

MRS. HAROLD STAGG.

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CHAPTER IV.—(Continued.)

For the next three hours a steady stream of festively clad women and swallow-tail-coated men swept past the spot where Mrs. Stagg had stationed herself to receive. Eleanor stood at her side, a trifle in the background, courtesying low when her aunt courtesied in mute acknowledgment of the announcements made by the ushers in attendance as to who was who. Before this bewildering ordeal was properly at an end, a youth invited her to wait; thereupon, having received a smiling nod of permission from her aunt, she went away with him to the ballroom, which was already possessed by whirling couples. Successive partners claimed her, and with each new trial her confidence increased. Soon she was flying over the smooth floor as blithely as any, flushed with triumph, radiant, panting, indifferently conscious that her dress was torn, scarcely hearing what was said to her and scarcely knowing what she said. Then it was supper time, and she had a chance to sit down and try to comprehend the gala scene, while more youths flitted about her like moths, hardly introduced before they were gone, yet sometimes returning for a moment as though not unwilling to become fascinated.

The german was led by Eleanor and a young man experienced in such matters, and daylight was peeping through the windows before the last polka had come to a close, eliciting a melodramatic sigh from the half-dozendancers who still remained on the floor, and stopped now only at the command of obdurate parents. Fifteen minutes later, Emma and Eleanor were sitting on a sofa sipping hot bouillon by daylight, amid the debris of the ball room. Harold had slipped away to bed, but the two women preferred to talk the party over before retiring. Eleanor's cheeks were still flushed with excitement, and she seemed as loath to separate herself from the mass of bouquets and german knick-knacks in her lap, or pendant from her person, as a hem from her chickabiddy.

"Well, my dear," said Emma, with a contented smile that lapsed into a yawn as she leaned back against the cushions, "what did you think of it?"

"Oh, I had a gorgeous time, and I'm so sorry it's over. I enjoyed every minute, and I shall never forget your kindness, Aunt Emma—yours and Uncle Harold's."

"This is only a beginning—of many similar times, I mean. As you get to know more people you will enjoy yourself still more. I must say, though, you were decidedly a belle. How many favors?"

"Sixteen in all; and I felt beforehand that if I got even two I should be fortunate. Aren't they lovely?" she added, burying her face in a bunch of roses, and holding it out for inspection.

Emma smiled cogitatively.

"Who gave them to you?" she asked.

"I've been trying to remember. There were several from men I didn't know the names of. Mr. Moore gave me a bouquet, so did Mr. Page; and one of the plumes was from Mr. Warren. Then I think a Mr. Porter or Cotter—I couldn't make out the name exactly."

"Alec Trotter, probably."

"Oh, yes; I remember one of the others called him 'Alec.' Well, he gave me a bouquet."

"He's a great swell, but he won't be flattered when I tell him that you called him 'Porter' and 'Cotter.' The Trotters think there is no name to conjure with but theirs."

"Oh! you mustn't let him know, Aunt Emma."

"You foolish child! Tell me, how did you get along with Mr. Page?"

"Very well, I think. He talked to me at supper and several times in the german. He dances beautifully."

"Owen Page is a very nice fellow," said Emma, unequivocally.

"It's a pretty name. There was a cobbler at home named Owen Glynn, and I used to think that if I ever wrote a novel I would name the hero after him; but Owen Page is more aristocratic."

"He is named after his grandfather, who died two or three years ago, leaving a great deal of money. His mother and his father are dead, and he and his two sisters—they were both here to-night—came in for the whole of it. Last winter he was in Europe, but I fancy he means to devote himself to going about at home this year."

Such was Eleanor's introduction into society, and, as her aunt had foretold, the ball at the Stagg's was but the first of a series of entertainments at which she appeared during the season. Emma knew well that nothing but eternal vigilance would save her from becoming merely one of the mass of girls who went to party after party to dance with the stupid or awkward men. Thanks to the instruction bestowed on her, she did not offend by peculiarities, and was even extremely presentable; but though pretty and pleasant-looking, she was not much more so than the average, and she was undeniably quiet—dull even, Mrs. Stagg believed in her heart of hearts. It was only reasonable to expect that after the glamor of the ball was over she would sink into obscurity. Why not? She was Harold Stagg's niece, but he had children of his own, and might well have more; no one knew anything about her except this, and

really there was nothing else to say. So the clever woman argued, and accordingly felt conscientious reasons for continuing strenuously her good work in behalf of her young relative. She had started to do her best for Eleanor, and she would continue to the end without faltering. Not that she found it irksome or chafed under it; on the contrary, it rather interested her; but she never disguised from herself for a moment the difficulties of the situation.

CHAPTER V.

And so to begin with, she carried Eleanor everywhere, day after day and night after night. They lived in a perpetual whirl of luncheons, teas, inner parties, receptions and germans, waltzing into the small hours.

There was so much more credit due to Mrs. Stagg for her self-sacrifice and devotion from the fact that, though she put on such a resolute front, she felt secretly from the first by no means confident that her efforts could prove successful. If, as she said to herself on more than one occasion, Eleanor were only full of animal spirits—one of the saucy or rollicking kind who amused men by saying whatever came into their heads—the chances were that, with so much backing, she would get along. But would anyone trouble himself to be more than decently civil to a young woman without prospects, who was pensive and retiring, and, though possibly intellectual, so far as book-learning went, without the faculty of entertaining people in general society? Emma was apt to sigh whenever she thought of the outlook. Therefore she saw with feelings which closely resembled emotion the evident liking which Owen Page was beginning to display for Eleanor's company. She had been gratified on the night of the ball by his showing the child some attention, but the idea that it was more than the ordinary politeness which a gentleman is apt to show at the coming-out party of a pretty girl never occurred to her, though naturally she was pleased at it, and had made a point of letting Eleanor understand that he was the desirable kind of man to know. When, at each of the next few parties, he again spoke to her, Emma supposed that he had felt pity at seeing her deserted, comparatively speaking, in spite of the ball; for, though she had not been absolutely without partners, there had been no repetition for her of the triumphs of the first evening.

The assumption that he danced and talked to her out of charity seemed, however, improbable, in the face of his continue to do so; and Emma, though she did not dare to frame any extravagant hypothesis, could not refrain from asking herself what it meant. Why should a man like Owen Page devote himself to Eleanor unless he were more or less fascinated by her? To be sure, he might simply be flirting; but, no, he would scarcely be cruel enough to try deliberately to engage the affections of a simple-minded, simple-mannered girl solely for the gratification of his own vanity; for there was so much higher game. There could be no doubt that he was attracted by her; otherwise, why did he never let an entertainment pass without seeking her out? Not that his attentions were particularly ardent or exclusive, but they were unremitting. Eleanor was one of the girls he always danced with and talked to. It might mean absolutely nothing; nine chances out of ten it did. But even granting that he were amusing himself at her expense, his constant attendance on her must necessarily give her prestige; and there was, of course, the bare possibility—a possibility which stirred the blood in Emma's veins whenever she thought of it, though she promptly dismissed it as out of the question—that he might be falling in love with her. Stranger things had happened, and in affairs of the heart it was frequently the unexpected which did happen. King Cophetua married a beggarmaid, and why not Owen Page, Eleanor? Not a soul could say that she would not make him a thoroughly suitable wife.

While thus pondering and avoiding premature elation, Emma took care not to let the grass grow under her feet in connection with the matter. She knew enough not to frighten off the possible lover by indecently frequent invitations to the house, or by seeming to take particular notice of his attentions, but she kept her eyes constantly open and lost advantage of no opportunity of throwing them together. Though, to tell the truth, there was little need, as it appeared, of intervention or diplomacy on her part; the young millionaire himself continued to seek every opportunity afforded for continuing the acquaintance. He called on Eleanor, he took her out on his coach, he gave her a theater party, and one day he sent her a basket of magnificent roses without there seeming to be any excuse for it. This last overt act fairly took Emma's breath away, and that evening, when she found an opportunity to speak to Harold alone, she remarked:

"Do you know, my dear, that I am really beginning to think that Owen Page is seriously attentive to Eleanor."

"Why don't you say something?" she exclaimed, with impatience, as her husband continued to smoke placidly. "Do you realize what that means? I don't half dare acknowledge it myself, but I verily believe he is seriously smitten. He scarcely takes his

eyes off her, and you saw the superb basket he sent this morning. My dear, do you realize what it means?"

"I realize that I admire your superb coolness in picking out about the richest young man in New York as a husband for your damsel," he said, removing his cigar with an amused smile. "Only the best is good enough for you, ha, ha!"

"You are crazy, Harold. Do you imagine that I ever in my sober senses would have conceived for a moment that there was the slightest chance in that direction? Of course, if I had, I would have made the most of it, as any woman would. I don't pretend to be superior in virtue to the rest of my sex, but do give me credit for a little common sense. Why should Owen Page, who has the pick of half a dozen cities to choose from, if he is matrimonially inclined, devote himself to a girl like Eleanor? Very likely it means absolutely nothing; I have tried to shut my eyes to it and persuade myself that such is the case, but facts are facts, my dear. And the most difficult part of all for me to make out," she added, in a confidential whisper, "is what he finds in her."

"I don't see why Eleanor isn't all right," Harold replied, stoutly, after a moment.

"Well, so she is, of course; I'm not saying anything against the child, especially in view of the fact that he seems to be in love with her; but you must understand what I mean. If it weren't that she's your niece, do you suppose you'd ever give her a second thought, if you were introduced to her, beyond agreeing that she was a rather pretty, well-dressed little girl, with sufficiently good manners and not much snap. The manners and the dressing are mine, though they count just the same, and I'd have done my best for Eleanor if she'd been a great deal worse than she was, but there's no use in trying to make her out anything superior to the common run, for she isn't. Compare her with a dozen girls one could mention and she would be nowhere. You know it as well as I; and because we are fond of her, there is no use in refusing to recognize the truth. If Owen Page offers himself to her, it will be a marvelous instance of good fortune."

"Don't count your chickens," remarked her husband, somewhat doggedly.

"That is precisely what I am avoiding doing; but surely you'll agree that she'd be very lucky."

"Oh, Page is a good fellow enough, and he has stacks of money, if that's what you want."

Emma looked painfully into distance; then, with a writhe of her neck, said with dignity:

"One would think, from your tone, I were a mercenary marriage-monger. I 'want' nothing. I have brought out Eleanor just as I would my own daughter, and under far greater difficulties. If, within the next five years, she were to marry any respectable young man of our acquaintance, we ought to feel very grateful, and yet, when, in her very first season, a man whom everybody considers charming, and who would be able to give her all that money can buy, deliberately pays her marked attention, and saves her, if nothing else, from having a horrid time wherever she goes, you, Harold Stagg, get up on a high horse and make disagreeable insinuations."

"Now, cherub, you know I was only fooling. You were bearing Eleanor in the market, so I thought I'd have a drive at the other fellow, to get a rise out of you. Come, now, I'll agree it's an ideal match; and if it ever comes to pass, I'll see that you get all the credit for it."

"Which is precisely what I shall not deserve, goosey-possey," said Emma, whose good humor was restored, leaning over her liege's chair and dallying with his short curls.

(To be continued.)

The Musical Russians.

Russian people are natural musicians. Accordingly every Russian youth as a rule takes to playing on some one of the national instruments. One of these is a curious three-stringed guitar called a "balalaika." Another is the square, old-fashioned concertina or accordion, known as the "agarmouka," which is greatly loved throughout the land by the muziks. Taking his instrument in his hand, young Ivan or Stepan goes courting on the long winter nights. If not he is apt to spend far too much of his time in the "kabak" or "traktir," and if he imbibes too freely of vodka he is apt, after being turned out late at night, to be found by the police lying in the snow with his agarmouka under his arm.

Aborigines of Japan.

Little is heard of the aborigines of Japan, at one time a savage tribe, now occupying the northern portion of the empire, and numbering about 17,000. Their mode of living is wild, hunting and fishing being their chief occupations. They live in rude huts containing two windows, one for ordinary use, and the other reserved for the entrance of the gods. Women are a scarcity in the tribe, there being eight men to every woman, hence wife stealing is a common offense. Anyone accused of this offense is tried in a rather barbarous way, having to lift a stone out of boiling water. If not guilty it is supposed the man will be unharmed.

China's Naval Resources.

China has still 90 ships in her fleet. These vary from first-class cruisers to small tug boats. She has no battleships.

Hit's a mighty good think fer folks what's always growlin' at de world dat de world's too busy ter talk back at 'em.

HOW GUESTS OF CHICAGO HOTEL DIED IN SMOKE AND FLAMES

Imprisoned in a fire-trap hotel, fourteen men were suffocated at day-break on the morning of December 4 at Chicago. Only twenty minutes elapsed after the alarm was sounded until the flames were extinguished, but in that time fourteen guests of the overcrowded Lincoln hotel, 176 Madison street, blindly groping in the dense smoke, had perished in the narrow hallway and closet-like bedrooms of the top floor.

Chicago that morning and slept in his mail car. Philip Koch of Janesville, Wis., saved himself by sliding to the ground by means of a rope made from strips of his bed sheet. W. J. Thomas, another mail clerk, climbed to a window on the fourth floor and was rescued by firemen just as he was. H. G. McMasters of Minneapolis, a mail clerk who usually occupied the room about to drop from exhaustion. Olaf Oldorf climbed downward

the hall made it impossible for anyone to keep his senses.

"The smell of smoke was strong in my room when the noise awoke me. It must have been filtering through the cracks of the door, for some time. I was partly dressed and attempted to find the electric light bulb. It had seemed just over my head when I went to bed in the evening, but in my excitement it might as well have been in the clouds. I made a frantic plunge for the door, which I remembered that I had bolted. I could not find the bolt, and in the darkness and excitement imagined that my end had surely come. Then I tried again for the electric light. I gave a gasp of relief as my hand struck it. The current was still on at that time, and I found the bolt which held me a prisoner in my room.

"As I opened the door a blinding cloud of smoke rolled into the room. The narrow hallway seemed to be full of shouting and struggling men. It was impossible to distinguish them. As I stepped from my room the light behind me flickered a moment and disappeared. I suppose it was when the fuses burned out. My room was at the head of the stairway, or I would never have found it. I heard some one shout, 'Here they are!' Immediately there was a despairing chorus from all sides of 'Where? Where?' Those of us that could grope in the direction from which had come the cry of hope.

"As each man found the stairs he would give a shout of encouragement to those further down the hall and trying to follow him. The smoke was rapidly becoming heavier and more stifling. Below us could be heard the roar of the flames from the rear. No one lingered longer than necessary after finding the way to possible safety."

Meantime the firemen and several patrolmen had again started to climb the stairs in the hope of reaching the upper floors. Detective Sergeants Anderson and Ellsworth managed to reach the top of the building. In a corner near the head of the stairway they found Mrs. Mina Belder, her 11-year-old daughter Cora, and Mrs. Geo. Clett and her 9-year-old son. Removing their overcoats, which they threw over the shivering women, the two detectives carried them down the stairs to a place of safety in an adjoining building.

Mrs. June Shepherd of Cairo, Ill., who was occupying a room on the fourth floor with her 10-year-old son Fred, was awakened by the smoke. Rushing to the door, she opened it, only to find the hallway filled with flames. Screaming, she slammed the door and started toward the window. Her son grasped her clothing and clung fast until the two were rescued by the firemen.

Mrs. Shepherd's screams awakened several persons in the rooms adjoining her own, and doubtless saved their lives.

Aged Statesman in Good Health. John Bigelow, a former United States minister to France, has entered



Bodies Waiting to be Conveyed to the Morgue.

In the sixty diminutive rooms of the hotel 125 persons were crowded when the flames broke out. Only fourteen of them were residents of Chicago. The others were stockmen and farmers attracted here by the live stock show or railway mail clerks and traveling men who could not secure accommodations at other hotels.

All the space possible was utilized. Even the hallway closets contained cots on which men were asleep, though there was not enough room in these improvised bedrooms for a chair in addition to the cot. In one room on the top floor the window of which opened to the only fire escape on the building, was a bed and a cot, an effective barrier, in the darkness and smoke, to this means of escape. With almost the first burst of flame the fuses on the electric switchboards burned out, stopping the elevators and leaving the building in total darkness.

Before the fire department could arrive, in response to the alarm were flames roaring from the rear windows of the building. Faces, white with terror, were appearing at the front windows of the upper story. From the sides of the ill-fated building men and women, shivering and half clad, were leaping or sliding to the roofs of the adjoining buildings.

The cries of the men imprisoned on the top floors could be heard above the clatter of the fire engines and the roar of the flames. The proprietor of the hotel asserts that he started to mount to the endangered men and lead them to the windows where they could safely reach the roofs on either side of the hotel, but that he was stopped by the firemen. At that time, he declares, all could have been saved if some one familiar with the upper floor had been allowed to show them the way to the windows. The firemen contradicted this, and say no one could have reached the fourth floor through the rapidly increasing volumes of smoke. When fire-insurance patrol No. 6, arrived, its members started up the stairs from the office to the third floor to rescue the men, whose cries were rapidly becoming weaker, but their captain refused to permit them to face almost certain suffocation, and ordered them to return.

The escapes of some of the occupants of the rooms were little short of miraculous. Six men, a woman and a little boy, saved themselves by jumping to the roof of a restaurant, adjoining the hotel on the west. Four mail clerks, who said they had a premonition of danger, arose at 4:30 o'clock, dressed, and left the hotel. J. H. Foster, another mail clerk, who occupied the room with Corey and Ewing, both of whom are dead, received a telegram early in the evening that his wife was ill and hurried away from the hotel to her bedside, leaving his valise with his fellow clerks.

room with Corey and Ewing, was nearly an hour late in arriving in



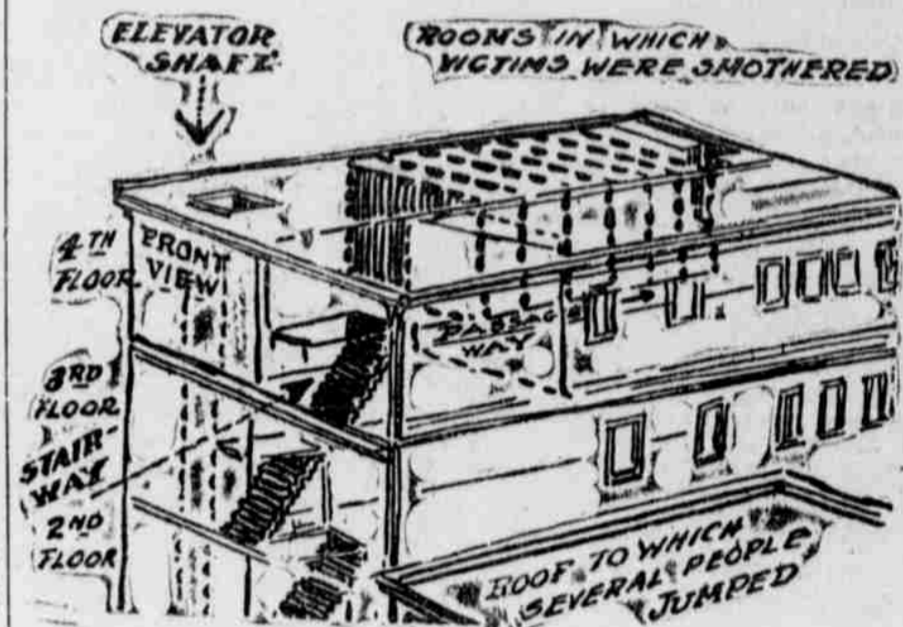
Mother and Son Saved from Fire.



Fred Shepard. Mrs. J. Shepard.

himself. H. E. Jett of St. Paul was awakened by the screams of a woman and, with four other half-clad men ran into the street and was given refuge in a saloon. The same screams awoke Edward Davenport and J. N. Westerland of Chicago. They were members of the party that was saved by jumping to the roof of the restaurant.

John W. Higgs of Lansing, Mich., escaped from the upper floor with the



Arrangement of Hall and Rooms on Fourth Floor.

loss of only his coat and vest and collar.

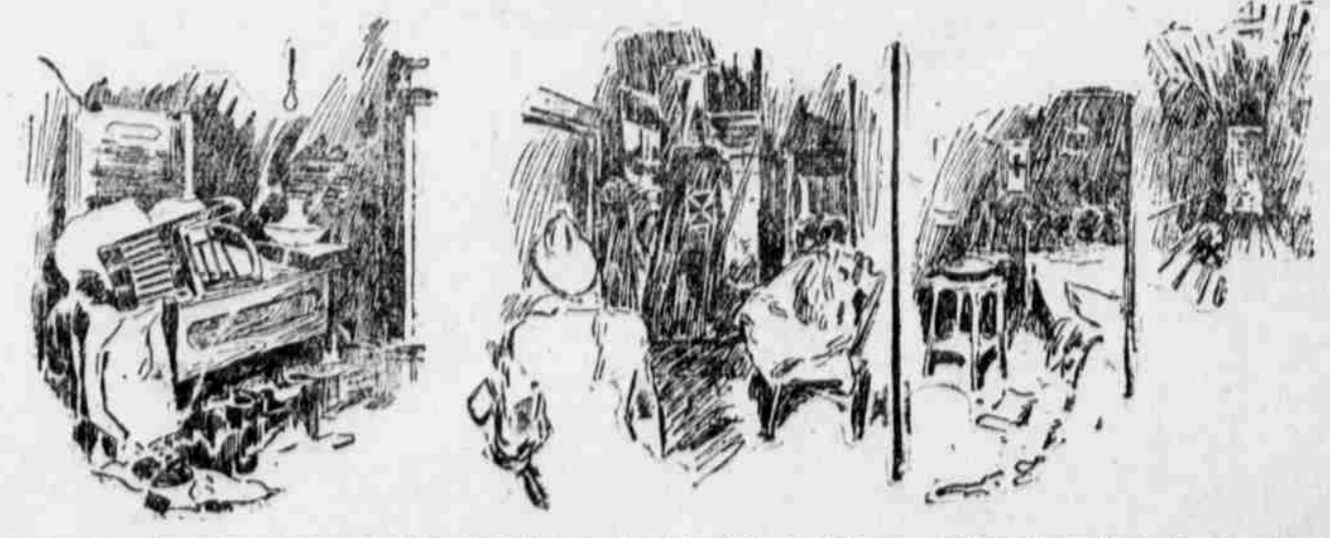
"If it had not been for the shouts of those who had already found the stairs, I would never have gotten out alive," he said. "The building was in absolute darkness, so dense that a person could see nothing. To add to this the smoke was so thick that breathing was almost impossible and the screaming and confusion of persons running wildly back and forth in

upon his eighty-fifth year apparently in the best of health. He was hale and hearty at a recent family gathering at his home in Gramercy Park, Mr. Bigelow was born at Maiden, N. Y., on Nov. 29, 1817.

Air in Southern China.

In southern China the air is so humid in summer that, despite the intense heat, clothes cannot be dried in the open air.

Scenes Inside Lincoln Hotel, Showing Where Lives Were Lost.



Room on fourth floor, where two men were found suffocated in bed. Entrance to elevator shaft at rear of fourth floor. Cross marks shaft. Scenes on top floor. Crosses show narrow windows through which escapes were made and spots in hallway where three bodies were found.