

# Nowhere

By RUBY M. AYRES.  
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(Continued from yesterday.)

Hastings turned round. "Come in," he said.

The stiff footman entered.

"Bring your pardon, sir, there's a lady to see you. She says it's most important. I told her you were engaged, sir, and she says that it was all the more reason for her seeing you, sir. She insisted on my telling you, sir."

Hastings raised his brows. His face was still white, and when he spoke his voice sounded strained and unnatural.

"What is her name, Hill? Did she give her name?"

"Yes, sir. The man never raised his eyes. He says her name was Miss Olive Hale, sir, and that I was to say that she came with a message from Miss Lingleby, sir."

Olive Hale often said afterward that the most thrilling moment of her life was when she stepped into Ronald Hastings' study in the big house at Park lane, and confronted the two men.

Alfred Suture had risen to his feet; he looked pale and nervous; he tried to smile when he saw her, but it was a poor attempt; he would have come forward but for Hastings' forbidding gesture.

Olive was quite mistress of the situation; she was pleasantly conscious of the Bond street that she wore which Mr. Gatwick had purchased for her she subsided gracefully into the chair. Hastings brought forward; she felt as if she were on the stage.

"I dare say you are very surprised

to see me, Mr. Hastings," she said going straight to the point. "But I really felt that it was a situation that needed dealing with at once or not at all."

She had prepared that speech as she came along in the taxi; she flattered herself that she had delivered it neatly. She did not look at Suture, he might not have been in the room for all the notice she took of him.

Hastings still stood leaning against the mantel shelf but there was a curious alertness about him. He looked as if he were holding himself in check with a great effort.

Olive smoothed a crease in her three and sixpenny with kid gloves; she was wondering what this interview would be worth to her; she knew that Hastings had a reputation for great generosity; she wondered if he would think 100 pounds out of the way; it would go far toward buying her a suitable trousseau, and a present with which to soothe the wounded heart of poor Mr. Green in the ribbon department.

She went on leisurely; she told Hastings the whole story of Violet's life and the finding of her; the child, Ronnie, as she knew it; she even told of the paper she had taken from Violet's drawer. When Olive did a thing she did it thoroughly; she did not trouble to shield herself; she did not care what Hastings might think of her; the stout figure of Mr. Gatwick loomed like a large and substantial security in the background of her thoughts.

The two men listened to her si-

lently; now and then Suture would be interrupted. He made a violent gesture, or uttered a stifled exclamation, but always was checked by his cousin. Olive told all that had happened that evening. She admitted frankly that she had been listening outside the door of Violet's room for some time before she went in; she said that she was quite sure Violet hated the man she had promised to marry; that she had merely consented to do so because she wanted the child.

"I don't care for kids myself," Olive added nonchalantly. "And I can't understand Violet being so crazy over this boy. He's a nice little chap, but—well, there you are. She's just mad about him. She's lonely, and that's the truth. She thought you were his father all along, and that's the fault of that man," she indicated Suture. "He's a liar," she proceeded calmly, "and he only wants Violet to use as a means of sponging on you. I know the sort of man he is. I've met lots of them. Look at him. He cuts a pretty poor figure, doesn't he?"

Suture burst into furious speech, the stammering speech of a coward. He was white to his lips. He looked as if he would have killed Olive. He saw his castles tumbling about his ears. He did not care so much if he lost Violet, but he cared greatly if, through that loss, he also lost his hold on his cousin's money bags.

Ronald Hastings had not spoken a word. Olive admired him immensely for his self-control. She thought him the finest looking man she had ever seen. She wished poor old Mr. Gatwick had his fine height and breadth of shoulder. She stifled a sigh.

Hastings looked round at his cousin.

"What have you got to say?" he asked curtly.

Suture shrugged his shoulders. He began to bluster. Finally he

began to swear. He realized that he had made a fool of himself. In his heart he cursed Violet. Twice he had upset the plans he had made for his life. He hoped she would die.

Suddenly he remembered Ronnie. He had still got the boy. Whatever they all chose to say or do, he still had the boy and nobody could take him from him. After all, he held the trump card.

The knowledge restored him to his complaisance. He selected a fresh cigaret and lit it with swaggering care.

"Miss Hale has put a very capable spoke in my wheel, I admit," he said lightly. He made her a mock bow. "But she—you both—seem to have forgotten one thing, the child—the cause of all this sensational drama—is still in my possession; also the law is on my side. The law does not separate a father from his child without adequate reason. I admit you have worried me on a few minor points, but perhaps you will admit that I have won on the chief issue."

"You scoundrel!" For the first time Hastings lost his control. He stood over his cousin with clenched fists. He looked like a furious giant. There were passion sparks in his lazy eyes.

Suture laughed. He felt decidedly nervous, but he had sense enough not to show it.

"As you like," he said carelessly. "I may be a scoundrel, but I think you will find it advisable to keep in with me." He looked at Olive and back at Hastings.

"I don't want the boy," he went

on brutally. "He's a beastly nuisance to me, but I fully intend to keep him unless you can see your way to meet me with regard to him."

Olive rose to her feet. She felt like a heroine in a drama. She wished intensely that poor Mr. Green of the ribbon department could see her now.

Hastings broke the breathless silence curtly.

"What's your price?" he asked.

Suture smiled, showing his white teeth. He spread his hands. "Ah, now we're talking sensibly. Now we shall come to an amicable agreement. Shall we say \$10,000?"

The audacious suggestion was followed by a gasp from Olive. She thought of the modest 100 she had scarcely dared hope to secure for herself. In a leap she doubled and trebled it.

Hastings laughed savagely. He pointed to the door.

"Get out," he said.

Suture stared. Then he shrugged his narrow shoulders. He could afford to wait, he told himself. He guessed that Hastings loved Violet. He guessed, too, that for her sake the exorbitant demand would be met. He swaggered to the door, opened it, turned and bowed, and went out.

Hastings wiped the sweat from his brow. He did not realize until that moment what supreme restraint he had placed on himself. He walked over to the window and flung it open. For a moment he stood breathing in the fresh evening air. Then he came back to Olive.

"I must apologize to you, Miss Hale, and thank you," he said slowly.

"I shall not forget what you have done for me. I—" He broke off. What could he say? Violet cared nothing for him. She had said that she hated him.

Olive murmured something unintelligible. She was feeling very upset herself. She applied a corner of a scented lace handkerchief to her eye very gracefully. Unfortunately Hastings was not looking at that moment.

"There is just one thing I should like to say," she said with becoming hesitation, "and that is, if you would come and see Violet, Mr. Hastings, I am sure she feels the injustice she has done you. I am sure that has helped to make her ill. Oh, I cannot say all I mean, but I should come and see her if I were you."

Hastings did not answer. She thought he was offended. She went on quickly:

"That man promised her she should have Ronnie back tonight; I promised that she should, too. Oh, what shall we do? The poor dear little boy."

Hastings hesitated. Then with a sudden gesture he went over to his desk and took his check book from the drawer. He wrote rapidly. Presently he pushed a check across to Olive.

"I know where Suture lives. If you will come with me—we—you—you could take the boy back to her."

He looked away from her as he spoke. A sudden fierce jealousy filled his heart. He hated to think of the love Violet lavished on another man's son.

Olive seized his hand.

"How good you are," she said. She really thought he was. She mentally

figured her own check at something approaching \$500 now.

Hastings insisted on her having a glass of wine and some cake. He ordered his own car and drove her to the dreary flat where Suture had taken Ronnie.

An untidy woman opened the door. She started when she saw Hastings. When he asked for Suture she stared still more.

"E ain't in," she said.

"Not in?"

"No. 'E went out 10 minutes ago with the little boy. 'E said they shouldn't be back yet awhile. They drove away in one of them taxi cabs."

Olive gave a little cry. She looked up at Hastings. In the gray evening light his face looked white and strained.

"It's my fault," he said hoarsely. "My fault, we're too late."

They looked at one another with blank faces. They were both pale, Olive with excitement, the man with a far deeper emotion.

The untidy woman eyed them with a sort of suspicion. Finally she opened the door a further couple of inches and asked them to walk in.

Hastings seemed not to hear the half-hearted invitation.

"Can't you tell us where Mr. Suture has gone? He must have left some address, given some directions. Did you hear what he said to the cab driver?"

"I weren't listening," said the woman sulkily. "Enough trouble I've had with Mr. Suture one way and another. All day long he's left me with that crying boy of his, not but what he wasn't a nice little fellow in his way, but mortal afraid of his father. Screamed the blessed 'ouse down,

that he did, when he 'eard his step in the 'all."

"Does he owe you any money?" asked Olive quickly.

She knew by experience that there was no surer passport to disfavor with this class of woman than debt. She also guessed shrewdly the kind of man Alfred Suture was.

"He gave me a sovereign this morning," said the woman reluctantly. "But he owes for two week's rent now, not to mention washing and extras for the boy. I've lost money on 'em both all round, that I have. He far took me in with his smooth words and smart clothes. But never no more! I'll take the Angel Gabrielle 'issel to get round me again, and that's gospel."

Hastings stemmed the flow of rapid speech impatiently.

"You shan't be the loser. I'll see you're well paid, doubly well paid, if you can help us find them. It's the boy we want, not the man. It means life or death."

(Continued in The Bee Tomorrow.)

### Proposed Burchard Road Will Give Tourists Outlet

Pawnee City, Neb., July 6.—(Special)—A proposition is on foot, sponsored by the business men of Burchard, to build a highway straight west from Burchard to the Cornhusker highway. The business interests of Pawnee City are assisting. This would complete a patrol highway from Pawnee City west Blue Springs which would be an outlet for tourists going west.

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To make choosing easy we have assembled all of the Half Price Sale Suits in our Main Clothing Room, Second Floor—Main Building. Included are thousands of suits from the House of Kuppenheimer, Society Brand, Fashion Park, Campus Togs, Adler-Rochester, Hickey-Freeman and many other famous makers.

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\$25.00 Spring Suits HALF PRICE	\$12.50	\$30.00 Spring Suits HALF PRICE	\$15.00	\$35.00 Spring Suits HALF PRICE	\$17.50	\$40.00 Spring Suits HALF PRICE	\$20.00
\$50.00 Spring Suits HALF PRICE	\$25.00	\$55.00 Spring Suits HALF PRICE	\$27.50	\$60.00 Spring Suits HALF PRICE	\$30.00	\$65.00 Spring Suits HALF PRICE	\$32.50

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