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His Typewriter

She Was Fair and Innocent and Very Bright.

By **KINGSBURY WELCH**

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When I was a young man I was a teller in an eastern bank. There I learned the banking business, and, having saved some money and inherited a little more, I concluded to go west and start a bank of my own. I chose Nevada and opened up in a mining town where I had no competition. It was when the business was increasing and I was thinking of taking on more help that a young woman came to me one day asking for a position as stenographer and typewriter. My unanswered letters were accumulating, and it occurred to me that I had better save time in this way rather than employ men whom I would have to intrust with the handling of money. The young woman said she had just come from the east to find employment and would begin for a small salary. She was rather too good looking to suit me. I was afraid of passing every day in a region where women were scarce, especially pretty ones, with her, but by cutting off a couple of hours a day on my letters I would be enabled to hold on to the handling of the cash. That decided me, and I engaged her.

Imogen Bradley looked to be about twenty years old. Her face would have made a good model for a picture of a Madonna. From the first she took an interest in my business, posting me if she saw anything going wrong and assisting me to right it. The only thing I couldn't get her to do was to handle any cash. She said that she was not used to money matters and if she should make a mistake I would blame her and that would break her heart.

What I feared when I employed her came to pass. I was cooped up from morning till night with a pretty young woman who in my eyes grew prettier every day. One evening after banking hours while I was dictating to her she made a bad blunder, and I gently chided her. Tears came into those "heaven's windows" of hers. The temptation was more than I could bear. I kissed them away.

The next two or three days I spent ruing my folly. I didn't want a wife, and if I felt inclined that way my mind was bent on a girl in the east whom I thought some day I might marry. I didn't know what to do to rectify my rash act. The consequence was that I did nothing. I simply let matters drift, though I controlled myself sufficiently to refrain from any further kisses. I looked for her to reproach me either for having kissed her or for not continuing to kiss her, but she made no reference to the first kiss and didn't indicate that she would like another. Indeed, she seemed to me to possess that innocence to be found especially in a girl hovering between childhood and womanhood.

It was about this time that "Handy Andy," a noted desperado, was terrorizing the surrounding country. He worked alone, but did not fear to undertake what was usually undertaken by half a dozen men. He had robbed an express car single handed and got away with the plunder. The passengers of half a dozen stages at different times had handed him their valuables. He had tackled a bank located in the center of a town of 3,000 inhabitants, though in this case the only thing he took away with him was a bullet in the leg. When I was informed of this robbery I naturally began to feel solicited for my own funds. True, we had weapons, but bank robbers don't usually wait for people to use them. I was no hand to tackle them myself, and with two young boys and a girl for support in case Mr. Handy Andy should drop in and ask for the loose cash lying about my bank I didn't feel very secure.

The day the news came of the bank robbery I have mentioned we—myself, my typewriter and my two clerks—were talking over the matter of defense in case the robber should come down upon us. One of the boys suggested that a gun be fixed on a swivel at the paying teller's window and one at the receiving teller's window so that it could be fired by electricity by pressing a button on the floor with the foot. This was, of course, ridiculous. Who was to aim the gun? Certainly not the man behind the window, for he would be covered. The other boy, who was thinking rather of his own safety than that of the funds, suggested that the back door that led from the space behind the fixtures be always kept open. Miss Bradley's face wore a terrified expression while we were discussing these expedients, and she put her hands to her ears that she might not hear them.

I playfully pulled her hands from her ears and said to her:

"You women are always frightened when there is nothing to be frightened at, but in presence of real danger you often astonish us men by your coolness. Besides, women often have better heads at hitting on devices than men. Come, tell me what you suggest in case Handy Andy makes us a visit."

"I don't like to think about it, and I'm sure if he should come I would faint. One thing I would recommend while he is operating in the neighbor-

hood. I would keep the funds in a tin box under the paying teller's desk, so that in case of a visit from him some one of us may catch it up and run away with it. Of course the back door should be always kept open.

"I knew," I exclaimed, "that you would display more foresight than any of us. That's exactly what we'll do."

"Another thing I would do," Imogen continued. "I would have some rope handy. In case it should become possible to get the better of him no one could hold him very long. It might be necessary to tie his hands and feet."

"Bravo!" I cried. "There's more in that little head of yours than in the heads of ten men. Where did you get such ideas? One would think you had worked with the police."

"Oh, I don't know about such things," was the modest reply. "These precautions seem to me to be merely common sense."

"Common sense! They're just the thing. You're idea of keeping the funds in the tin box is a bright one. No one could keep us all covered at once, and some one of us might very likely have a chance to pick up the box and skip. You, being a woman, would probably have the best chance to get away with it."

"Oh, I would be too frightened to do anything like that."

I was not prepared for so much forethought in this modest girl. After all, I thought, would not a woman who has had the energy and pluck to come out here to earn her own living instead of sitting around at home waiting for a husband make a better wife for me than the girl I had been thinking of? I was very much inclined to continue my caresses, to be wound up with an honorable proposal of marriage.

I got a tin box out of the vault and, scraping together all the loose funds necessary for making payments during the day, put them in it and placed it under the paying teller's desk in order that he could use it without continually running outside his compartment for it. But after it had been filled and placed in position Imogen suggested that while there it would be handy for the person who was to snatch it up and run away with it. I therefore placed it under a small table by the back door through which it was to be carried in case of attack. I also bought a few yards of quarter inch rope, which I deposited in a closet. The only thing remaining to be done was to see that the revolvers were kept in the different drawers were loaded and in good condition. These things having been attended to, I dismissed the matter from my mind.

My thoughts dropped from war to love. I had a problem to settle. Would I or would I not propose to Imogen Bradley? I resolved to ask her from what part of the east she came and to make inquiries. So I asked her the question one day carelessly, that she might not suspect my intention, and she gave me the name of a college town in Massachusetts. I knew no one there, so I was no better off than before. The truth is I was pining for her, and it seemed to me that I would rather be marrying her than her family. So I never wrote. I was satisfied from what I had seen of her that she was an odd mixture of gentleness, pluck and natural ability. What more could I want, especially in a rough country like Nevada?

It was but a few days after our preparations to receive Handy Andy when at 12 o'clock the boys broke off work and went to dinner. I never left the bank myself after opening in the morning till closing in the evening, always eating a lunch in my private office. Miss Bradley usually went out for her dinner, but today she said she had a headache and would not go. She sat reading a newspaper. As I munched a sandwich I could look at her—so fair, so pure, so gentle—and I made up my mind I would propose to her that evening.

Suddenly there was a man's step outside the fixtures. Imogen looked up, and I saw by her expression that she recognized the comer. A wonderful change came over her innocent face, which took on one of hard resolution. Quickly rising, she unlatched a door leading into the space she occupied. A masked man stepped in and covered me with a revolver. Imogen darted to the closet and took out the rope, and the man who had ordered me to throw up my hands took it from her, giving her his revolver, which she kept pointed at me. The masked man then proceeded to blind me hand and foot.

This done, he took the weapon from Imogen. She picked up the tin box containing the bank funds and, turning to me, threw me a kiss.

"That's in return for the one you gave me," she said, smiling. "and I'm much obliged to you for saving us the trouble of collecting the money, which would have taken time. Ta, ta!"

She walked out of the back door with some \$20,000, leaving the masked man to keep guard over me till she had got far enough away to render pursuit unavailable. When she had gone my watcher said to me:

"Nice young woman, isn't she? Sorry for you, but she's got a husband already, and two is against the law. She's my wife, Mrs. Handy Andy, and my cleverest work is done by her."

The boys were not to be expected back till 1 o'clock, and the robber had undoubtedly been informed of the fact, for after keeping me covered half an hour he left me at ten minutes to 1. The boys came in at the regular time and unbound me.

My funds were never recovered. I learned as soon as I was freed that Imogen had been seen slowly carrying the box to a carriage, which she entered and was driven away.

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