

The Blunder

PICTURES BY A. WEIL

BY LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE

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SYNOPSIS.

"Mad" Dan Maitland, on reaching his New York bachelor club, met an attractive young woman at the door. Janitor O'Hagan assured him no one had been within that day. Dan discovered a woman's finger prints in dust on his desk, along with a letter from his attorney. Maitland dined with Bannerman, his attorney. Dan set out for Greenfield, to get his family jewels. During his walk to the country seat, he met the young woman in gray, whom he had seen leaving his bachelor's club. Her auto had broken down. He fixed it. By a ruse she "lost" him. Maitland, on reaching home, surprised lady in gray, cracking the safe containing his goods. She, apparently, took him for a well-known crook, Danie Anisty.

CHAPTER III.—Continued.

Did he catch a gleam of admiration in the eyes behind the goggles? "Now, if ever they get hold of my portrait and print . . . Well!" sighed the girl wickedly, lifting slim, bare fingers in affected concern to the mass of ruddy hair. "In that event I suppose I shall have to become a natural blonde!"

Her humor, her splendid fearlessness, the lightness of her tone, combined with the half-laughing, half-serious look that she swept up at him, to ease the tension of his emotions. For the first time since entering the room, he smiled; then a silence for a time regarded her steadfastly, thinking.

So he resembled this burglar, Anisty, strongly enough to be mistaken for him—eh? Plainly enough the girl believed him to be Anisty. "Well, and why not? Why shouldn't he be Anisty for the time being, if it suited his purpose so to masquerade?"

It might possibly suit his purpose. He thought his position one uncommonly difficult. As Maitland, he had on his hands a female thief, a hardened character, a common malefactor (strange that he got so little relish of the terms!), caught red-handed; as Maitland, his duty was to hand her over to the law, to be dealt with as—what she was. Yet, even while these considerations were urging themselves upon him, he knew his eyes appraised her with open admiration and interest. She stood before him, slight, delicate, pretty, appealing in her ingenuous candor; and at his mercy. How could he bring himself to deal with her as he might with—well, Anisty himself? She was a woman, he a gentleman.

As Anisty, however—if he chose to assume that expert's identity for the nonce—he would be placed at once on a plane of equality with the girl; for a fellow of her craft she could hardly refuse attentions. As Anisty, he would put himself in a position to earn her friendship, to gain—perhaps—her confidence, to learn something of her necessities, to aid and protect her from the consequences of her misdeeds; possibly—to sum up—to divert her footsteps to the paths of a calling less hazardous and more honorable.

Worthy ambition—to reform a burglar! Maitland regained something of his lost self-esteem, applauding himself for entertaining a motive so laudable. And he chose his course, for better or worse, in these few seconds. Thereby proving his incontestable title to the name and repute of Mad Maitland.

His face lightened; his manner changed; he assumed with avidity the role for which she had cast him and which he stood so ready to accept and act.

"Well and good," he conceded with an air. "I suppose I may as well own up—"

"Oh, I know you," she assured him, with a little, confident shake of her head. "There's no deceiving me. But," and her smile became rueful, "if only you'd waited ten minutes more! Of course I recognized you from the first—down there by the river; and knew very well what was your—lay; you gave yourself away completely by mentioning the distance from the river to the Manor. And I did so want to get ahead of you on this job! What a feather in one's cap, to have forestalled Dan Anisty! . . . But hadn't you better be a little careful with those lights? You seem to forget that there are servants in the house. Really, you know, I find you most romantically audacious. Mr. Anisty—quite in keeping with your reputation." "You overwhelm me," he murmured. "Believe me, I have little conceit in my name, such as it is. . . . And, crossing to the windows, he loosed the heavy velvet hangings and let them fall together, drawing their edges close so that no ray of light might escape.

She watched him with interest. "You seem well acquainted here." "Of course. Any man of imagination is at pains to study every house he enters. I have a map of the premises—house and grounds—here." He indicated his forehead with a long forefinger.

"Quite right, too—and worth one's while. If rumor is to be believed, you have ordinarily more than your labor for your pains. You have taught me something already. Ah, well!" she sighed. "I suppose I may as well acknowledge my inferiority—as neophyte to hierophant, Master!" She courted low. "I beg you proceed and let thy chieftain through observation!" And a small white hand gestured significantly toward the collection of burglar's tools—drills and chisels, skeleton keys, putty, and all—neatly displayed upon the rug before the massive safe.



And a Small White Hand Gestured Significantly Toward the Collection of Burglar's Tools.

"Not at all," she replied briskly. "I am entirely serious. My loss of today will prove my gain to-morrow. I look for incalculable benefit through study of your methods. My own, I confess, with a contemptuous toss of her head toward the burglar's kit, are clumsy, antiquated, out of date. . . . But then, I'm only an amateur."

"Oh, but a woman—" he began to apologize on her behalf.

"Oh, but a woman!" she rapped out, smartly. "I wish you to understand that this woman, at least, is no mean—"

"And she hesitated.

"Thief!" he supplied, crudely.

"Yes, thief! We're two of a feather, at that."

"True enough. . . . But you were first in the field; I fail to see why I should reap any reward for tardiness. The spoils must be yours."

It was a test; Maitland watched her keenly, fascinated by the subtlety of the game.

"But I refuse, Mr. Anisty—positively refuse to go to work while you stand aside—and laugh."

Pride! He stared, openly amazed, at this bewilderingly feminine bundle of inconsistencies. With each facet of her character discovered to him, minute by minute, the study of her became to him the more engrossing. He drew nearer, eyes speculative.

"I will agree," he said, slowly, "to crack the safe, but upon conditions."

She drew back imperceptibly, amused, but asserting her dignity.

"Yes?" she led him on, though in no accent of encouragement.

"Back there, in the river," he drawled deliberately, forcing the pace. "I found you—beautiful!"

She flushed, lip curling. "And, back there, in the river, I thought you—a gentleman!"

"Although a burglar?"

"A gentleman for all that!"

"I promise you I mean no harm," he prefaced. "But don't you see how I am putting myself in your power? Every moment you know me better, while I have not yet even looked into your face with the light full upon it. Honor among thieves, little woman!" She chose to ignore the intimate note in his voice. "You're wasting time," she hinted, crisply.

"I am aware of that fact. Permit me to remind you that you are helping me to waste it. I will not go ahead until I have seen your face. It is simply an ordinary precaution."

"Oh, if it's a matter of business—"

"Self-preservation," he corrected, with magnificent gravity.

She hesitated but a moment longer, then with a quick gesture removed her mask. Maitland's breath came fast as he bent forward, peering into her face; though he schooted his own features to an expression of intent and inoffensive studiousness, he feared the loud thumping of his heart would betray him. As he looked it became evident that the witchery of moonlight had not served to exaggerate the sensitive, the almost miniature, beauty of her. If anything, its charm was greater there in the full glare of the electric chandelier, as she faced him, giving him glance for glance, quite undismayed by the intenceness of his scrutiny.

In the clear light her eyes shone lustrous, pools of tawny flame; her hair showed itself of a rich and luminous coppery hue, spun to imitable, measurable fineness; a faint color burned in her cheeks, but in contrast her forehead was as snow—the pure, white, close-grained skin that is the heritage of red-headed women the world over, and their chiefest charms as well; while her lips—

As for her lips, the most coherent statement to be extracted from Mr.

frowned in perplexity, unable to analyze the sensation.

"You're not angry?" she asked.

"No—but—but—"

"Yes?"

"Why do you do this, little woman? Why do you stoop to this—this trade of yo—of course? Why sully your hands—and not only your hands—impair your good name, to say nothing of your liberty?"

She drew her hand away quickly, intertending him with a laugh that rang true as a coin new from the mint, honest and genuine.

"And this," she cried, "this from Dan Anisty! Positively, sir, you are delightful! You grow more dangerously original every minute! Your scruples, your consideration, your sympathy—they are touching—in you!" She wagged her head daintily in pretense of disapprobation. "But shall I tell you?" more seriously, doubtfully. "I think I shall . . . truly, I do this sort of thing, since you must know, because—imprints, because I like it. Indeed and I do! I like the danger, the excitement, the exercise of cunning and—and I like the rewards, too. Besides—"

The corners of her adorable mouth drooped ever so slightly.

"Besides—"

"Why—? But this is not business! We must hurry. Will you, or shall I—?"

A crisis had been passed; Maitland understood that he must wait until a more favorable time to renew his importunities.

"I will," he said, dropping on his knees by the safe. "In my lady's service!"

"Not at all," she interposed. "I insist. The job is now yours; yours must be the profits."

"Then I wash my hands of the whole affair," he stated in accents of finality. "I refuse. I shall go, and you can do as you will—blunder on," scornfully, "with your nitroglycerin, your rags, and drills and—and rouse the entire countryside, if you will."

"Ah, but—"

"Will you accept my aid?"

"On conditions, only," she stipulated.

"Halvers?"

He shook his head.

"Half shares, or not at all!" She was firm.

"A partnership?"

This induced a moue of doubt, with: "I'm not worthy the honor."

"But," he promised rashly, "I can save you—oh, heaps of trouble in other—ah—lays."

She shrugged helplessly. "If I must—then I do accept. We are partners, Dan Anisty and I!"

He nodded mute satisfaction, brushed the tools out of his way, and bent an attentive ear to the combination.

The girl swept across the room, and there followed a clik simultaneous with the total extinction of light.

Startled, "Why—?" he demanded.

"The risk," she replied. "We have been frightfully careless and thoughtless."

Helplessly Maitland twirled the combination dial; without the light he was wholly at a loss. But a breath later skirts rustled near him; the slide of the bull's-eye was jerked back, and a circle of illumination thrown upon the lock. He bent his head again, pretending to listen to the fall of the tumblers as the dial was turned, but in point of fact covertly watching the letters and figures upon it.

The room grew very silent, save for the faintly regular respiration of the girl who bent near his shoulder. Her breath was fragrant upon his cheek. The consciousness of her proximity almost stifled him. . . . One feather that Maitland prolonged the counterfeited study of the combination unnecessarily.

Notwithstanding this, she seemed amazed by the ease with which he solved it. "Wonderful!" she applauded, whispering, as the heavy door swung outward without a jar.

"Hush!" he cautioned her.

In his veins that night madness was running riot, swaying him at its will. With never a doubt, never a thought of hesitancy, he forged ahead, willfully blind to consequences. On the face of it he was playing a fool's part; he knew it; the truth is simply that he could not have done other than as he did. Consciously he believed himself to be merely testing the girl; subconsciously he was plastic in the grip of an emotion stronger than he—moist clay upon the potter's whirling wheel.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

CHAPTER IV.
Midsummer Night's Madness.

At length, averted and not a little shamed, "I beg your pardon," he stammered, wretchedly.

"For what?" she demanded, quickly, head up and eyes aight.

"For insisting. It wasn't—ah—courtuous. I'm sorry."

It was her turn now to wonder; delicacy of perception such as this was not ordinarily looked for in the person of a burglar. With a laugh and a gibe she tried to pass off her astonishment.

"The thief apologizes to the thief?" "Unkind!"

Briefly hesitant, with an impulsive gesture she flung out a generous hand.

"You're right; you shake hands? Forgive me. Won't you shake hands? . . . I do want to be a good comrade, since it has pleased Fate to throw us together like this, so—so oddly." Her tone was almost plaintive; unquestionably it was appealing.

Maitland was curiously moved by the touch of the slim, cool fingers that lay in his palm. Not unpleasantly, he

GETTING THE CROWD IN LINE

Showing the Methods of the Resourceful Street Faker.

Two belligerent appearing men faced each other.

"You're a liar."

"You're a yellow pup."

"Fight!" shrieked a small boy.

Then a crowd of curious began to gather in front of the Grant building in upper Market street.

"If you're looking for trouble I guess I can give it to you," hissed the "liar" between his teeth.

"You can place a bet that I intend to see things to a finish," replied the "pup," striking a fighting pose.

"Come around the corner where a cop won't bother us, then," said the first, and war thus declared, the duo hastened around to an empty lot behind the post office, while a crowd of bloodthirsty men and boys dogged at their heels.

Arrived, the "liar" mounted a wooden platform newly built, while the "pup" dove into a dry goods box and extracted therefrom a bulging suitcase.

"While the 'doctor' gets out the packages of our magical herbs, guaranteed to cure cancer, bunions, all skin diseases, etc., I will entertain you with a few sleight of hand tricks," announced the "liar" in stentorian tones.

The crowd then realized that it had been gulled. A few on the outskirts slunk away, but the majority remained to fall victims to the wiles of the wily medical faker and their cure-all at "one dollar per package, and a pair of cuff buttons, warrant solid gold, thrown in."—San Francisco Call.

The road to success is strewn with the bones of other men's failures.—Syracuse Journal.

CRIPPLED WITH SCIATICA

Caused by Disordered Action of the Kidneys.

Samuel D. Ingraham, 2402 E. Main St., Lewiston, Idaho, says: "For two years I was crippled with sciatic rheumatism in my thighs and could not get about without crutches. The kidney secretions became irregular, and showed painful, and showed a heavy sediment. Doctors were not helping me so I began taking Doan's Kidney Pills. I improved soon, and after a while was entirely free from my suffering. I am in the best of health now and am in debt to Doan's Kidney Pills for saving my life."

Sold by all dealers. 50 cents a box. Foster-Milburn Co., Buffalo, N. Y.

TENDER, BUT NOT LOVING.



Waiter (to customer, who had complained that his steak is not tender enough)—Not tender enough! D'you expect it to kiss you!

WESTON, Ocean-to-Ocean Walker.

Said recently: "When you feel down and out, feel there is no use living, just take your bad thoughts with you and walk them off. Before you have walked a mile things will look rosier. Just try it." Have you noticed the increase in walking of late in every community? Many attribute it to the comfort which Allen's Foot-Ease, the antiseptic powder to be shaken into the shoes, gives to the millions now using it. As Weston has said: "It has real merit. It cures tired, aching feet while you walk. 30,000 testimonials. Order a 25c package to-day of any Druggist and be ready to forget you have feet. A trial package of ALLEN'S FOOT-EASE sent FREE. Address Allen S. Olmsted, Le Roy, N. Y."

Women to Fight Tuberculosis.

One million women, representing cities, towns, villages and isolated rural settlements in every section of the country, are to-day enlisted in a campaign against tuberculosis, according to a statement issued by the National Association for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis. In legislatures, in congress at Washington, in society gatherings, in churches and clubs, through speaking and writing—in every possible way, the women of the country are persistently fighting consumption.

With an organization established in every state of the country, under the direction of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, and with associated clubs in Alaska, the Hawaiian islands, Porto Rico and the canal zone, the women of the country have entered a systematic crusade to carry the message of the prevention and cure of tuberculosis into every American home.

Logical Reasoning.

A certain young man's friends thought he was dead, but he was only in a state of coma. When, in ample time to avoid being buried, he showed signs of life, he was asked how it seemed to be dead.

"Dead?" he exclaimed. "I wasn't dead. I knew all that was going on. And I knew I wasn't dead, too, because my feet were cold and I was hungry."

"Well, this way: I knew that if I were in heaven I wouldn't be hungry. And if I was in the other place my feet would be cold."

The Captain's Repartee.

The captain of a trans-Atlantic liner, having become irritable as a result of some minor troubles in the ship's management and the unusually large number of ridiculous inquiries made by tourists, was heading for the "bridge" when a dapper young man halted him to inquire the cause of the commotion of the starboard side of the ship. Being on the port side, the captain politely replied, with some sarcasm, he was not certain, but thought it possible that a cat fish had just had kittens.—What-to-Rat.

OVER THE FENCE

Neighbor Says Something.

The front yard fence is a famous council place on pleasant days. Maybe to chat with some one along the street, or for friendly gossip with next door neighbor. Sometimes it is only small talk, but other times neighbor has something really good to offer.

An old resident of Baird, Texas, got some mighty good advice this way once.

He says: "Drinking coffee left me nearly dead with dyspepsia, kidney disease and bowel trouble, with constant pains in my stomach, back and side, and so weak I could scarcely walk."

"One day I was chatting with one of my neighbors about my trouble and told her I believed coffee hurt me. Neighbor said she knew lots of people to whom coffee was poison and she pleaded with me to quit it and give Postum a trial. I did not take her advice right away but tried a change of climate, which did not do me any good. Then I dropped coffee and took up Postum."

"My improvement began immediately and I got better every day I used Postum."

"My bowels became regular in two weeks, all my pains were gone. Now I am well and strong and can eat anything I want to without distress. All of this is due to my having quit coffee, and to the use of Postum regularly."

"My son, who was troubled with indigestion thought that if Postum helped me, it might help him. It did, too, and he is now well and strong again."

"We like Postum as well as we ever liked the coffee and use it altogether in my family in place of coffee and all keep well." "There's a Reason." Read "The Road to Wellville," in Pkgs.

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.



From the "Sunshine" Bakeries

This is where Takhoma Biscuits are made—models of their kind—the ovens are built of white tile on the top floor.

Sunshine and pure air is abundant.

We employ the most modern methods—costliest materials—and with our infinite skill we make

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perfect. Yet they cost as little as the poorer kinds. Their goodness is protected by the thrice sealed carton—with "Sunshine" seal.

Be sure of the "Sunshine" seal—it's the sign you have the genuine.

Takhoma Biscuits are at your grocer's, 5c and 10c. Try them—see how good they are.

LOOSE-WILES BISCUIT COMPANY



A JUSTIFIABLE EXPRESSION.



Inexperienced Caddie (after Mr. Toole's fifteenth miss)—Shall I make the 'ole a big bigger, sir?

Mutual Surprise.

A mission worker in New Orleans was visiting a reformatory near that city not long ago when she observed among the inmates an old acquaintance, a negro lad long thought to be a model of integrity. "Jim!" exclaimed the mission worker. "Is it possible I find you here?" "Yassum" blithely responded the backslider. "I'm charged with stealin' a barrel o' sweet potatoes." The visitor sighed. "You, Jim!" she repeated. "I am surprised." "Yassum" said Jim. "So was I or I wouldn't be here!"

There is no need to suffer with soreness and stiffness of joints and muscles. A little Hamlin's Wizard Oil rubbed in will liber them up immediately.

A girl always likes to say "no" to the first time a man proposes, just to find out what he will do next.

Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup. For children teething, softens the gums, reduces inflammation, allays pain, cures whooping cough, croup, colic, and whooping cough.

The man who has faith in God is sure to have many other good things.

Lewis' Single Binder straight 5 cigar. You pay 10c for cigars not so good.

How to catch fish is a study. How to lie about it comes natural.



You Need a Tonic

if you feel languid and depressed all the time. The best thing to help nature build up the system is

DR. D. JAYNE'S TONIC VERMIFUGE

This great tonic is not a false stimulant as many of the so-called "spring tonics." It is a natural strength-giver. For all run-down conditions of the health it is an invaluable remedy; imparts new life and vigor and builds up the entire system.

Sold by All Leading Druggists in 100 size bottles, 50c and 35c.

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Positively cured by these Little Pills.

They also relieve Distress from Dyspepsia, Indigestion and Too-Hurry Eating. A perfect remedy for Dizziness, Nausea, Drowsiness, Bad Taste in the Mouth, Coated Tongue, Pain in the Side, TORPID LIVER.

They regulate the Bowels. Purely Vegetable.

SMALL PILL, SMALL DOSE, SMALL PRICE.

Genuine Must Bear Fac-Simile Signature

REFUSE SUBSTITUTES.

320 Acres of Wheat Land

IN WESTERN CANADA

WILL MAKE YOU RICH

Fifty bushels per acre have been grown. General average greater than in any other part of the continent. Under new regulations it is possible to secure a homestead of 150 acres free, and additional 150 acres at \$3 per acre.

The development of the country has made marvelous strides. It is a revelation, a record of conquest by settlement that is remarkable.—Editorial from correspondence of a National Editor, who visited Canada in August, 1908.

The grain crop of 1908 will net many farmers \$20.00 to \$25.00 per acre. Grain-raising, mixed farming and dairying are the principal industries. Climate is excellent; social conditions the best; railway advantages unequalled; schools, churches and markets close at hand. Land may also be purchased from railway and land companies.

For "Last Best West" pamphlets, maps and information as to how to secure low railway rates, apply to Superintendent of Immigration, Ottawa, Canada, or the authorized Canadian Government Agent.

W. V. BENNETT, Omaha, Nebraska, 801 New York Life Building.

Headache

"My father has been a sufferer from sick headache for the last twenty-five years and never found any relief until he began taking your Cascarets. Since he has begun taking Cascarets he has never had the headache. They have entirely cured him. Cascarets do what you recommend them to do. I will give you the privilege of using his name."—E. M. Dickson, 1120 Resiner St., W. Indianapolis, Ind.

You Should Specify

the brand of shingle you want when you give your dealer your order. If you want a shingle that's always the same quality and that's always put up full count ask for this brand. Remember the name.



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of this paper desiring to buy anything advertised in its columns should insist upon having what they ask for, refusing all substitutes or imitations.

DEFIANCE Gold Water Starch

makes laundry work a pleasure. 16 oz. pkg. 10c.