

The Social Pirates :-:

Plot by George Bronson Howard
Novelization by Hugh C. Weir :: Copyright Kalem Company

Story No. 3--The Parasite

Mary Burnett watched the pretty hotel maid as she finished performing the trifling service for which Mona Hartley, Mary's chum, had summoned her.

"Thank you," said Mona. "Here--"

"Oh, thank you, Miss," said the girl flushing with pleasure as she received her tip.

The maid went out, and Mary sitting back in the deep chair that was so placed that she could look out, without moving, and see the park with its ever changing panorama, laughed.

"Mona," she said, "will you tell me why you sent for that girl to do a lot of silly things for you, which would have made you indignant had anyone even offered to do them for you a few weeks ago?"

"I did it just because I like to be luxurious," said Mona. She stretched out her arms, and took a step or two. "Mary--don't you love it, too?" Here she was caught by some people who would say we ought to be hunted fugitives, flying around the country under assumed names--and instead, we're living here, right within sight of the scene of our exploits in the most expensive hotel in town."

"I suppose we're a pair of scamps," said Mona. "But I don't feel a bit sorry for our two worthy (?) victims. They thought I was rich--and easy. But it was mighty funny to see the way they pined if I happened to mention casually that any girl I knew was married."

"We did get their money with our plan," said Mary. "and I may be all wrong, but I haven't any scruples about them, either. It will be all right to collect the expenses for our campaign if we always take care to present the bill to someone who deserves what he gets as richly as those two men did."

"Speaking of that," said Mona, "we've got to keep our eyes open. Mary mine. We're living in the very lap of luxury just now, but if we don't watch out we'll slide off on the floor. We've got to be forwarned, you and I. We can't wait till the wolf is at the door--we want to turn him away before he remembers to start looking for us."

"You're right," said Mary. "I'm keen enough when we've once started. Mona--you'll admit I did my part in the other matters! But it's a good thing I've got a partner like you, or I never would get started."

"You're not started yet, you know," said Mona. "I've not the slightest idea of what to do next. Have you? My mind's empty. I just want to stay here forever and bask in the luxury of this place!"

"Oh, something will turn up," said Mary, confidently. "But I like the luxury of all this just as much as you do, Mona. Still--I wish we had some friends."

"Tend friends," said Mona, in mock alarm. "We can't afford that luxury, my dear--and it's not until we've made enough money to give us a nice income, and I think we've quite a long road to travel before that time comes."

"Yes--because, after all, we have got some scruples. After all, we break the law. We'll stick to that agreement, I think."

"Yes--only bend it, like the big corporations. It's silly to break the law--it's so easy to get around it! For us--all we have to do is to select our victims from among those who are breaking the law themselves. Then we're safe. By the way--talking about the law, consider me and my friend. I've made a will, not a friend, but an acquaintance, here!"

"In the hotel, Mona? Who?"

"The house detective, no less!" said Mona, proudly.

"For heaven's sake!" said Mary, with a laugh. "Why--and how?"

"Oh, I don't know--it just seemed to me he might be useful. He's an interesting person, really--and he likes me ever so much. He tells me about all the trouble women make for him here--the things they lose, and all sorts of things! It's quite entertaining. Come on down--I'll introduce you to him."

"So, in a few minutes, they went down to the luxurious lobby of the hotel. But Mary had to wait for her introduction.

"There he is," said Mona. "But her's busy. Mary--I don't believe that woman's just lost a ring or something! She looks as if she were in deadly trouble!"

"It was true. A woman whose face bore signs of a storm of emotion was pleading with the man.

"We'll have to find out why," said Mona.

Mona and Mary had not long to wait before the woman, greatly distressed, left the detective and went to the elevator. Her manner made it plain that he had not been able to comfort her.

"Miss Burnett--Mr. Clyde," said Mona. "Miss Burnett lives with me, Mr. Clyde. Now--you're going to be nice to us, aren't you? We're dying with curiosity! What was the matter with that poor soul who were talking with just now? I'm sure she's in some sort of real trouble!"

"I should say she was!" ejaculated Clyde angrily. "Of course, it's her own fault. In a way--and yet, when I think of a man who is scoundrel enough to take advantage of a woman's mistake--"

"You've simply got to tell us more than that," said Mona, determination plain in her voice and in every line of her features.

"Well--I don't know," said Clyde, doubtfully. "I get lots of information in confidence that I'm not at liberty to pass on."

"Oh, please--please," said Mary. "Why--what harm could it do, Mr. Clyde? We don't know this woman--and we would never tell on you!"

"And, besides, it might be a warning to us," said Mona. "I think it's your duty to tell us, so that we'll never, by any chance, make the same mistake she did!"

"No fear of that!" said Clyde, warmly. "If you'll permit me to tell you what you know nothing and never, by any chance, breathe to a soul that I told you--"

"Oh, we will," said Mary. "Honestly, you needn't be afraid--"

"It's a common enough story," said Clyde, then. "And an ugly one, too. The plain truth of it is that the poor lady has a husband who doesn't get along any too well with as he is--and I know enough of the case to be sure it's his fault."

"From a man to take the woman's side," said Mona. "But she didn't say it. Didn't she? Well, she didn't say it. I made her see that a good deal more than that. She saw that some women who have never had to withstand temptation can master."

"Well, be that as it may," said Clyde, "she was foolish enough a year or two ago, to have some correspondence with another man. It never came to anything. But there were the letters. What fools people are to keep letters! They get

All the time she realized that he was appraising her, weighing her charms, in fact--"But I'm very short just now, my dear--very short. Business is bad. Still--I'd like to help you. I don't know about a loan--that would be hard to manage. But--ah, I have it!"

"Yes!" she said.

"I need a housekeeper! I've just had to dismiss the one I had--a busy, my dear, and that's the truth! I could give you the place. That would give you a place to stay where you'd be comfortable. And I could pay you something--"

Mona pretended to hesitate, but she was overjoyed. She had received her in his office and she was already studying his safe. And so, doubtfully, she consented. Reynolds did not give her a chance to change her mind. He sent for his servants at once, and introduced her as the new mistress. Mona shivered as she saw the way the maids looked at her. They understood!

Mona, as a matter of fact, had anticipated the possibility that Reynolds would propose some such arrangements. With that in mind she had warned Mary that she might not return, and had made arrangements for keeping in touch with her chum. She was well content. She was by no means insensible to the risk she was running, to the false position in which she had deliberately placed herself. But she was confident, too, of her ability to cope with Reynolds. She knew from the way he looked at her, that she had power over him, and she meant to use it to the fullest possible extent.

"That night, indeed, after she had once gone to her own room and assured herself that she could lock herself in, she deliberately ventured into the lion's den, metaphorically speaking. She went down to the office, which Reynolds also used as a library. He was sitting there alone--the servants had all retired. At the sight of her he started up, plainly pleased, but Mona drew back in confusion.

"I took the liberty of coming down to borrow a book," she said. "I like to read myself to sleep."

"Help yourself, my dear," he said. "You--" he chuckled meaningly, and leered at her--"you're welcome to more than a book from me!"

She went to the shelves and after she had selected a novel, made for the door. "Sit down," he said. "You're coming for an old fellow like me. But--I'm not too old, am I?"

"Oh, no," she said. "I mustn't stay. Remember, I'm only your housekeeper, Mr. Reynolds."

He chuckled at that, and she started as she saw him go to his safe and open it. But, though she tried, she couldn't make out the combination--he was ahead of her. "Look at that. When he turned back he held out a necklace to her, a string of sparkling brilliants.

"Look at the pretties!" he said. "Mona took the necklace and looked at it admiringly.

"It's beautiful," she said. "I envy you that, I believe!"

"Ha--ha!" he chuckled. "Try it on, my dear! You know, if you and I get along you might wear it for your own!"

Mona pretended not to understand, and returned it to him.

"Now I must go to bed," she said. "Good night, Mr. Reynolds!"

"So soon," he said, wistfully. "I've got more jewels to show you."

"More?" she said. "I should think you'd be afraid of thieves!"

"I'm guarded against them," he said, shrewdly. "Look--I'll show you!"

And in the next few moments, thanks to his vanity, Mona was able to make a mental chart of the whole burglar alarm system that protected the place. She had hoped for this, rather than expected it. And then she went to her room. But in a few moments there came a tapping at her door.

"It's me!" said her employer's cracked voice. "Is everything all right?"

"Quite, thank you," said Mona, with an affection of sleepiness in her voice.

He turned away at that and went to his own room, disappointment plainly written on his face.

Mona slept little. But she was up, bright and fresh, in the morning. She was not afraid of Reynolds by day, as she suspected, he had plenty to keep him occupied, so that while he might think of her, he would not have the time to pursue her with his horrible attentions. His "clients," people of all sorts and conditions, since all appeared to be grist that came to his evil mill, began to arrive soon after breakfast, and came all day long, in a steady stream. It was easy to understand that his business was a profitable one.

Mona, meanwhile, had affairs of her own that demanded all attention. The first was a meeting with Mary--previously arranged for, and held at a nearby roadhouse.

"Everything looks fine, my dear," said Mona. "But you've got to find a real burglar for me--some one who can crack a safe. I can't do that--and it's the safe that contains what we're after. Do you think you can?"

"I can try," said Mary. "I know some awfully disreputable people, you know."

"Well, it's vital to my plan to have a dependable safe cracker. I'll leave that to you. As usual, the really hard work is for you to do."

Mary did, as she had told Mona, know a lot of more or less shady people. And on the night of her talk with Mona she went to a place she had not visited for a long time--a place that had threatened, once, to entrap her and drag her down. It was a luxurious resort of those who smoke opium--a place where the drug is surrounded with all the glamour and false romance that constitutes its chief appeal to many who are forming its acquaintance for the first time.

This place was not in Chinatown, but in the heart of one of the best districts of the city. The houses were luxuriously appointed and furnished. There was a great room where, if they so desired, the patrons might take their ease on soft couches. If they preferred, however, small rooms were at their disposal, where they might have privacy. Many customers came to this resort because they knew that they would be seen by none of their fellow smokers, though Mary had nearly fallen a victim to the smoking habit, but she had shaken off the deadly spell of the drug and she hesitated, even with a fixed purpose in her mind, to renew her acquaintance with it. It had to be, however, soon seen, she felt, she was fairly sure to find a man of the sort she needed. Here would be no common criminals, but only the very pick and choice of the profession.

The proprietor of this resort was a Chinaman, whose eyes gleamed covertly at the sight of Mary.

"You also come back one time,

up at the sight of a dozen or more packed-up letters. He had given up hope of the jewels, and he piled everything neatly together. And then, as she watched him, tensely, Mona heard a step on the stairs. Reynolds had awakened--he was coming down. She wheeled around, and Stallings seized his chance to pocket the letters. He would keep faith with Mary.

The next moment Reynolds came in--to find his housekeeper covering a letter with her revolver.

"Get up!" said Mona, sharply, to Stallings. She had seen him take the letters, but pretended that she had not. As he got up he made a sudden lunge for her and seized the hand that held the revolver. Reynolds, a coward revealed now, cried out in terror, and crouched against the wall. And while they struggled Mona managed to whisper to Stallings:

"I'm with you--I'll let you make your getaway!"

He yielded at once.

"Telephone the police!" cried Mona to Reynolds. He made for the instrument and then stopped. As Mona had guessed he dared not, with his record, call in the police. And the next moment, at a signal from Mona, Stallings slipped through the window and fled.

"Oh, let him go!" cried Mona. "He didn't get anything--see, all the jewels are there! I saved them for you!"

"You're the bravest woman I ever knew!" croaked Reynolds.

"Let me see if they're all here," he examined the jewels; then, straightener up. "Yes--all here," he said. "Here--take these as a reward!"

He held up the necklace he had shown her before, and a tiera of equal value. Mona hesitated, but finally accepted them. And then, with a cry of dismay, Reynolds saw that the letters were gone. He was like a man beside himself, and in the confusion of his dismay Mona slipped away, pretending that she was going to her room. Five minutes later Mary was speeding back to the city, with Mona at her side.

In Mary's apartment they talked over the wild affair of the night, well satisfied with the jewels Reynolds had given Mona.

"But I had to let your burglar get the letters--and I'm afraid he'll come here," said Mona.

"Your fears were justified. She had scarcely spoken when there was a ring at the door. Mona hid herself; Mary admitted Stallings. He tossed her the letters.

"I took an awful chance for you, Mary," he said. "Now--make good!"

"A good sport," said Mona, as he went out. "I like him better than some of the men I've met!"

They were back in the Grand Hotel a few days later. And Clyde, the house detective, came up to them with a beaming face.

"Remember that story I told you?" he asked. "Well--our friend got her letters back in the mail--no sign of where they came from! What do you know about that?"

They knew a great deal--but they didn't tell him!

End of Episode No. 3.

Quickest Way to Remove Blackheads



Valeksa Burnett, Celebrated on the American Stage for Her Self-Made Beauty, Gives Home Experiments and Simple Methods of Acquiring Quick Beauty.

There is hardly anything in the line of beauty-making of which the average person knows so little, as blackheads. The common resort is to squeeze out as many as possible, and to steam the face. The first process never removes the thousands of small blackheads, and the second enlarges the pores, makes the skin coarse, and is never successful in rid-ing the skin of these pests. I want those afflicted to try my method, as follows: Sprinkle a little norexin on a sponge made wet with hot water, and rub this all over the face, particularly on the affected localities. To your astonishment you will find all the blackheads gone in a few moments. There is nothing else known that will accomplish this same result. Norexin manently solves the blackhead problem. You can get the norexin at any drug store.

HANNAH M.--I am known as the only woman on the American stage who does not have to resort to the use of switches and other make-ups. If you will use my hair growing formula as follows, you will find that dandruff will be absolutely stopped, the hair roots will regain their youthful vigor, hair will grow quickly and luxuriantly, after several inches a month, and take on a very silky and healthy gloss. Your hair will also stop falling. Mix one ounce of beta-quinol in water and alcohol, half a pint each, or use a full pint of bay rum instead. This makes a very economical hair treatment. It is mixed in a few moments, and cannot be surpassed. Any drug store can supply you with the beta-quinol.

MRS. SADNESS.--My head-wash is a mixture of a teaspoonful of eggol in half a cup of hot water. As it contains alcohol, whatever it actually dissolves all fatty accumulations, and dandruff completely disappears. It is also economical, since you can obtain enough eggol at small cost, at any drug store to supply you for a dozen or more shampoos.

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