business is better than rushcoming to light the hall, the young ing round town and pretending to enman waited, leaning over the balus, joy yourself when it's hotter than the ters. His guess proving correct, he

"O'Hagan? Is that you?"

"Th' saints presarve us! But 'twas versilf gave me th' sthart. Misther the room, where stood the telephone Maitland, sor!" O'Hagan paused in upon a small side table, sat down, and, the gloom below, his upturned face quaintly illuminated by the flame of a wax taper in his gaslighter.

"I'm dining in town to-night, O'Hagan, and dropped around to dress. Is anybody else at home?"

"Nivver a wan, sor. Shure, th' house

do be quiet's anny tomb-" "Then who was that lady, O'Hagan?" "Leddy, sor?"-in unbounded amaze-

"Yes," impatiently. "A young woman left the house just as I was com-

ing in. Who was she?" "Shure an' I think ye must be dr'amin', sor. Divvle/a female-rayspicts to ye!-has been in this house for manny an' manny th' wake, sor."

"But, I tell you-"Belike 'twas somewan jist sthepped into the vesthibule, mebbe to tie her shoe, sor, and ye thought-

"Oh, very well." Maitland relinquished the inquisition as unprofitable, willing to concede O'Hagan's theory a reasonable one, the more readily since sparsely built figure of a man, clothed | he himself could by no means have sworn that the woman had actually come out through the door. Such had enough, but founded on circumstantial evidence.

"When you're through, O'Hagan," he told the Irishman, "you may come and shave me and lay out my things, if you will."

"Very good, sor. In wan minute." But O'Hagan's conception of the passage of time was a thought vague; his one minute had lengthened into ten before he appeared to wait upon

Now and again, in the absence of the regular "man," O'Hagan would atbe his own property. A substantial tend one or another of the tenants in the capacity of substitute valet; as in the present instance, when Maitland, having left his host's roof without troubling even to notify his body-servant that he would not return that study the more trained employe;

Now, with patience unruffled, since social obligations), the foot of woman rooms, lighting the gas here and the black polished wood of the writingthere and noting that all was as it should be, as it had been left-save beside, clearly defined in the heavy

gotten architect's scheme-a large and well-lighted apartment overlooking the street. Here, pausing beneath the chandelier, he looked about him for a moment, determining that, as elsewhere, all things were in order-but gray with dust.

Finding the atmosphere heav, stale, and oppressive, Maitland moved over to the windows and threw them open. A gush of warm air, humid and redoent of the streets, invaded the room, together with the rear of traffic from its near by arteries. Maitland rested elbows on the sill and leaned out, staring absently into the night; for by now it was quite dat .. Without concern, he realized that he would be late at dinner. No matter; he would as willingly miss it altogether. For the time being he was absorbed in vain speculations about an unknown woman whose sole claim upon his consideration lay in a certain but immaterial glamour of mystery. Had she, or had she not, been in the house? And, if the true answer were in the affirmative, to what end, upon what errand?

His eyes focused insensibly upon a void of darkness beneath him-night made visible by street lamps; and he found himself suddenly and acutely sensible of the wonder and mystery of the City; the City whose secret life ran fluent upon the bot, hard pavemeats below, whose voice throbbed. sibilant, vague, strident, inacticulate, upon the night air; the City of which he was a part equally with the girl in gray, whom he had never before seen, and in all likelihood was never to see again, though the two of them were to work out their destinles within the bounds of Manhattan island. And

"It would be strange," said Maitland thoughtfully, "If . . ." He shook his head, smiling. "'Two shall be born," quoted Mad Maitland, sentimentally-

"Two shall be born the whole wide world apart-"

A piano organ, having maliciously sneaked up beneath his window, drove him indoors with a crash of metallic melody.

As he dropped the curtains his eye was arrested by a gleam of white upon his desk-a letter placed there, doubtless, by O'Hagan in Maitland's absence. At the same time, a splashing and gurgling of water from the direction of the bathroom informed him that the janitor-valet was even then preparing his bath. But that could

Maitland took up the envelope and tore the flap, remarking the name and address of his lawyer in its upper lefthand corner. Unfolding the inclosure, he read a date a week old, and two lines requesting him to communicate with his legal adviser upon "a matter of pressing moment."

"Bother!" said Maitland. "What the dickens-"

He pulled up short, eyes lighting. "That's so, you know," he argued "Bannerman will be delighted, andseven brass hinges of hell and you can't think of anything else. I'll do it!"

He stepped quickly to the corner of receiver to ear, gave central a number. In another moment he was in communication with his attorney's residence. "Is Mr. Bannerman in? I would like

to-" "Why, Mr. Bannerman! How do

you do?' "You're looking 100 per cent. bet-

ter-" "Bad, mad word! Naughty!-"

"Maitland, of course." "Been out of town and just got your

note." "Your beastly penchant for economy. It's not stamped; I presume you sent it round by hand of the future president of the United States whom you now employ as office boy. And

"Important, eh? I'm only in for the night-"

O'Hagan didn't forward it for that

reason.'

"Then come and dine with me at the Primordial. I'll put the others off." "Good enough. In an hour, then? Good-by."

Hanging up the receiver, Maitland waited a few moments ere again putting it to his ear. This time he called up Sherry's, asked for the head-waiter, and requested that person to be kind enough to make his excuses to "Mr. Cressy and party;" he, Maltland, was detained upon a matter of moment, but would endeavor to join them at a later hour.

Then, with a satisfied smile, he turned away, with purpose to dispose of Bannerman's note. "Bath's ready, sor."

O'Hagan's announcement fell upon heedless ears. Maitland remained motionless before the desk-transfixed with amazement.

"Bath's ready, sor!"-imperatively. Maitland roused slightly. "Very well; in a minute, O'Hagan."

Yet for some time he did not move. Slowly the heavy brows contracted over intent eyes as he strove to puzzle it out. At length his lips moved noiselessly.

"Am I awake?" was the question he

Wondering, he bent forward and drew the tip of one forefinger across bed. It left a dark, heavy line. And hand; a woman's hand, small, delicate

"Well!" declared Maitland, frankly "I am damned!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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