

The Social Pirates :-:

Story No. 10—Unmasking a Rascal

It was Mona who first noticed the girl—a wisp of a creature with a mass of dull gold hair, and large, frightened eyes which stared out from a face that was almost child-like in its innocence. Just outside the swinging doors of the Frivolity—the newest of the glittering The Dansants of Broadway—she was standing, her skirts clutched nervously in one small gloved hand, and her big, staring eyes never losing a chance to sweep the gay scene within, whenever the doors chanced to swing open. Mona Burnett reached across the small table in the corner of the cafe and, catching Mary Hartley's arm, directed the other's attention to the girl outside the swinging doors, who looked so strangely out of place. Mary studied the furtively watching figure for a moment in silence.

It was obvious that the girl outside was seeking someone—and that she was both hopeful and fearful that her search would be successful. The girl behind the doors had stepped in a quick, nervous fashion into the big cafe. For a moment she stood uncertainly, as though mustering all her resources for the ordeal ahead of her. Then with a long breath she crossed the room hurriedly, her little head held high, her eyes cold and hard. Now the watchers could see that she was dressed with a quiet elegance, hinting vividly of a comfortable income and a luxurious home, and that there was the air of real breeding in every feature of her face. She had seen the object of her search, and he was a man—a stockily built man of middle age, with a florid face, and a carefully waxed mustache, who was acting as escort to a young woman, whose every feature, from her penciled eyebrows to her extremely cut gown, cried out her character.

The advancing girl reached the table and paused, as his companion, sensing the situation, also looked up. The three made a tableau, subcharged with emotion. It was the man who spoke first, but strive as they would, neither Mary nor Mona was able to hear the words that fell from his lips. But they saw the girl's face go white, and then a dull red spot in her cheeks, and she caught the edge of the table, leaning forward and speaking in a low, vibrant voice. The next instant, a waiter, beckoned at a sudden gesture from the florid-faced man, glided to the scene and took the girl's arm.

"The brutal! The big, hulking, red-faced brute!" gasped Mona. "He is ordering that poor little thing ejected!"

It was true. The thing was done discreetly and with dispatch. Mona tossed a bill on the table and rose quickly. "I am going to follow her! Hurry, Mary! We'll be able to catch her at the street!"

The two girls reached the marble hall outside just in time to see the diminutive figure ahead clutch for an instant at the street door and then step out onto the crowded walk. They caught her at the corner. "You poor dear!" said Mona in a low, soothing voice, as she took hold of the other's arm. "We saw what happened at the cafe, and we followed you on purpose. Won't you tell us all about it?"

The three turned into a quiet tea room on a cross street, where Mary selected a retired table in the rear. "Now, if you will tell us your story—or as much of it as you like, perhaps we can think of something that will help you!"

"My name is Meadows—Minnie Meadows," she began. "I am, or rather was, the ward of Amos Fuller. 'Amos Fuller, the banker?' queried Mona.

"Yes. That—that was Mr. Fuller whom I spoke to in the cafe!"

Mona's glance expressed amazement, and the other shrugged bitterly. "I know it is hard to believe—hard to believe that a man like Mr. Fuller would be found at a tango cafe at this hour of the day! But it is true! I am afraid that the call of the white lights has been more than he could resist—and they say that when a man of his age goes astray he falls harder than any one else! Until two or three years ago he was an entirely different man—patient, kind, giving me anything I asked. You see, when my father died I was left quite a lot of money, and Mr. Fuller was made my guardian. I always supposed that I would have everything I wished, and would have thought it nothing but a nightmare had anyone ever hinted that I would some day find myself in the position I am now in. But gradually things began to change.

"Mrs. Fuller, who is several years younger than her husband, began to rot out more in society, the kind of society that wasn't very good for her. At last, she took to rambling, and so on, and she and Mr. Fuller had many bitter quarrels. But she was very jealous of him in spite of these, and she took it into her head that her husband was beginning to fall in love with me. Of course, that was absurd! Then one day Mr. Fuller came to me, and told me that if I made over to him the estate which father had left, he could invest it so that it would bring in double as much income for me. I don't know anything at all about business, and I had always trusted him! So I did what he told me to do, and signed a lot of papers—and—"

but there didn't seem any place where I could fit. Then I grew desperate and tried to reach Mr. Fuller again, but whenever I called at his bank, they told me that he was 'out' or 'too busy' to see me. I knew something of his habits, and decided to wait for him at the Frivolity. The scene which you saw was the result. He deliberately laughed in my face and ordered the waiter to put me out!"

The tears started to the girl's eyes, and her shoulders quivered. The proffered help of Mona and Mary was accepted. And they agreed to get her a position.

Back in their own apartment the girls fell to discussing a means of dealing with Fuller.

"I have it!" said Mona, suddenly. "You remember that newspaper article we were reading the other day, which told of the methods employed by the so-called tango cafes to find escorts for women, and vice versa? You remember that the article said most of those establishments employed professional 'introducers,' whose business was to make strangers acquainted, and so on? Why can't we get just such positions at the Frivolity?"

"Splendid!" agreed Mary. "But—do you think we could?"

"We can try, certainly! And there is no reason why we should not try at once!"

The plan was at once followed, the manager of the Frivolity agreeing to the plan which Mary and Mona put before him.

A week passed. On several afternoons and one evening the banker had drifted into the cafe, but only remained a short time on each visit, and as no time had an opportunity offered for the two girls to make his acquaintance. In the meantime Mona had succeeded in finding for Minnie Meadows a temporary position as model in an exclusive cloak house, during the vacation of one of the staff of regular girls, and had told their young protegee to hold herself in patience until she heard from them again.

"I don't think it will be long before we shall have something encouraging to tell you," she promised the girl. "In the meantime, if you need a friend, do not hesitate to call on us."

It was the next day that the girls' vigil was rewarded. Mona was the first to see the stocky figure of Fuller, the banker, immaculate in frock coat and pearl gray trousers, entered the Frivolity a little before 4 in the afternoon.

Fuller's glance wandered past Mona, and rested on Mary, who was seated alone at a table across the cafe. She made a demure, innocent picture as she sat idly reading a newspaper, and toying with a cup of tea. Mona saw Fuller's eyes light as they appraised the details of her modish costume and natty figure. Then he beckoned to the head waiter.

"Who is the girl, Jules?"

"I don't know, sir. But, if you like, I will see if it can be arranged for you to meet the young lady."

"She doesn't look like that kind of a girl, Jules—I mean the kind you can meet in a public place without the proper introduction."

"You are probably right. But we have recently introduced a new system here, sir. We have a professional introducer, whose business it is to make persons acquainted with one another—I mean in a perfectly proper manner, sir."

which the man was accustomed from his acquaintances of the cafes and cabarets that he was losing his native caution and shrewdness. Mary evaded his invitation for the next day, but hesitatingly promised to let him call on the following afternoon. Fuller took his departure, on the whole very well contented.

Mona had decided to continue her role of "professional introducer" at the Frivolity, at least for the present. To begin with, there was nothing which she could do to aid Mary's cause, and in the second place, their funds were beginning again to run alarmingly low. It was this second factor which induced her to approach the manager of the cafe, and ask for an advance. The man agreed promptly, for the girl's services had proven more valuable than he had expected.

"If you don't mind, I will give you a check," he said. "I'll make it out on the Ajax National, and witness your endorsement so that you will have no trouble in cashing it."

"Thanks!" said Mona. The words, Ajax National, meant nothing to her—then. It was not until the next morning when she presented the check at the paying teller's window that she appreciated the unexpected good fortune that had been given her with the conventional pink slip of paper. The paying teller turned the check over several times, made a movement as though to count out the bills in payment for the sum designated, and then, apparently seeing some real, or fancied defect in the endorsement, he got down from his stool, and called an assistant. Mona saw the two whisper together for a moment, and then caught the words, "Better see Mr. Fuller, Ed, and avoid any trouble!"

Mona flushed. Fuller! Could it be that fate had sent her to the bank of Amos Fuller—the man who they had marked for poetic retribution? Her question was answered when a moment after the paying teller opened the door of a private office, and asked her if she would be good enough to accompany him. The girl followed without hesitation. She had no idea what was wrong with the check or what was wanted of her, but this was too good an opportunity to lose! If this were, indeed, the institution presided over by Amos Fuller, who chose to mark his double life under the alias of "Winters"—her speculations were cut short by the sight of the story, familiar figure of Fuller, himself, who turned from a mahogany desk at their entrance.

For a moment he sat staring at her without recognition. And then a frown gathered swiftly on his face as he saw the girl smile, and he snapped a hasty order to the paying teller to wait outside. It was not until the door had closed behind the other that he turned again to the girl. Mona had thrown herself into a chair, and was laughing in unaffected abandon.

"Well—this is rich!" she gasped, holding her handkerchief to her mouth. "It is a pleasant day, is it not—Mr. Winters?"

"There isn't any need to laugh!" he snapped. "Can't a man have any fun at all these days?"

"Of course, he can, you old dear!" returned Mona, giving him a playful nudge under the chin, which made Fuller scowl again. What if one of his clerks should come in suddenly? Or, what if—

"I say, what is wrong with my perfectly good check?" laughed Mona. "Nothing at all," said Fuller hastily. "That fool of a paying teller fancied there was something wrong with the endorsement. The Frivolity has two accounts here, and he didn't know just where to credit the check."

"I see," said Mona without interest, but without making a motion to rise. She could see that her presence annoyed Fuller, and it gave her a sort of mischievous satisfaction to prolong his uneasiness.

"I haven't seen you for two or three days," she said, seeking for some excuse to prolong the conversation. "I have been busy, very busy," evaded Fuller, getting to his feet, and moving to the door. Before he could reach it, someone turned the handle, and a clerk entered.

"Fuller is outside! Shall I show her in?"

Fuller barely smothered a curse. "Tell her I will be free in just a moment." The door closed behind the clerk's wondering face, and Fuller mopped his face with his handkerchief. Mona laughed aloud.

"Why not have your wife come in at once? It seems to me rather discourteous to have her wait while you entertain another lady visitor!"

Fuller glared at her silently, obviously revolving a problem in his mind. He stepped quickly to the door of a small inner ante-room. "Step in here," he snapped. "You will have to wait until she goes!"

"All right, my dear!" And Fuller turned to his desk, and pressed an electric button.

"Gee, but you're easy!" breathed Mona. She chuckled, as she heard Fuller give orders to his secretary to pay to Mrs. Fuller the amount she had asked, and charge it against his personal account. "Evidently wifey has been overdrawn her allowance, and needs some pocket money," commented the concealed Mona, "and quite as evidently hubby is afraid not to give it to her! If she only knew the real facts about him—wheew!"

She broke off as Fuller ushered his wife to the door, and stood with his back against it, again mopping his face. It was apparent that Amos Fuller was not enjoying his morning!

A few minutes later he opened the door of the ante-room, and let Mona come forth. The girl laughed into his face.

"I ought to hold you up for a few hundred," she said mockingly. "But I'll let you off—this time! Maybe, you'll buy my dinner the next time you see me!"

"A dozen!" protested Fuller with assumed heartiness as he saw her depart.

"The old crook!" thought Mona. "It is men like that who make a woman lose her confidence in humanity!"

She received the amount of her check, and hurried to the street, glad to be in the open air again. She walked home so that she could think the situation out clearly. When she reached her apartment she had come to a decision. She recounted to Mary the events at the bank, and finished with the gleeful prophecy, "Unless I am absolutely mistaken, we shall have Brother Fuller in a corner and whining for mercy before a week has passed."

"What is your plan?"

Mona laughed. "That would be telling! And, besides, I haven't all of the details perfected yet. You remember Ralph Stokes, don't you, Mary?"

"The actor?" And Mary nodded. "I met him yesterday, and I think he will fit into my little denouement excellently. And—Mary. Do you think that you could lead our worthy friend of the banking fraternity to the point of an actual proposal?"

Mary considered the question reflectively. "I don't know, dear. I rather think that I might—under the right conditions! It that what I am to do?"

"Exactly. You are to be given the honor of being asked to be Mrs. Winters. That is the name by which Fuller is known to you, remember. If you can do that much, I am confident that I can do the rest!"

"Leave it to me!" promised Mary. "When I think of that scene at the cafe when Fuller ordered his ward ejected from the place, I could do anything!"

Mona nodded. "The same here! He deserves all that we can do to him—and always bear in mind that we are not doing it from a selfish motive, but only for the purpose of seeing that a belated justice is meted out to another one of those richly deserving of it!"

When Mona returned to the apartment that evening she announced that she had had an extremely satisfactory interview with Ralph Stokes, and that their friend was prepared to do anything possible to aid them. "When you are ready, we will be on hand to supply the artistic touches!" she concluded.

"Oh, I'll be ready!" promised Mary. "Fuller has asked me to go driving with him tomorrow afternoon at 3, and I have consented."

Mona consented swiftly. "Do you think that you can manage the proposal then?" she asked doubtfully.

Mary nodded. "Sure of it!"

"Then I will get in touch with Ralph tonight for final instructions." Mona met the young actor after she had concluded her evening's work at the Frivolity, and the two repaired to a quiet, all-night restaurant for a cup of chocolate and a sandwich.

Mona studied the other's trim, well set up figure approvingly, and then as the waiter vanished, she leaned across the table, and lowered her voice.

"I think our trap will be ready to spring sometime tomorrow afternoon," she said. "Fuller will call for Mary at 3, and she is to plead a sick headache, and ask him to visit her in the apartment. I want you to stay down in the lobby by the telephone stand. When I am ready, I'll call you and you are to come up at once!"

Stokes grinned appreciatively. "Let me see—I am to be Amesbury of the Evening News, and you are to give me the facts of Mr. Winters' or rather Mr. Fuller's engagement to your friend! I understand. And I am to be the aggressive newspaper reporter, who is overjoyed at the prospect of a sensational story! I think I can play the part. Leave it to me!"

"I will!" smiled Mona, as she sipped her chocolate.

Fuller was on time the next day. Punctuality, when it came to engagements with members of the fair sex, was one of his few virtues. Mary asked him to come up when his presence was announced over the house telephone, and when Fuller appeared, he found her lying back in an easy chair, her head bound with a handkerchief, and a bottle of smelling salts in her hand.

"What in the world is the matter?" he demanded, bending over her anxiously.

"A woman's proverbial complaint—headache," smiled Mary, allowing him to hold her hand, as he drew a chair up beside her. "I am afraid I shall have to postpone our drive. But, if you don't mind, you can stay here with me—and later we can have some tea sent up!"

"Fine!" assented Fuller enthusiastically. His hand wandered to her hair, and he ventured to stroke back some stray locks which had fallen down across one of her cheeks. She looked very alluring and dainty as she reclined in the huge chair—and she knew it. She closed her eyes, and felt Fuller's hand linger on her cheek. She repressed a shiver of disgust as she remembered the goal before her—and thought of Mona waiting in the next room, ready to appear at a given signal.

"I was feeling so home sick and blue and lonely before you came!" she sighed contentedly.

"Were you?" asked Fuller, beaming, and venturing to stroke her hair again. Suddenly he leaned forward, and before she realized his purpose,

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

later that energetic young man stepped into the room and stood surveying the group uncertainly.

"This is Mr. Amesbury of the Evening Star," said Mona, introducing the caller to Mary. "We have a rather interesting bit of news for you, my friend!" And she made the other acquainted in a few rapid sentences with the story of Fuller's masquerade, and his proposal to her chum under the alias of Winters. Fuller withdrew to the background, staring glumly from the window. Suddenly he turned.

"This farce has gone far enough!" he grated. "You are trying to blackmail me, all of you! You must think I am a Reuben to let you get away with it! Publish anything you please—but always remember that I have a reputation for business integrity behind me, and that I shall denounce it all as a lie, and sue for libel!"

For a moment Mona stared at him silently. She knew that the man spoke the truth—that if it came to a question of veracity he had nothing to fear. She turned again to the telephone, and spoke into the receiver the number of Fuller's residence. She heard the banker's muttered curse behind her as she requested the butler to call Mrs. Fuller, and the next moment he raised his voice sullenly.

"Come away from that telephone! You win! Now, how much do you want?"

"Fifteen thousand!" said Mona coldly, without moving. For another moment Fuller hesitated, and then drew his check book from his pocket.

"Will a check do?" he asked ironically.

"It will not!" snapped Mona. "Call a messenger from your bank to bring over the cash. You can fix up the details later!"

"Well—you are a cool one!"

"So were you when you robbed poor Minnie Meadows of her dead father's money!"

Fuller's face went ashen. Without another word, he stepped to the telephone and gave the necessary instructions.

to his bank. Even when the messenger appeared with the packet of crisp bills in a small leather bag, and Fuller had duly received for them, the thoroughly cowed banker did not break the silence. He counted out the contents of the packet, and picked up his hat. At the door he made a movement as though to speak, and then with a bitter shrug, passed on into the hall and slammed the door behind him.

Mary turned to Mona with a little cry of relief.

"Oh, I am so glad it is all over!" she breathed.

The more practical Mona was stowing the bank bills into a drawer of their writing desk.

"Now it is up to you to find Minnie Meadows and give back to her part of what was stolen! I couldn't touch a dollar of this money myself!"

"Nor I!" agreed Mary with a little shiver.

"Well, if that is the case, suppose you both come out and have dinner with me," invited Stokes. "I know a little Italian restaurant where we can eat the whole bill of fare for 60 cents!"

(The End.)

Janie's Way.
The young man was in love. He had declared his passion to the young lady and she had passed him along to father. Father lined to his late, patently, the old gentleman said, "I am so glad that Janie will not marry you."

"Oh, don't say that," the young man pleaded. "Has she—has she said no?"

"No," said the old gentleman, "but from what I hear, she is not so sure. She would have taken you without referring you to me."—Philadelphia Ledger.

Bobbin's Next in Engine Room.
Harry Bailey, steam shovel engineer, witnessed the building of a roller, used in his engine room while the plant was in operation in East Walnut Hills, Cincinnati.

"The roller is a very peculiar device built for use in such a noisy place," said Deputy Game Warden Kuertz, "but it shows that people do not harm birds as they used to, and they are securing a good deal of money from the sale of the rollers and tools them daily."—Cincinnati Enquirer.

Like a Boy at 50 Bubbling Over
With Vitality—Taking Iron Did It
Doctor says Nuxated Iron is greatest of all strength builders—
Often increases the strength and endurance of delicate, nervous folks 200 per cent. in two weeks time.

New York, N. Y.—Not long ago a man came to me who was nearly half a century old and asked me to give him a preliminary examination for life insurance. I was astonished to find him with the blood pressure of a boy of 20 and as full of vigor, vim and vitality as a young man; in fact, a young man he really was notwithstanding his age. The secret he said was taking iron—nuxated iron he had filled him with renewed life. At 80 he was in bad health; at 46 overworked and nearly all in. Now at 48 a miracle of vitality and his face beaming with the buoyancy of youth. As I have said a hundred times over, iron is the greatest of all strength builders. If people would only throw away patent medicines and nauseous concoctions and take simple nuxated iron, I am convinced that the lives of thousands of persons might be saved, who now die every year from pneumonia, grippe, consumption, kidney, liver and heart trouble, etc. The real and true cause which started their diseases was nothing more nor less than a weakened condition brought on by lack of iron in the blood. Iron is absolutely necessary to enable your blood to change food into living tissue. Without it, no matter how much or what you eat, your food merely passes through you without doing you any good. You don't get the strength out of it and as a consequence you become weak, pale and sickly looking just like a plant trying to grow in a soil deficient in iron. If you are not strong or well you owe it to yourself to make the following test: how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next take two five-grain tablets of ordinary nuxated iron three times per day after meals for two weeks. Then test your strength again and see for yourself how much you have gained. I have seen dozens of nervous, run-down people who were

alling all the while, double their strength and endurance and entirely get rid of all symptoms of dyspepsia, liver and other troubles. From ten to fourteen days' time simply by taking iron in the proper form. And this after they had in some cases been doctoring for months without obtaining any benefit. But don't take the old forms of reduced iron, iron acetate or stannate of iron simply to save a few cents. You must take iron in a form that can be easily absorbed and assimilated, like nuxated iron, if you may prove worse than useless. Many a wealthy or prizefighter has won the day simply because he knew the secret of great strength and endurance and filled his blood with iron before he went into the arena. While many another has gone down to ignominious defeat simply for the lack of iron. E. Bauer, M. D.

NOTE—Nuxated Iron, recommended above by Dr. Bauer, is not a patent medicine nor secret remedy, but one which is well known to druggists and whose iron constituents are widely prescribed by eminent physicians everywhere. Unlike the older ferrous iron products, it is easily assimilated, does not injure the teeth, makes them black, nor upsets the stomach; on the contrary, it is a most potent remedy, in nearly all forms of bile, as well as for nervous, run-down conditions. The manufacturers have such great confidence in Nuxated Iron that they offer to refund \$100.00 to any charitable institution if they cannot take any man or woman under 45 who lacks iron and increase their strength 100 per cent. or over in four weeks' time. Provided they have no serious organic trouble. They also offer to refund your money if it does not at least double your strength and endurance in ten days' time. It is dispensed in this city by Sherman & McConnell drug stores and all other druggists.



The Ideal Farm Paper

Has the greatest farm paper circulation in its state.
Reaches a greater per cent of the farm homes in a single state than any other weekly farm paper.
Has a greater editorial staff than any other weekly farm paper having less than double its circulation.
Unexcelled in its activity for the improvement of farming methods and making farm life more enjoyable and profitable.
Maintains one member on its staff trained to assist automobile manufacturers in creating greater sales.

110,000 Copies Weekly
Sample Copy on Request