

# The TWICE AMERICAN

By ELEANOR M. INGRAM

## CHAPTER VII.

The Letter to a Lady Named Rose.

"You know, dear Rose, I promised to write you of my experiences, and what they did to me. Well, I have kept my promise! And it has not been easy to tell you. I would have liked to keep this year hidden from you, of all people on earth; and from your father. But it would not be honest to do so. You were always strong for honesty, Rose. I don't mean only because you may not care to write to me again. There is something else. I have just told you how Nilo Valdez said it was the duty of every citizen of the republic to repeat the story of David Noel's generosity to everyone who would listen. Rose, I have a queer feeling—no logic to it—just a feeling—that it would not be honest to Noel to conceal from you his kindness to me. I don't know whether any one else could understand that feeling; I know you will. I am a worm and you are a firefly, but we have some mental meeting places, haven't we?"

"I have been in this house a month, now. It is three weeks since Noel came home for the first time after bringing me here, was at work with Nilo Valdez, in the evening, when I looked up to see Noel in the doorway watching us. Since then, he treats me almost as he does Valdez."

Corey Bruce straightened in his chair with an unwarranted change of color and pulled a blotter over the letter on the desk before him.

"I did not hear you come in, Dom David," he stammered, with that guilty embarrassment upon him which usually overtakes a man when found speaking of another, however inoffensively.

Noel sank into a chair opposite the desk, motioning the other man to keep his position.

"I am interrupting you," he remarked perfunctorily. "You were writing a letter, I see."

"Yes. A letter home. You see, it is a year since, since—"

"A year since your family heard of you?"

Bruce faced the detected disapproval in the tone. A flush colored his thin face; he had the transparent complexion corresponding with his red hair, rendered more transparent by his long confinement. He nervously took off his glasses and replaced them before replying.

"Oh, I really meant North," he explained. "I haven't a home, in the intimate sense. No parents living. No brothers or sisters. A cousin and—everyone has relations more or less distant or indifferent. I suppose, but they hardly make a home."

"I have no kin at all," Noel stated. He took a cigar from a humidor on the desk, looking at it abstractedly. "Most men have, of course. Your first name is a family name, is it not?"

"Yes, my mother's family name was Corey."

Noel continued to look at the cigar he had taken, without lighting it.

"Yes? You are a New Yorker, I think you said?"

"A Philadelphian, Dom David," Bruce corrected. "But there are branches of both sides of our family in New York, both Bruces and Coreys."

"Yes, I thought that possible."

Struck by some indefinable significance in his companion's tone, Bruce peered at him, hesitating. Noel lifted his gray eyes to the inquiring brown ones for a moment, seeming to scrutinize his features in a search for some vague resemblance. If he found what he sought, he said nothing. He returned his attention to the cigar without comment, yet the gleam of a new idea enlightened Bruce's vision. Noel was, or had been a New Yorker; he himself had said so.

"Did—do you perhaps know some of my people at home?" he wondered.

"Perhaps," said Noel. "I was about to ask you that question. No doubt there are a good many people of that name in the city, yet it is possible that I did know—your family. There was, perhaps still is, a brownstone house on one of the avenues; a house that used to have a large aquarium in a front window."

"Madison avenue!" Bruce eagerly followed the lead. "Why, yes. My father was born there."

"Ah? There was a little girl named Constance Bruce who lived there once?"

"My cousin! Yes. You knew them, then?"

"I knew the little girl," said David Noel, his voice very quiet.

"Constance? But she is grown up." Bruce stared at Noel's strong vigorous figure and incisive face. Certainly, he thought, Noel must have been a boy when Constance was a child. There could hardly be more than five or six year's difference in age between Noel and his cousin. What could that time have to do with the present?

"Yes, it was a long time ago," Noel answered the other's doubt. "She is well, I hope, and happy? As a child she seemed both."

"Oh, yes! She was when I last heard from her. That was some time ago, though. The fact is"—Bruce fidgeted with the desk fittings, then perceived that he had uncovered a corner of his letter and hurriedly moved the blotter over it—"the fact is, Constance's people are the wealthy branch of the family. I never saw a great deal of them, after my mother died and I grew up. I was too busy. Working my way through

college, and all that sort of thing. I usually spent a short time there each vacation. Constance is a handsome girl, and kept on the social merry-go-round nowadays."

Noel nodded and at last proceeded to light his cigar. He looked suddenly uninterested, almost bored. The unbroken reticence of years concerning that inner life wherein he cherished the image of the princess of the little shoes, the concealment of its very existence, had developed jealous sensitiveness almost morbid upon that subject. Noel did not like to hear Constance's name handled with cousinly offhandedness; the name he himself never spoke aloud. He had found out what he wanted to know about Cory Bruce; now he wished to abandon the subject. At least, for the present. He had not the slightest intention of taking Bruce across the threshold of his mind. He was even willing to take elaborate precautions to prevent that intrusion. Perhaps, also, he was stirred with his first misgivings as to the possibility of making a childish dream into the solid fabric of life for a man and a woman. The Constance evoked by Bruce's speech was no phantom, but an actual modern woman, perhaps too actual!

"Senhor Ferraz will be here, this evening, bringing more of those reports upon which you and Valdez are working," he remarked, laying his extinguished match in the tray. "I mean the secret census of the Germans in this country. Remember, this matter is not to be spoken of except to Valdez or to me. The fact that the census is being taken, is known to very few."

Bruce hardly heard the caution. His mind had been actively employed for the last moments in egotistical human fashion with his own affairs. He went on, not with a reply to Noel's speech, but with a continuation of his own thoughts during the interval.

"Then that was why you came to Rio Nabuco after me! That is why you took me from the prison and brought me here! You recognized my name as one you knew."

Noel's black brows knotted, his eyes narrowed to flashes of very light grey in his dark face.

"I thought that I had told you why I brought you here to work for me," he retorted. "Was not once enough, Mr. Bruce?"

Bruce shook his head, rising in his excitement and resolve, so that he looked down at the man in the chair. He could not, of course, know how he intruded in forbidden places.

"No, General Noel. You see, I can't believe that at all. Why, it is not even reasonable. Why should you take a convict from Rio Nabuco to practise English with you? If you were in earnest at all when you spoke about my gossiping, why, you must have known there was nothing to gossip about. You speak better English than I do, now; so if ever you do slip into the wrong kind, you could laugh it off and no one would ever imagine—anything." He floundered, and recovered himself.

"If you did choose to use such a man for such a reason, why should you bring him into your house as a guest and treat him with the most delicate kindness? Kindness! It's—It's consideration! I do not know why you like to hide your kindness and, and masquerade as indifferent. Perhaps you are afraid I would expect the impossible and ask you to turn me loose. I shall not, of course. But I do wish you would tell if I'm not right in guessing that you took me from Rio Nabuco because you know some of my family. If I'm wrong, if you only brought me here to use me as you say, I'm content and grateful. But unless it is so, don't tell me that you only trust me because you have got the prison to hold over me like a club. That kills what poor self respect I've got left; it is rank in every breath I take. If it is so, why, I've nothing to say. But if it is not, I wish you would tell me so."

The stammering, fervent protest pierced Noel with a conviction of selfish cruelty. He knew why he had masqueraded, as Bruce called it; but he had not known how hardly that masquerade of his motives fell on the other man. He had thought only that he wanted no premature unveiling of his dream of the Princess Constance. He did not want his romance known before he made it known to her, and if by some chance he failed in winning her, he could not bear that it should ever be known at all. Nor did he want her to suppose, when he went to her eventually, that he had tried to buy her favors by kindness to her kinsman; but neither was he willing to seltzer his own pride behind Corey Bruce's humiliation. Simply, he had not considered Bruce's point of view. He rose now, with the extreme southern courtesy which seemed formal in northern eyes, but which long custom had made natural to him as to a Latin.

"You are right, and I was wrong," he conceded without reserve. "I might have been more frank with you—I should have been! Yet you must remember that I knew nothing of you personally, before I met you at Rio Nabuco. You might have been the kind of man best left in prison; or best returned to it. There is no reason why you should not know that your name caught my eye, in a set of registers I had occasion to examine. I had investigations made, and found you were an American engineer. I had the

minutes of your trial brought to me, and read them over with Nilo Valdez. Your trial did not seem to me to have been conducted without prejudice, neither did it to Nilo. Also, I knew Rio Nabuco and what it would mean to a white man. I should have investigated the case, had you been a stranger in every way. Suspecting you to be of a family I respect, I thought investigation an urgent duty. So the next time I was in that neighborhood, I rode over to see you. Now, is the air clear between us?"

Bruce gripped the hand offered him, struggling with his usual inarticulateness.

"I am glad that you spoke frankly," Noel filled the empty moment. "We will say that Rio Nabuco is forgotten. If you are content in my house, I am content also. Put it on the ground that we are both American, if you like. Have you seen Valdez recently? In his room? Thank you, I will see him there."

Bruce did not at once renew his letter writing after Noel had gone. He sat down again and drew out the letter, then remained for a long time leaning upon the desk, head in hand. The attitude implied nothing of desperation or grief. On the contrary he thought of all the loathsomeness of Nabuco was drawing away from him as he sat there, like an unseen presence driven afar. Now he could feel gratitude to Noel without loss of self-respect. He could give rein to his cordial liking for Nilo Valdez. Had not Noel said that he and Valdez had investigated the trial, and had not their verdict been expressed when the prisoner was brought to their home, and accepted into pleasant intimacy? Yes, they were friends.

Fourteen years of his sentence remained to be served. His plans for his life and career were, of course, hopelessly shattered. He recognized that, but he was still incapable of realizing it; the present relief was too profound. He had recovered much during the last four weeks, but he was still a man exhausted mentally and physically. It was almost, he thought, as if he had died instead of the Indian whom he had shot, and had awakened in another world. The ambitions of his former life seemed faint, futile things; pathetic, perhaps, but too far behind him to claim much consideration. Other purposes must fill the coming years. Just now, to remain in the Villa Noel was enough. That, and to be able to write to Rose.

After a long time, he straightened himself in his chair and rubbed his hot face with his handkerchief. The heat was unusual, even in the shaded room. He thought of the probable atmosphere in the underground cell at Rio Nabuco, and recoiled with sick disgust from the reply of his two excellent memories. Suppose Noel had not noticed his name on that prison register? He shuddered in a horror of the place, greater even than he had felt when he dwelt there.

When his hand was steadier, he drew towards him the letter; the unfinished letter to a woman called Rose. He gazed at it soberly, then took up his pen. At first he wrote slowly, then more and more rapidly, his heart driving his hand. When he finally ceased, he was surprised and somewhat dismayed at the number of sheets of paper he had covered, throwing them about the desk in his excitement. He began to assemble and number the pages, folding them together with methodical neatness.

They made quite a formidable bulk, altogether. Bruce snapped a rubber band about the packet, then ruefully contemplated the result. Decidedly, the letter resembled a legal document rather than a dainty epistle to a lady. He had a vision of small fingers tugging at the heavy band.

"It looks like most things I mail. I do hate the Dutch at everything!" He muttered aloud, petulantly choosing a large manila envelope as the only possible container.

He hardly knew that he had spoken his complaint aloud, until someone's shadow fell across the space before him, putting out the little glittering lights struck by the sunshine from the crystal and copper fittings of the desk. Expecting to see Valdez or Noel behind him, and somewhat embarrassed at his display of ill temper, he turned, and collided with a man who had stolen up to look over the writer's shoulder.

The two came together with considerably violence. Bruce's spectacles were knocked away by the intruder's chin, so unanticipated by either man had had been the collision.

The blinking American raised his hand to replace the spectacles before he thought of speaking, but a brusque gesture of the other man's struck his arm and sent the glasses tinkling to the floor. Bruce uttered a cry of veritable anguish, stammering in his angry distress.

"What—what? My glasses!"

The man made no answer; he was neither Nilo Valdez nor Noel; even Bruce's blurred vision at once discerned that fact. He was pale, tall and thin, and made. He stood like a pointer after the dog had flushed a bird; straining forward, yet immovable. He was looking toward the desk.

Visitors were plentiful at Villa Noel. Bruce's first thought was that here was merely some guest less well bred than usual. Puzzled and angry, he leaned down to grope for the glasses; afraid to step lest he tread on them and complete their destruction.

The room was strongly lighted by the noonday sun. Just as he located what he sought, Bruce saw the shadow of the man's arm extended towards the desk. He snatched up the glasses with his left hand, and sprang erect to pinion the stranger's wrist with his right.

"Here," he exclaimed. "What are

you doing?"

He checked his speech in amazement, for the man grasped the yellow manila envelope containing the letter to Rose.

"These papers are for me," the man stated, with a false mildness smoothing the surface of his guttural voice. "I was to call for them, Senhor. Pardon my clumsiness, I beseech you."

Without releasing the man's bony wrist, Bruce put on his spectacles, shaking them into place with a jerk of his head. He looked again, and verified his first impression; the stranger indeed grasped the yellow envelope.

"You're crazy," he snapped. "Paper? You've got a private letter. A letter of mine."

The man's pale lips spread into an ingratiating smile. He offered no resistance to Bruce's grasp upon his wrist but he continued to hold the yellow envelope. "Oh, there is no need of so much caution with me, Senhor! I am in his excellency's confidence. He sent me for these."

"He sent you—for what?" I tell you that you hold a letter of my own."

"So! And what you said when I entered, what of that, Senhor?"

"Why, what did I say?"

The man repeated Bruce's vexed exclamation of a moment before, in strongly accented, but correct English, as it had been spoken:

"I do beat the Dutch at everything!"

"Well?" queried the puzzled Bruce.

"You perceive that I am well informed, Senhor."

"I perceive that one of us is crazy," Bruce exclaimed in exasperation. "Let go my letter!"

They were standing close together, Bruce's face almost touching the pale bony face of the other with its pointed yellow beard, as the American pressed down upon the desk the hand he had pinioned.

"His excellency sent me for it," the man mildly insisted.

"He did nothing of the kind. Whatever he sent you for, it certainly was not this letter."

"And, the Dutch, as you wrongly name them?"

Bruce stared at his captive in complete bewilderment and irritation. The allusion had no meaning for him. He utterly distrusted the man, but he could imagine no reason why anyone should want to gain possession of his letter, and there was no other document on the desk. Indeed, no documents were kept in this little music room. All of Noel's work was done in the library, all important papers were kept in the safe, locked in by the meticulously careful Valdez.

"If Dom David sent you here, why did you sneak up behind me that way?" he challenged, "and why did you try to snatch the letter while I was picking up my glasses? You are not telling the truth. There is something wrong."

"You doubt my word?" reproached the man. "Ring for a servant, and send to Dom David. Ask him if he did not send for the papers."

Shaken by the apparent candor of his request, Bruce wavered. Certainly he might send for Nilo Valdez and ask him if the stranger had been sent for any documents. There was no reason why he should not do this. Valdez would not ask to see the contents of Bruce's letter, of course. Bruce had poured out his shy and reticent heart in those pages; the mere idea of their being read by another than the lady named Rose made his writhe. But he could see no harm in accepting the man's suggestion; indeed it seemed the only way to convince him that he did not want this particular letter. Slowly he released the wrist he held and turned toward the call bell set in the wall, keeping between the suspect and the door.

Scarcely had Bruce moved across the room when the man leaped for the open window. It was a well calculated attempt; by no possible means could Bruce turn and reach him in time to prevent his escape. But the American had not neglected to see that chance.

Catching up a light chair, he hurled it spinning towards the fugitive's legs. The chair glided across the polished floor like a sled, and struck its target with accuracy. The awkward missile was effective. The man went crashing down. Before he could recover and rise, Bruce was upon him, grasping at the letter. The man tried furiously to free the envelope, striving to regain his feet and disentangle his limbs from the projecting legs of the chair. "Get up!" Bruce panted, savagely. "Here—!"

The yellow envelope tore across, too roughly handled. From between the clutching hands it poured out its contents; the pages slipping and fluttering over the floor. Bruce promptly dropped his man to make a wild dash after the scattered letter. The other made a similar move; then, arrested, crouched staring at the pages nearest him as he stooped forward. Corey Bruce wrote a round, legible hand, not very small. From sheet to sheet the man's glance shifted over the easily read lines, gathering their obvious purport.

"Here!" the outraged Bruce repeated, sweeping the pages into a head. "What do you mean by that?"

The man uttered a guttural ejaculation, started up, and setting his palms on the window sill, vaulted out into the garden.

(To be continued next week.)

If the flood of letters which is daily reaching the trustees of the 50,000,000 franc fund given by Mr. Cognac, to be distributed in lots of 25,000 francs to families consisting of more than nine children, is to be taken as a criterion, then depopulation in France is not as bad as it has been reported. Among the candidates to the fund is a mother who boasts of 21 children, born of the same wedlock. More than 2000 letters from parents claiming a progeny of more than nine children have been received.

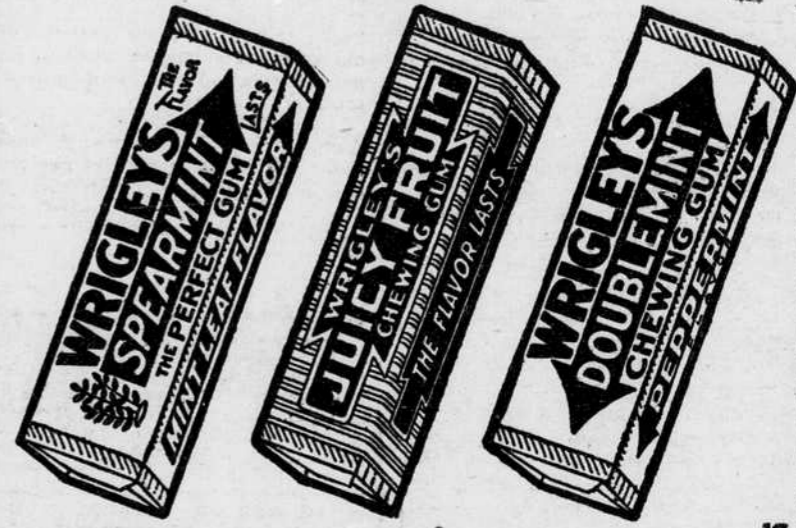
# WRIGLEY'S

5c a package before the war

5c a package during the war

5c a package NOW

THE FLAVOR LASTS SO DOES THE PRICE!



### MAY LEAD TO OTHER THINGS

Having Sewing Machines, Igorrotes Possibly Will Send Forth Call for the Fashion Magazines.

Wearing about as little clothing as is possible even in the least sophisticated part of the Philippines, the Igorrotes of Bontoc in the mountain province have little need of sewing; but Bontoc at last has a sewing machine. The first sewing machine ever seen in Bontoc turned up there recently as a prize for the winning team in a tug-of-war contest at a local celebration. Never did a crowd of nearly naked villagers look with more interest at a new object of curiosity than did the simple Igorrotes when the wonder of the sewing machine was explained to them; after which the tug-of-war was contested in the vigorous fashion inherited from generations of tribal ancestors to whom this simple exercise had stood as a great tribal sport. The winning team presumably carried off the sewing machine, and one may imagine that the natives are proud to possess it as a rare and impressive curiosity. But the time has yet to come when a sewing machine will be of much practical importance to the average Igorrote family.

### Forgot His Cue.

Cholly—Is your sister in, Bobby?  
Bobby—She's either in or indisposed, I can't remember which.—Boston Evening Transcript.

The motto of some men is, "Give me liberty, or give me debt!"

### DEFY TIME BY KEEPING FIT

Long Life and Health Offered to All Who Will Obey a Few Simple but Imperative Rules.

When one has been overworking, undersleeping, overdrinking, overeating, and underexercising, germs multiply rapidly because the "white wings" of the human system are too tired to clean them out.

A long illness follows. Some day we will tell the truth in death certificates and reports will be made like this:

"Died after thirty years of over-eating."

"Smothered himself to death. Worked and slept in unventilated rooms."

"Burned out. Slept only six hours a night."

Good health is a luxury we all can enjoy if we are willing to play the game on the long law of averages.

Eat lightly, drink lots of water, breathe fresh air every night and day, get plenty of sleep, keep clean inside and outside, and Father Time will pass you by.—The Fortuna Magazine.

### Wouldn't Improve His Looks.

Mrs. Styles—Don't you think this new hat improves my looks, dear?

Mr. Styles—I suppose so.

"But what makes you look so cross?"

"I'm thinking of the bill for that hat. You can't expect that to improve my looks."

When a mule climbs Mount Popocatepetl he takes over 5,000,000 steps, but we don't know how many over.

## Sleepless Nights

and coffee-drinking are closely linked together with many people.

If your case is like that, try

## Instant Postum

—a wholesome cereal drink with a really rich coffee-like flavor that meets the test of taste, just as the beverage itself meets the test of health.

Economical, Ready Instantly, Delicious

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