

The Romance of a Million Dollars *By Elizabeth Dejeans*

THE STORY THUS FAR.
MARIE ANGOULEME, alone, friendless, and almost penniless, starts for New York to receive her fortune after a harrowing experience in France as a war ambulance driver. On the train she misses her watch, but finds it, and on her return by mistake enters the wrong berth—the berth occupied by a mysterious woman in robes. Instantly she-like hands grasp her throat and she escapes with difficulty. Arrived in New York, she is directed by an unidentified woman to the Long Island estate of Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent, a woman of great social prominence and with an income from millions. Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent after some hesitation gives Marie a position as chauffeur. Marie quickly notices there is a sinister atmosphere about the household, which consists, in addition to Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent, of her two nephews, West and Breckenridge, and her niece Bella. Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent is holding in trust for these three the great fortune of her husband, Marie is attracted to the somber Breck.

SECOND INSTALLMENT.
Suspicion.

AND from an upper back window they were also being observed, for when Marie and Breck had gone out the family party in the library had instantly dissolved. Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent had risen without a word and had gone up to her room, where, with door locked and in lowered tones, she had called a New York number. "Is that you, Haslett?" she asked. "Yes? Well, this is Mrs. D. K. Something queer has happened. A girl appeared this afternoon and applied for the chauffeur's place." "A girl?" came the answer. Then, after a pause, "That is strange. There was a girl here in answer to our advertisement. My stenographer told me about it, but no one else gave her the address—who could have done so?" "Mrs. Brant-Olwin." "That can't be—Mrs. Brant-Olwin is in Florida."

"She says she doesn't know the woman's name who sent her to me, but she described her, and the description fits exactly. She says she met the woman just outside your office door," and Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent gave the history Marie had given her and related Marie's experience with the woman at the elevator. "If the woman wasn't Mrs. Brant-Olwin, it was some one exceedingly like her, Haslett," she concluded. "The girl looks an honest sort and she's pretty. The papers she showed me are straight; she must have served in France. She looks and talks like a French girl, the better educated sort. The thing is, who has put her up to this and why? It's reported Mrs. Brant-Olwin is in Florida, but is she?"

"I know positively that she is in Florida," the man reiterated. "Somebody may be personating her, though. And the girl may be either the gullible sort or deep, used by them or acting for them. She did come here to the office, for I have a description of her from my stenographer. No one here in the office knows that the advertisement was inserted by me for you. All they know is that I advertised for a chauffeur for myself. They were amused at a girl's having answered it, and I think they laughed at her when she appeared. My stenographer told me about it as a great joke, so she certainly didn't get your address from either the boy or the stenographer. And she didn't get it from Mrs. Brant-Olwin. The thing's ridiculous anyway, a girl proposing to take charge of a garage like yours. But they're raising heaven and earth—she caught himself up, then went on. "The right sort of person ought to talk to her, draw her out, I believe. You've kept her, of course?"

"Yes—it seemed the only thing to do. You see, Haslett, I'm certain she knows Breck. I received her in the library; we were all there—and she recognized Breck the moment she came in. He looked like stone—as usual—but she looked queer, taken aback, I thought."

"That's curious," he returned, thoughtfully. "It was certainly the wise thing to keep her, though."

"I was afraid not to. I've sent her out to the garage with Breck. Willa is there."

"That's just right. I think I had better come out this evening. You needn't send to the station for me, I'll walk over and back. O, I want the address of that boarding house, too. I'll make a few inquiries."

"I was going to give it to you. Her trunk is there, and I told her I would send for it."

"I'll attend to it. It'll be easy enough for us to go through it, too. And, whatever you do, don't show her in any way that you're afraid of her. You need a chauffeur, you'll give her a trial, and she must prove that she is capable. If she is not she will get her walking papers—let her understand that. And, Mrs. D. K., try not to worry over this occurrence. If it leads to trouble we'll do our best to meet it—we'll talk it over tonight. Remember that suspecting and proving are two different things."

"Maybe they are," Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent returned bitterly. "At present Kent house is hell—that I know." And she rang off abruptly. She rose and walked about her room restlessly. Then she sat down heavily and closed her eyes, her expression pained and troubled.

It was a corner room. Two of its windows looked into the park. One of the big oaks grew almost against her window, but from the other two windows she could see the garage and the windows of the chauffeur's room. With the aid of the field glasses which she took from a locked drawer she watched Breck and Marie disappear in

the direction of the stairway leading up to the chauffeur's room, saw Marie come into the room and lay her coat on the bed, stand and look about her for a moment, then disappear again.

When, almost immediately, the two came into view in the garage below, Bella watched them intently. They stood so plainly in view and the glasses were so powerful that she could almost see their expressions. When Breck and the girl disappeared behind one of the cars, she continued to watch, and when they appeared again and Breck left the garage hurriedly and walked off rapidly in the direction of Kent house farm, she watched his going until the trees of the park hid him. Then she watched Marie until she closed the garage doors.

When Breck took Marie up to her room, he had not entered it, and when they came down he had stood in plain view from the house while he pointed out the cars. "That road is West. Dunbarton-Kent's, the young man you saw in the library, and the other three cars are Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent's," he said perfunctorily.

"Which one will she wish to drive today?" Marie asked.

"Ordinarily she would take the limousine,



In the hall she met West. "Where now?" she asked.

but today she's likely to telephone you that she wants the roadster—it's better adapted for conversation," he answered dryly.

Marie felt that this showing her about was a great nuisance to him. She stole glances at his profile; he was handsome, but he looked most stern and unhappy, she thought. Frequently Marie had discerned unapproachableness by a genuinely pretty speech and smile. And she had discovered that the American man likes to be called "Monsieur." So she said, "It is a most beautiful place, this Kent house, monsieur, and the garage is more elegant than are most houses. I shall take great care with the cars and try to please your mother."

He was giving her the keys and she was looking up at him, smiling, but with the flashes of respect which is rarely achieved by an American. But he gave her no answering smile.

"Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent is not my mother," he said coldly.

"The two you saw there in the house and I are only her step relations, her nephews and niece. We three are cousins." He raised his voice slightly. "Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent has a number of millions left her by her uncle. West has a good income which was left him by his father; Bella is entirely dependent on Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent, and I have nothing, so I am earning my bread by managing the Kent house farm for the present. The Allen Colfax whom you chatted is a distant cousin of the Dunbarton-Kent family, and is a much disliked neighbor. His place is called Colfax hall. He studied her face in his shadowed way. "But perhaps I'm telling you things you already know."

Marie's soft, wide eyes had assimilated his information. "No, monsieur, I do not know. Thank you that you tell me—it is kind."

Then Breck went to one of the cars and stood close beside it. "This car is new—it's been used only once or twice," he said, but when Marie followed him, expecting further instruction, he came close to her and asked very low and swiftly, "Why did you look at me as you did when you came into the library?" His black brows had lowered suddenly into a straight line and beneath it his eyes were cuttingly keen.

Marie caught her breath. Not for anything would she have explained why for a brief moment she had stared at him. It was his eyes that had startled her, they were such a light blue and the lashes black, like that woman's on the train. It was a mere resemblance, but anything that reminded her of her terrifying experience was sufficient to startle her, and for an instant she had felt a sort of panic. She flushed warmly and took refuge in a half truth.

"You—you stood so like a soldier, monsieur. I looked, then I thought most certainly you had been in France. Were you not?"

He scrutinized her intently. "Yes," he said, finally, "but most of the time in a German prison camp." He spoke now without lowering his voice.

There was something in his manner as well as his words that touched her; his eyes were keen yet so somber.

"Ah, monsieur," she exclaimed with genuine profound pity. "Now I know why you look so sad."

flushed suddenly and painfully, stood for an uncertain moment, then turned on his heel and hurried out of the garage.

Marie looked after him, wide eyed and perplexed. He was a strange man. Then soberly she began to inspect her domain, the steam heated and luxurious garage, and her own pleasant and well lighted bedroom, but with thoughts only half given to what she was doing. She was still warmed by her good fortune, yet she was puzzled and troubled.

"Most certainly there is a strangeness about this entire family," she confided to herself. "I do not understand it."

As Breck had predicted, Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent telephoned to the garage shortly before 4 o'clock that she wanted the roadster.

"Put in a foot warmer and one of the fur robes, Angouleme," she commanded. "I don't propose to freeze myself, but I do want a breath of fresh air."

Marie was having her garage troubles. Outwardly the place looked well cared for, but a close inspection of cupboards, mops, sponges, and the like had wrought Marie to a pitch of indignation. The seats of the cars covered evidences of long continued neglect, but, worst of all, there was a puzzling absence of necessary tools. Not one of Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent's cars was properly equipped. West Dunbarton-Kent's car was in perfect condition, a high powered roadster, shining clean within and without and equipped with every device for long travel, extra tires, a locked contrivance in the rear which was large enough to carry a small wardrobe and blankets, every imaginable automobile tool, and a gasoline tank and other well filled—each object lesson to any chauffeur of what a car should be.

"It is quite certain that the same abominably neglectful person who has not cared for the cars of Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent had had nothing to do with this car of Mr. West's!" Marie commented to herself indignantly.

When Marie brought Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent's roadster to the porte-cochere the glow of haste and irritation warmed her cheeks; the roadster had needed all sorts of things done to it, a regular housecleaning, and Marie had been able to give it only a hasty brushing up. Besides, one of the rear tires was in a bad condition.

She had kept Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent waiting for fifteen minutes, and she was reprimanded for it. "When I say 4 o'clock I mean 4 o'clock," she said, sharply. "That is one objection I have to women—they're always either fussing around before time or forgetting that there is such a thing as a clock. Go down the driveway, then turn on the road to the left—I want to go to the farm first."

Marie's color deepened, but she said in soft accents: "When everything is new to a person it is a little difficult. I shall not again be late, madame. There was much to be done to this car. I did the best I could in a short time."

But Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent was not appeased. "What was the matter with the car? Glidden was a perfect chauffeur—when he didn't drink."

Marie had not meant to tell at once of conditions in the garage—do so gradually, for Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent had impressed her as being in a state of continual irritation.

But Marie possessed a lively temper and she was seething.

"He must then have been drunk often, madame. I think that same chauffeur was a two face. It is evident that he polished your cars upon the outside, but within they are abominable. You yourself are now sitting above such a condition within the seat as is disgusting, and which I have not had time to clean. Besides, I do not understand certain things about this garage—nothing is there that should be."

Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent flushed crimson; the young person was asserting herself early.

"Indeed! My garage doesn't please you, eh? Well, that's quickly remedied," she returned grimly. "There are several trains into town tomorrow, for as your things have been sent for you'll be wise to wait till they come."

The big woman's anger set Marie afire; she had done only her duty in telling of conditions in the garage. Why should she be spoken to in this way, as if accused of wrongdoing? She turned hot eyes on Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent.

"I think your garage beautiful, madame. It is because of deception to you that I am angry. I think you do not know that in your garage, aside from neglect of cleanliness, I have found not one full set of tools and not one new tire. The extra tires upon the backs of your cars, so carefully covered, are all worn out tires, put there to deceive you, I think. That same perfect chauffeur! I call him a two face—I do not like to apply the word 'thief' to any one!"

Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent's bulk stiffened suddenly and curiously, and her expression changed to a bleakly gray look, blank and troubled.

Marie's eyes became sympathetic. "I am sorry that you should suffer such annoyance, madame," she said softly. "It was thinking of it that made me so angry."

"I haven't thought much about the cars lately. It's possible Glidden exchanged the tires for whisky, but I doubt it," Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent returned dully.

"I am sorry that I should worry you," Marie apologized. "I spoke only because it did not seem possible that in that beautiful garage everything should be wanting. It is not so with the roadster which belongs to Mr. West Dunbarton-Kent. It is in most perfect condition."

"Yes—West takes care of his own car—he's a mechanical genius," Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent answered absently. Then she roused somewhat. "That is the road to the farm, Angouleme. Turn there."

The porte-cochere was at the side of the wide front house, off the library wing, and they had come down the driveway which circled the slope of lawn and into the park. Marie had come up through the park when she came to Kent house, so she knew the road and the big stone pillared gateway at the entrance to the park. Just this side of the gateway there was a road which ran close to the park wall, and this was the road into which Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent ordered Marie to turn. The farm-house was hidden from Kent house by the semi-circle of woodland against which Kent house backed; the only view Kent house possessed was its fine view of the sound. From the front of the house to the water's edge was a long and widely undulating slope, a vivid lawn and a green meadow in summer, a dun and snow streaked slope in March.

Some distance beyond the entrance to Kent house park was another entrance to a winding and unkempt driveway through neglected looking trees to a huge old brick house which Marie, on her way from the station had mistaken for Kent house and where she had encountered Allen Colfax. Colfax had not been seen from Kent house, but from the lower end of the park the brick pile was distinguishable. Marie had thought it the nearest house to Kent house, but now, as they drove along beside the park wall, she saw that there was a small house between the two places, a modern looking and artistic house which had been built so close to the Kent house park wall that its windows topped the wall. It was built just above the park cottage, a little vine covered stone cottage which backed against the park wall, and on a terrace rear against the park wall, as if its owner was determined to overlook both wall and cottage and gain a view of Kent house park.

The pretty little house had an impertinent air, like a head laid above the wall and prying into the dignity of a neighboring estate. It was a surprise to Marie, and she said involuntarily, "Ah, I did not notice that house. I thought the house of Mr. Colfax was nearest to yours. It is close to the wall of your park."

"It is indeed—fairly sitting on my cottage roof," Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent said grimly, referring to the little dwelling near the Kent house park wall. "Some of Allen Colfax's work. He sold the narrowest possible strip a house could be built on to that Smith woman, purposely to spoil our privacy. He has ruined the cottage which my husband built for a quiet retiring place. The man about the place used the cottage now for a sort of workshop—West has his tools and work bench in one of the rooms. That's what my dear husband's little cottage has become. He loved the little place."

Marie discovered that the big woman's voice could be low and soft; it was so when she spoke of her husband. "She loved her husband dearly," was Marie's instant conclusion. "In spite of much money, I think she is lonely and distressed."

Marie felt, though severe, Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent was an upright and honest woman. "It is difficult for a woman with much money to be without a husband," Marie reflected wisely. "There are always those who wish to take advantage of such a lone woman. She looked so shocked and distressed when I told her the truth about the garage, as if there was no one whom she could trust. And as yet she does not trust me, but I shall lead her to do so."

Marie's wiles consisted mostly of a certain sympathetic cheer, tinged by native shrewdness; of softly bright glances and pretty smiles.

"I do not think well of a woman who would build a house disagreeable to a neighbor such as yourself," Marie said to Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent with genuine sympathy. "She must be a person who considers only herself."

"She lives to herself, certainly," Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent said grimly. "There are reasons why no one here has anything to do with her. Happily she's not here much. She's a handsome woman of the high colored sort, and a good musician, though," she added as if willing to give the woman her due. "They say she is a Russian."

Marie welcomed her first view of Kent house farm as a better subject. It stood a pasture's width beyond the park, was snow-white and green roofed and deep eaved, with tall elms about it and its white and green barn. Even the barnyard, in which were several horses and cows, suggested spotless neatness.

"Ah, madame! This now is most charming," she exclaimed with genuine pleasure. "It is a little like my pretty Canada, the green and white and the cattle! It seems so peaceful and plentiful, even more lovely than a great house, I think."

Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent glanced down at her and her face softened. Then she asked with astonishing abruptness: "Was it in France you met my nephew, Breck?"

Marie's eyes widened, then the color swept into her face. Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent had noticed then how she had started at her nephew and she had thought it strange, just as Breck himself had thought. But she could not explain to Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent any more than she could to her nephew. Was she going to be reminded forever of that hateful experience on the train?

Marie's annoyance and embarrassment made her denial positive. "I never saw or heard of your nephew, madame, until I saw him in your house today."

"You looked as if you knew him. You looked as if you'd seen a ghost," Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent asserted vigorously.

"He looks like a soldier," Marie returned firmly. "I looked at him, but in one minute I knew that I had never seen him before."

"The ghost of a soldier, perhaps," Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent remarked, with bitter sarcasm. "Come back to haunt his family."

"Marie caught her breath and crossed herself hastily. "Madame! You have not seen them die as I have! Do not say such things!" Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent eyed her in a puzzled and interested way, but all she said was: "Don't drive in at the gate—keep to the right. You know the way to the farm now, if ever I have to send you over here. Keep on up this road. It comes out on the highway which runs behind all these places on the sound."

They went on in silence up the road which skirted the pasture and passed close to the barnyard. The house and barn had hidden what Marie saw now was a considerable chicken farm, numbers of runs, each with its white and green roofed house. It was feeding time, and two men, Breck and an elderly man, were feeding the chickens. They were all white, not a black fowl among them, a pretty sight.

Marie wished that Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent would order her to stop, but she did not. "Anderson," she called to the elderly man, who had paused to smile at her, "come down to the house this evening; I want to see you." And he answered, "I will, Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent." To Breck she said nothing; she did not appear to see him, though he looked at them in his shadowed way and lifted his cap.

They went on, passing a vegetable garden, an orchard, and berry patches covered with straw, all in perfect winter order, then came out upon a broad road, from which there were far views of the sound. But the sight of her well ordered estate seemed to have afforded Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent no pleasure. Her look was grim and, presently, she began to question Marie about her birthplace, upbringing, and connections; just where she had been and what she had done in France, and particularly about the last few months, studying Marie keenly meantime.

Marie answered her questions exactly, trying not to be irritated, and succeeded in emerging from the ordeal with her liking for

Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent intact, for it seemed to Marie that there was a restless distress behind all this questioning; something which puzzled Marie.

"But she intends to keep me," Marie consoled herself, for when they passed the country club, a palatial place it seemed to Marie, Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent said: "There's not much doing there now, but you'll drive over here often in the warm weather."

And when they turned homeward on the lower road, which passed the station and led on past the entrance to several estates, the road Marie had taken when going to Kent house, Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent said: "You'll come this way to the station half a dozen times a day, for I'm always having guests out from town, or some one of us is taking the train in. You'll—"

Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent stopped abruptly, for they were approaching the entrance to Colfax hall, and a man stood there, aimlessly tapping his boots with his cane while a big mastiff circled about him. Marie recognized the man instantly—Allen Colfax. She felt Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent stiffen and she herself held her head high and looked straight ahead, though she was conscious that he was grinning at her and also that Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent was staring at him and through him in no pleasant fashion.

In the dimness of Colfax hall Marie had not seen his features distinctly, but she noticed now how disipated he looked, a reckless looking man. He was young, as young as the two Dunbarton-Kents, and he showed his Dunbarton-Kent blood plainly; save for his mustache, looked much like Breck, for he was dark. He twirled his cane between his fingers delicately and grinned broadly at Marie as they passed, and she herself held her head high and looked straight ahead, though she was conscious that he was grinning at her and also that Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent was staring at him and through him in no pleasant fashion.

"He is making fun of us, the despicable man!" Marie thought, indignantly. "A spear-rod driving a hippopotamus," he says to himself."

"Drunk, of course," Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent muttered, with vivid contempt. Then she sighed heavily and said to herself, so low that Marie barely caught it: "This generation of Dunbarton-Kents! The Lord help us!"

Marie brought the car to a stop beneath the porte-cochere, her heart warmed by a feeling of sympathy for her huge mistress. "There is here some great family trouble," she thought. "It is a pity it should be so in the midst of so much wealth and beauty."

Then Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent heaved herself out of the car. "Make a list of the things that are needed for the garage, Angouleme, and give it to me tomorrow. I've given Gibbs orders—you will take your meals in the servants' dining room. Gibbs will telephone you half an hour before each meal, so you'll have time to get ready," and she went slowly into the house.

In the hall she met West. She looked at the watch he was carrying. "Where now?" she asked.

"To Washington—to see about my patent. I told you I was going, didn't I?"

"I don't remember—I suppose you did. West, you went through the supplies in the garage after Glidden left, didn't you, and found everything all right?"

"Yes—why?"

"That girl tells me that there isn't a new tire in the place, and the tools are gone, too." She had lowered her voice.

They looked at each other. West's pleasant face grown so anxious as hers. "That's something new," he said, slowly. "A bit of defiance, I suppose. You're worried over this girl, too, aren't you?"

"You heard what she said."

His eyes grew merry. "A quaint little fellow. He mimicked her softly. "It seemed to me quite possible for me to be a chauffeur for a man. She's charming little thing—keep her for a day or two and if, by that time, she hasn't had enough of it and doesn't go of her own accord, pay her what she wants and persuade her to go back to Canada—New York's no place for her. I'll wager anything she's as straight as a die. Mrs. Brant-Olwin had nothing to do with her coming here; she's in Florida. I had a letter from her this morning. Some plump, black eyed acquaintance of yours in town is playing a joke on you, she says. You've probably remarked at some time that you'd deal rather be chauffeured by a baby than by such a whisky soak as the magnificent looking Glidden. I've heard you say something of the kind myself. Some one has taken you at your word."

Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent did not relax. "Possibly. Did you see how she looked at Breck?"

West's face grew grave. "Yes; Breck's a striking looking man."

"She told me she had never seen him or heard of him before."

"I'd believe her, I think. He made an impression on her—another good reason for not keeping her, Aunt Bulah."

"She wasn't telling me the truth," Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent said decidedly. "I know an open countenance when I see one."

"A still better reason for assisting her back to Canada," West persisted. "I'd be willing to swear that she's just a sweet, honest little thing. If she knows anything about him, it will be far better to have her out of the country."

"I shall take Haslett's advice," Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent said firmly. "A misstep may have tragic results."

West shrugged again. "So be it! I'm going to take the roadster, Aunt Bulah. It's at the cottage now—I'm going there to pack my model. If the weather's good I may motor to Washington."

"Very well," Mrs. Dunbarton-Kent said indifferently, and went on towards the stairway.

West paused for a moment, watching her ascend. He smiled slightly—his aunt climbing the stairs did resemble the ascent of an elephant. Then, with shoulders squared, he went out to meet the March child.

(Continued Next Sunday.)
 (Copyright, 1922.)