## THE REPUBLICAN, CUSTER COUNTY, NEBRASKA.



come, he suffered himself to be led

upward and presently stopped, and they emerged upon a wide landing.

"Here," said Nina, throwing open a there is, tell me frankly."

"Little sister," he said, imprisoning both her hands, "it is a paradise, but I don't intend to come here and squat on my relatives, and 1 won't!" "Philip! You are common!"

"Oh, I know you and Austin think you want me."

"Phil!"

"All right, dear, I'll-it's awfully generous of you-so I'll pay you a visit for a little while. You are very kind, I do not accept let me loose to risk it Ninette." He sat partly turned from her, staring at the sunny window. Presently he slid his hand back along the bed covers until it touched and tightened over hers. And in silence she raised it to her lips.

They remained so for awhile, he still partly turned from her, his perplexed and narrowing gaze fixed on the window, she pressing his clinched hand to her lips, thoughtful and silent.

"Before Austin comes," he said at length, "lei's get the thing over and buried as long as it will stay buried." "Alixe is here," she said gently. "Did

you know it?"

He nodded.

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"You know, of course, that she's married Jack Ruthven?"

He nodded again. "Are you on leave, Phil, or have you

really resigned?" "Resigned."

"I knew it," she sighed.

He said: "As I did not defend the suit I couldn't remain in the service. There's too much said about us anyway-about us who are appointed from civil life. And then to have that happen!"

"Phil, do you still care for her?" "I am sorry for her."

'After a painful silence his sister said, "Could you tell me how it began, Phil?"

"How it began? I don't know that either. When Bannard's command took the field I went with the scouts Alixe remained in Manila. Ruthven was there for Fane, Harmon & Co That's how it began, I suppose, and it's a rotten climate for morals, and

into the elevator-a dainty white and rence, a matter of routine in some rose rococo affair. His sister adjusted sets. Who cares except decent folk? dance, you know," she said Faint a tiny lever; the car moved smoothly | And they only think it's a pity and tints of excitement stained her white wouldn't do it themselves. If Alixe skin; the vivid scarlet contrast of her found that she cared for Ruthven I mouth was almost startling "On don't blame her. Laws and statutes Thursday I was introduced." she exdoor. "Isn't this comfortable? Is there can't govern such matters. If she plained, "and now I'm to have the gayanything you don't fancy about it? If found she no longer cared for me, I 'est winter I ever dreamed of And could not blame her. But two people I'm going to leave you in a moment if vision awaiting them-Elleen in all her mismated have only one chance in this Nina doesn't hurry and come. Do you world-to live their tragedy through

with dignity. That is absolutely all self and race and civilization! That is my conclusion after a year's experience in hell." He rose and began to pace the floor, fingers worrying his

mustache. "Law? Can a law which

all again with another woman?"

She said slowly, her hands folded in her lap: "It is well you've come to me at last. You've been turning round and round in that wheeled cage until you think you've made enormous progress, and you haven't. Dear, listen to me. What you honestly believe to be unselfish and high minded adherence to principle is nothing but the circling reasoning of a hurt mind-an intelligence still numbed from shock, a mental and physical life forced by sheer courage into mechanical routine. I tell you your life is not finished. It is not yet begun! You need new duties, new faces, new scenes, new problems. You shall have them. Dear, believe me, few men as young as you, as attractive, as human, as lovable, as affectionate as you, willfully ruin their lives because of a hurt pride which they mistake for consolence. You will understand that when you become convalescent. Now kiss me and tell me you're much obliged, for I hear Austin's voice on the stairs."

"Well, we've buried it now," breathed Selwyn. "You're all right, Nina, from your own standpoint, and I'm not going to make a stalking nuisance of myself. No fear, little sister. Hello"-turning swiftly-"here's that preposterous husband of yours."

They exchanged a firm hand clasp, Austin Gerard, big, smooth shaven, humorously inclined toward the ruddy heaviness of successful middle age; Selwyn, lean, bronzed, erect and direct in all the powerful symmetry and perfect health of a man within sight of maturity. "Nina's good enough to want me for a few days"- began Selwyn, but his big brother-in-law laughed scornfully: "A few days! We've got you now!" And to his wife: "Nina, I suppose I'm due to lean over those infernal kids before I can have a minute with your brother. Are they in bed yet? All right, Phil. We'll be down in a minute. There's tea and things in the library. Make Elleen give you some."

she encountered his curlous gaze

"Tonight is to be my first dinner glory mind?"

"Of course I mind," he protested life holds for them; beyond that, out- amiably, "but I suppose you wish to side of that dead line, treachery to devote several hours to dressing." She nodded. "Such a dream of a

gown! Nina's present! You'll see ft. 1 ] hope Gerald will be here to see it. He asked the girl, turning to confront er Gerald when you meet him Now must go."

Then, rising and partly turning to collect her furs:

"It's quite exciting to have you here. We will be good friends, won't we? by the faint underringing wistfulness And I think I had better stop my chat in the laughing voice that challenged ter and go, because my cunning little his opinion, and something within him that's nepotism." Alsatian maid is not very clever yet. Goodby."

She stretched out one of her amazingly white hands across the table, giving him a friendly leave taking and welcome all in one frank handshake, and left him standing there, the fresh contact still cool in his palm.

Nina came in presently to find him seated before the fire, one hand shading his eyes, and as he prepared to rise she rested both arms on his shoulders, forcing him into his chair again. "So you have bewitched Eileen, too, have you?", she said tenderly, "Isn't she the sweetest little thing?"

"She's-ah-as tall as I am," he said. blinking at the fire.

"She's only nineteen; pathetically unspoiled-a perfect dear. Men are go ing to rave over her and-not spoll her. Did you ever see such hair-that thick, ruddy, lustrous copper tint? And sometimes it's like gold afire! And a skin like snow and peaches! She's sound to the core. I've had her exercised and groomed and hardened and trained from the very beginning-every inch of her minutely cared for exactly like my own bables. I've done my



of unused room in this big barn, only of officers and troopers, and vis reward you don't mind being at the top of the was a pension offer, declined. He practiced until his wife died, then retired "Yes, 1 do. 1 want to be in the to his country home, from which house drawing room or somewhere so that his daughter Nina was married to Ausyou all may enjoy the odors and get tin Gerard.

the benefit of premature explosions. Oh, come now, Austin, if you think I'm going to plant myself here on "Don't notice him, Austin," said

Nina; "he only wishes to be implored. And by the same token you'd both better let me implore you to dress!" She rose and bent forward in the firelight to peer at the clock. "Goodness! Do you creatures think I'm going to give Eileen half an hour's start with her maid and I carrying my twelve years' handlcap too? No, indeed! I'm decrepit, but I'm going to dle fighting. Austin, get up! You're horribly slow anyhow. I'hil, Austin's man-such as

he is-will be at your disposal, and your luggage is unpacked." In the hallway Selwyn and Austin encountered a radiant and bewildering "Wonderfull" said Gerard. patting

the vision's rounded bare arm as be hurried past. "Fine gown, fine girl! But I've got to dress, and so has Phil-He meant well. 1p."

"Do you like it, Captain Selwyn?" promised. I hope you'll like my broth him where he had halted. "Gerard isn't coming, and-1 thought perhaps you'd be interested."

The formal, half patronizing compliment on his tongue's tip remained there unsaid He stood silent, touched responded in time:

"Your gown is a beauty; such wonderful lace. Of course anybody would know it came straight from Paris or from some other celestial region." She colored enchantingly and, with pretty, frank impulse, held out both Billy.

her hands to him. "You are a dear, Captain Selwyn! It is my first real dinner gown, and I'm quite mad about it, and somehow I wanted the family to share my madness with me. Nina will. She gave it to me, the darling. Austin admires it, too, of course, but he doesn't notice such things very closely, and Gerald isn't here. Thank you for letting me show it to you before I go down." She gave both his hands a friendly little shake and, glancing down at her skirt in blissful consciousness of its

perfection, stepped backward into her own room. Later, while he stood at his dresser constructing an immaculate knot in his white tie, Nina knocked.

"Hurry, Phil! Oh, may I come in? You ought to be downstairs with us, you know. And it was very sweet of you to be so nice to Eileen. The child had tears in her eyes when I went in. Oh, just a single diamond drop in each. Your sympathy and interest did it. I think the child misses her father on an occasion such as this-the beginning of

ife, the first step out into the world.

loyal than the services of thousands

Mr. Selwyn, Sr., continued to pay his taxes on his father's house in Tenth street, voted in that district, spent a month every year with the Gerards and judiciously enlarged the family reservation in Greenwood, whither he retired in due time.

The first gun off the Florida keys sent Selwyn's only brother from his law office in hot haste to San Antonio. That same gun interrupted Selwyn's connection with Neergard & Co., operators in Long Island real estate, and a year later the captaincy offered him in a western volunteer regiment operating on the island of Leyte completed the rupture.

And now be was back again, a chance career ended, with option of picking up the severed threads-his inheritance at the loom-and of retying them, warp and weft, and continuing the pattern according to the designs of the tufted, tinted pile yarn knotted in by his ancestors before him.

Meanwhile he was looking for two things-an apartment and a job-the first energetically combated by his immediate family.

It was rather odd-the scarcity of jobs Of course Austin offered him one, which Selwyn declined at once, enraging his brother-in-law.

"But what do I know about the investment of trust funds?" demanded Selwyn. "You wouldn't take me if I were not your wife's brother, and

Austin's harmless fury raged for nearly ten minutes, after which he cheered up, relighted his cigar and resumed his discussion with Selwyn concerning the merits of various boys' schools, the victim in prospective being

A little later, reverting to the subject of his own enforced idleness, Selwyn said, "I've been on the point of going to see Neergard, but somehow I can't quite bring myself to it-slinking into his office as a rank failure in one profession to ask him if he has any use for me again.".

"Stuff and fancy!" growled Gerard. "It's all stuff and fancy about your being any kind of a failure. If you want to resume with that Dutchman, go to him and say so. If you want to invest anything in his Long Island schemes he'll take you in fast enough. He took in Gerald and some twenty thousand!" "Isn't he very prosperous, Austin?"

"Very-on paper. Long Island farm lands and mortgages on Hampton hencoops are not fragrant propositions to me. But there's always one more way of making a living after you counted 'em all up ou your fingers. If you've any capital to offer Neergard, he won't shrick for help."

"But isn't suburban property"-"On the jump? Yes-both ways, Oh, I suppose that Neergard is all right. If wasn't I wouldn't have permitted

stincts, good and bad, right and wrong, out of which, formed from the acts which become habits, character matures. This was his estimate of Gerald.

. . . . . The next morning, riding in the park

with Elleen, he found a chance to speak cordially of her brother. "I've meant to look up Gerald," he

said, as though the neglect were his own fault, "but every time something happens to switch me on to another track."

"I'm afraid that I do a great deal of the switching," she said, "don't I? But you've been so nice to me and to the children that"-

Miss Erroll's horse was behaving badly, and for a few moments she became too thoroughly occupied with her mount to finish her sentence.

The belted groom galloped up, prepared for emergencies, and he and Selwyn sat their saddles watching a pretty battle for mastery between a beautiful horse determined to be bad and a very determined young girl who had decided he was going to be good.

Once or twice the excitement of solicitude sent the color flying into Selwyn's temples. The bridle path was narrow and stiff with freezing sand, and the trees were too near for such lively maneuvers, but Miss Erroll had made up her mind, and Selwyn already had a humorous idea that this was no light matter. The horse found it serious enough, too, and suddenly concluded to be good. And the pretty scene ended so abruptly that Selwyn laughed aloud as he rejoined her.

"There was a man-Boots Lansingin Bannard's command. One night on Samar the bolo men rushed us, and Lansing got into the six foot major's boots by mistake-seven leaguers, you know-and his horse bucked him clean out of them."

"Hence his Christian name, I suppose," said the girl "But why such a story, Captain Selwyn? I believe I stuck to my saddle."

"With both hands," he said cordially, always alert to plague her, for she was adorable when teased, especially in the beginning of their acquaintance before she had found out that it was a habit of his, and her bright confu-



that's how it began."

"Only that?"

"We had had differences. It's been one misunderstanding after another. If you mean was I mixed up with another woman-no! She knew that." "She was very young, Phil."

He nodded. "I don't blame her." "Couldn't anything have been done?" "If it could, neither she nor I did it or knew how to do it, I suppose. It fwent wrong from the beginning It was founded on froth. She had been engaged to Harmon, and she threw him over for Boots Lansing. Then 1 came along. Boots behaved like a choroughbred. That is all there is to 4t-inexperience, romance, trouble. She couldn't stand me, she couldn't stand the life, the climate, the inconvenfences, the absence of what she was accustomed to. She was dead tired of it all. I can understand that And we went under, that's all-fighting each other heart and soul to the end. is she happy with Ruthven? I never

knew him and never cared to, 1 suppose they go about in town among the yellow set. Do they?"

"Yes. I've met Alixe once or twice She was perfectly composed, formal, but unembarrassed. She has shifted her milleu somewhat. It began with the Influx of Ruthven's friends from the 'yellow' section of the younger married set-the Orchils, Fanes, Minsters and Delmour-Carnes By the way, I'm dipping into the younger set myself tonight on Eileen's account. 1 brought her out Thursday, and I'm giving a dinner for her tonight."

"Who's Eileen?" he asked "Eileen? Why, don't you-why, of course you don't know yet that I've taken Eileen for my own Eileen is Molly Erroll's daughter, and the courts appointed Austin and me guardians for her and for her brother Gerald." "Oh!"

"Now is it clear to you?"

"Yes," he said, thinking of the tragedy which had left the child so utterly alone in the world save for her brother and a distant kinship by marriage with the Gerards.

For awhile he sat brooding, arms loosely folded, immersed once more in his own troubles.

"It seems a shame," he said, "that a family like ours, whose name has always spelled decency, should find themselves entangled in the very things their race has always hated and managed to avoid. And through me 100.

"But no disgrace touches you, dear," whe said tremulously.

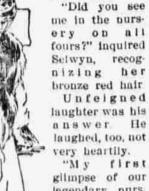
"I've been all over that, too," he said, with quiet bitterness. "You are partly right; nobody cares in this town. Even though I did not defend the suit, nobody cares. And there's no disgrace, to condone. Divorce is no longer noticed; it is a matter of ordinary occur-



ANDS clasped behind his back, Selwyn stood in the center of the library, considering his environment with the grave, absent air habitual to him

when brooding. And as he stood there a sound at the door aroused him, and he turned to confront a young girl in hat, veil and furs, who was leisurely advancing toward him, stripping the gloves from a pair of very white hands. "How do you do, Captain Selwyn?" she said "I am Elleen Erroll, and I am commissioned to give you some tea Nina and Austin are in the nursery telling bedtime stories and hearing assorted prayers. The children seem to be quite crazy about you. I congratu-

late you on your popularity."





frank malice Then, quickly: A young girl in hat "But you don't

and furs. mind, do you' It's all in the family, of course."

"Of course," he agreed with good grace; "no use to pretend dignity here; you all see through me in a few moments."

She had given him his tea. Now she sat upright in her chair, smiling, distrait, her bat casting a luminous shadow across her eyes; the fluffy furs, 2 suppose, if nobody cares enough even fallen from throat and shoulder, settied loosely around her waist. Glancing up from her short reverie

her brother. "I should say," observed Selwyn,

"that she's equipped for the slaughter of man." "Yes, but I am selecting the vic

tim," replied his sister demurely. "Oh! Are you? Already?" "Tentatively."

"Who?"

"Sudbury Gray, I think, with Scott Innis for an understudy, perhaps the Draymore man as alternate-1 don't know; there's time."

"Plenty," he said vaguely, staring into the fire, where a log had collapsed into incandescent ashes. She continued to talk about Elleen until she noticed that his mind was on other matters. His preoccupied stare enlightened her. She said nothing for awhile.

But he woke up when Austin came in and settled his big body in a chair. "Dring, the little minx, called me back on some flimsy pretext," he said, relighting his cigar. "I forgot that time was going, and she was wily enough to keep me talking until Miss Paisely caught me at it and showed me out. I tell you," turning on Selwyn, "children are what make life worth wh"- He ceased abruptly at a into the social fabric of the metropolis gentle tap from his wife's foot, and was merely an automatic matter for Selwyn looked up.

Whether or not he divined the interference, he said very quietly: "I'd rather have had children than anything in the world. They're about the best there is in life. I agree with you. Austin."

His sister, watching him askance, was relieved to see his troubled face become serene, though she divined the effort.

"Klds are the best," he repeated, smiling at her. "Failing them, for second choice I've taken to the laboratory. Some day I'll invent something and astonish you, Nins."

"We'll fit you up a corking laboratory," began Austin cordially. "There

"You're very good. Perhaps you'll all be civil enough to move out of the house if I need more room for bottles and retorts."-

"Of course Phil must have his laboratory," insisted Nina, "There's loads

Men do not understand what it means to us. Gerald doesn't, I'm sure. I've been watching her, and I know the shadow of that dreadful tragedy falls on her more often than Austin and I are aware of. You are among your own people, anyhow!"

. . . . . His own people! The impatient tenderness of his sister's words had been sounding in his ears all through the evening. They rang out clear and insistent amid the tumult of the dinner. He heard them in the laughing confu sion of youthful voices. They stole into the delicate undertones of the mu-

sic to mock him. The rustling of silk and lace repeated them. The high heels of satin slippers echoed them in Irony.

His own people!

The scent of overheated flowers, the sudden warm breeze eddying from a capricious fan, the mourning thrill of the violins, emphasized the emphasis of the words. And they sounded sadder and more

meaningless now to him, here in his own room, until the monotony of their recurrent mockery began to unnerve him.

He turned on the electricity, shrank from it, extinguished it. And for a long time he sat there in the darkness of early morning, his unfilled pipe



gether the loosened threads which represented the unfinished record that his race had woven

His own people had always been among the makers of that fabric. Into part of its vast and Intricate pattern they had woven an inconspicuously honorable record-chronicles of births and deaths and marriages, a plain memorandum of plain living and upright dealing with their fellow men. Some public service of modest nature they had performed, not seeking it, not shirking, accomplishing it cleanly when it was intrusted to them.

His forefathers had been, as a rule, professional men-physicians and lawyers. His grandfather died under the walls of Chapultepec eastle while es before Santiago.

ical officer in Sheridan's cavalry had He was simply a joyous, pleasure lovbeen perhaps no more devoted, no more ing cub. chock full of energetic in-

Gerald to go into it. Neergard sticks to his commissions and doesn't back his fancy in certified checks. I don't know exactly how he operates. I only know that we find nothing in that sort of thing for our own account. But Fane, Harmon & Co. do. That's their affair too. It's all a matter of taste, I tell you."

Selwyn reflected: "I believe I'd go and see Neergard if I were perfectly sure of my personal sentiments toward him. He's been civil enough to me, of course, but I have always had a curlous feeling about Neergard-that he's forever on the edge of doing something-doubtful,"

"His business reputation is all right. He shaves the dead line like a safety razor, but he's never yet cut through it. On principle, however, look out for an apple faced Dutchman with a thin nose and no lips. Neither Jew, Yankee nor American stands any chance in a deal with that type of financier. Personally my feeling is this: If I've got to play games with Julius Neergard, I'd prefer to be his partner. And so I told Gerald. By the way"-

Austin checked himself, looked down at his cigar, turned it over and over several times, then continued quietly:

"By the way, I suppose Gerald is like other young men of his age and timesimmersed in his own affairs-thoughtless perhaps, perhaps a triffe selfish in the cross country gallop after pleasure. I was rather severe with him about his neglect of his sister. He ought to have come here to pay his respects to you too."

"Oh, don't put such notions into his head"-

"Yes, I will," insisted Austin. "However indifferent and thoughtless and selfish he is to other people, he's got to be considerate toward his own family, and I told him so. Have you seen him lately ?"

"No-o," admitted Selwyn.

"Not since the first time when he came to do the civil by you?" 'No, but don't"-

"Yes, I will," repeated his brother-inlaw, "and I'm going to have a thorough explanation with him and learn what he's up to. He's got to be decent to his sister. He ought to report to me occasionally. That's all there is to it. He has entirely too much liberty, with his bachelor quarters and his junior whippersnapper club and his house parties

and his cruises on Neergard's boat!" He got up, casting his cigar from him, and moved about bulkly, muttering of matters to be regulated, and firmly too. But Selwyn, looking out of the window across the park, knew perfectly well that young Erroll, now of age, with a small portion of his handsome income at his mercy, was past the regulating stage and beyond the authority His father's services as division med ' of Austin There was no harm in him.

## Gerald Erroll.

sion always delighted him into furthe mischief.

"But I wasn't a bit worried," he continued. "You had him so firmly around the neck. Besides, what horse or man could resist such a pleading

pair of arms around the neck?" "What you saw," she said, flushing up, "is exactly the way I shall do any pleading with the two animals you mention."

Later she remarked, "It's just as Nina says, after all, isn't it?"

"I suppose so," he replied suspiciously. "What?"

"That Gerald isn't really very wicked, but he likes to have us think so. It's a sign of extreme self consciousness, isn't it," she added innocently, "when a man is afraid that a woman thinks he is very, very good?"

"That," he said, "Is the limit. I'm going to ride by myself."

Her pleasure in Selwyn's society had gradually become such genuine pleasure, her confidence in his kindness so unaffectedly sincere, that insensibly she had fallen into something of his manner of badinage-especially since she realized how much amusement he found in her own smiling confusion when unexpectedly assailed. Also, to her surprise, she found that he could be plagued very easily, though she did not quite dare it at first, in view of his impressive years and experience.

But, once goaded to it, she was astonished to find how suddenly it seemed to readjust their personal relationsyears and experience falling from his shoulders like a cloak which had concealed a man very nearly her own age, years and experience adding themselves to her, and at least an inch to her stature to redress the balance between them.

It had amused him immensely as he realized the subtle change, and it pleased him, too, because no man of thirtyfive cares to be treated like a grandfather by a girl of nineteen, even if she has not yet worn the polish from her first pair of high heeled shoes.

"It's astonishing," he said, "how little respect infirmity and age command In these days."

"I do respect you," she insisted, "especially your infirmity of purpose. You said you were going to ride by yourself. But, do you know, I don't believe you are of a particularly solitary disposition. Are you?"

He laughed at first, then suddenly his face fell.

"Not from choice," he said under his breath. Het quick ear heard, and she turned, semi-serious, questioning him with raised eyebrows.

"Nothing. I was just muttering.

(CONTINUED NEXT WEEK)

twisting a tourniquet for a cursing dragoon; an uncle remained indefinitely at Malvern Hill; an only brother at Montank Point sickened in the trench-

clutched in his nerveless hand.

SN:

Selwyn.