

THE SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST.

Mellor brushed aside the cards and pushed back his chair with a jerk.

"What infernal luck! About enough for me for one night," he exclaimed.

"There are times when the cards won't come to one—not if one sits it out till the milk comes round," said Ashby, as he slipped a handful of gold into his pocket.

Mellor shrugged his shoulders. "Cards? There are times when nothing on earth comes right!" The others caught the bitter tone, and wondered. Mellor took out his fountain pen and signed a couple of checks for large amounts. He pushed these across the table to Ashby and Hayes, and with a curt good-night, walked out of the room.

"I'm sorry for him—he is a decent enough chap, but no head for finance—utterly unfitted for company promoting," said Hayes, irreverently, as he puffed at a freshly lighted cigar.

A quiet looking man named Denniford dabbled nervously with the end of his cigarette in the ash tray before him. "It seemed to me—it's a hateful word to use in connection with a fellow member—but I believe Mellor cheated once to-night. He appeared to manipulate the ace of diamonds the last hand but one. Am I wrong in speaking from mere suspicion?"

Ashby straightened himself in his chair. "I, for one, am glad that you spoke, Denniford," he said firmly. "I saw what you saw. I was a bit doubtful at the time, but you confirm my belief. I have a strong idea that things have been going badly with Mellor of late. There's a whisper abroad about that Anglo-Canadian Produce Company of his."

"What's to be done?" asked Hayes.

"Keep it to ourselves for the present," advised Ashby. "I'll see him before any steps are taken."

Meanwhile Mellor had left the club and was walking slowly down Piccadilly. His pet scheme—*one* of the biggest frauds ever foisted on an imbecile public—had failed. Mellor was ruined. Scruples had never been a factor in his life. Otherwise he would not that night have put his name to what he well knew were two worthless pieces of paper. But the end of all things had come for Mellor, and so what were a couple of dishonored checks, more or less? Before they could be presented he would be beyond the ken of man.

Having reached his rooms, he carefully examined a revolver and slipped in a couple of cartridges. Then he put it in his pocket and stepped into the street again. He had a desire to see the streets once more; to hear for the last time the subdued night roar of London, and there was always a chance that he might alight on some stroke of luck.

It was close on midnight when Mellor turned into Berkeley square and strolled once more in the direction of Piccadilly. A lighted side window in the otherwise dark house caught his attention. It was Ashby's house, and the window was that of the owner's study. A man's shadow was thrown for an instant on the blind, and Mellor stopped. He knew Ashby's habits—knew that he rarely left that particular club before half-past one, and, besides, he had left him at the card table. Moreover, Ashby was of slender build, and so were Ashby's valet and butler, and the shadow on the blind was that of a man of burly proportions.

"What does it matter? What does anything matter?" reflected Mellor as he moved on. But he turned back. At the bottom of the window, where the blind had not been pulled quite down, he peered in. A man was bending over a table by the side of an open safe. On the table was a tray of uncut diamonds. And the man's dress showed him to be a collector of jewels—other people's.

Mellor's first thoughts were of police. He backed stealthily from the window and ran down the square. Suddenly he stopped, hesitated, looked at his watch, laughed softly to himself, and hurried back to the house. At the rear door was unfastened—the lock had been picked. When he had found his way to Ashby's study he opened the door with a swift and almost noiseless movement, and the next instant his hand went to his hip pocket.

"Good evening—or, rather, good morning," he said suavely.

The burglar had his back turned toward the door, and he spun around on his heel, dropping a heavy gem with a tinkle on to the table.

"Trapped!" he muttered.

"Looks remarkably like it, my friend, doesn't it?" Mellor swung the gleaming barrel up on a level with the man's head.

"Quick! No tricks!" exclaimed Mellor sharply.

The other reluctantly drew a heavy revolver from his pocket, holding it out butt-foremost.

"Thanks—that's sensible," Mellor said as he dropped the weapon into the tail pocket of his dress coat.

"Who are you? Yer ain't Ashby, is you?" growled the burglar.

Mellor stroked his neatly trimmed beard. "I can't imagine my identity, matter of vital importance to me. The fact that I am a friend of

Mr. Ashby's, and have caught a burglar is a matter which I would commend to your notice."

"Don't for me in that 'frightfulin' style! If yer 'adn't a shooter I'd mash yer so's yer friend Ashby'd never recognize yer features!"

"My dear sir, don't raise your voice unless you wish to rouse the servants."

A cunning gleam shot into the burglar's eyes.

"So you don't want the servants roused, either, eh?"

"No occasion to do so, I assure you. I rather fancy I am quite capable of managing you single-handed," replied Mellor calmly. "Stand over there—face to the wall."

The burglar did as he was bid, and Mellor moved to the table, which he cleared of the valuables. "Now, here," he nodded to the table. "Down on your back. Arms straight out over your head. That's right. Not a move, now."

Then the company promoter took out his penknife and cut several long strips from the heavy tapestry curtain. With these he bound the recumbent burglar—an ankle to each of the legs at one end of the table, and a wrist to each of the others. A wider strip, made into a tight roll, proved an effective gag. Mellor performed these operations expeditiously. Ashby might return to Berkeley Square earlier than was customary.

"I can imagine his facial expression should he appear at the door this moment," mused Mellor. "There my friend, you are nice and comfortable, and now I propose to depart with what I believe in your profession is termed the 'awag.'"

Mellor resumed his walk in the direction of Piccadilly. The advancing night was growing cooler, and he was a firm believer in fresh air as a thought-collecting agency.

Ashby, who was a dealer in diamonds, had spent some years in Johannesburg and Kimberly. When Mellor had preceded a hundred yards further, he ran into the arms of the very man in his thoughts. Ashby for once had left the club earlier than usual. The latter would have passed on with a nod.

But a dare-devil feeling suddenly possessed Mellor. He turned on his heel and walked down the street side by side with his victim. A miserable woman came whining to them from out of the shadows, and Mellor flung her a coin.

"Bang goes the last half-crown I can call my own," said Mellor, with a laugh. "but, poor devil, I dursay she can do more with it than I could."

"You speak figuratively, of course," said Ashby, gravely.

"No. Literally."

Ashby stopped beneath a glaring arc light. "I'm sorry to hear you say that, Mellor—deuced sorry I confess I had a suspicion that things were none too rosy with you of late. But you're surely not serious—you're not absolutely 'broke'?"

"Absolutely," replied Mellor, calmly, as he cut the tip of a fresh cigar. "What's the use of tearing one's hair? It's an up-and-down world. I'm a pauper to-day; to-morrow I may be worth thousands Quilen sub?"

"But, seriously, what do you purpose doing?"

"Heaven knows. These are the times of the survival of the fittest. The weak, gullible, the honest, go under. The strong, the cunning, the dishonest come out on top. Am I weak? Am I gullible? Am I honest?"

Ashby was held by the other's strange manner.

"The first two adjectives are certainly not applicable," he confessed. "Honest? Well, every man is honest till he's proved dishonest."

"Oh, I'm not offended," laughed Mellor. "Suppose there's nothing left but theft between a man and the end of all things, so far as he is concerned. Is he to steal, or is he to cut his throat?"

"You spoke of the survival of the fittest a moment ago. But I should say, let him do away with himself, by all means, if there's no other alternative but felony."

"I'm afraid I disagree. Good-night. Hope you'll sleep well."

The only vocal noise a gagged man is capable of can hardly be described, but the burglar's effort was loud enough to catch Ashby's ear, and the dealer in diamonds flung open the study door, switched on the electric light and beheld his midnight visitor spread-eagled on the table.

A constable and the sergeant of the beat, who happened to be near at hand at the moment, heard Ashby's whistle and were quickly upon the scene.

Ashby turned to the open safe. "Cleaned out close on twenty thousand pounds worth of diamonds!"

"Gorbllimey! but this is a fair treat, this is! Is own pal bunked wiv the sparklers," chuckled the burglar.

"What the deuce d'you mean?" demanded Ashby.

"Wait a moment, sir." The sergeant ran his hands deftly through the housebreaker's clothes. "They're not here, anyhow," he added presently.

"Course they ain't there. Didn't I tell yer 'is bosom pal hoofed it wiv 'em? Think I tied myself up just by way of a little amusement? S'help me, Gawd, 'e said he was 'is friend, an'—"

The sergeant held up his hand. "That'll do. You're too old to need the customary caution. But we'll hand the other chap yet, ah, he's four. Come on. Good-night, sir."

His conversation with Mellor flashed through Ashby's mind. "Could it be possible that Mellor was really

at the bottom of the business? No, the idea was too preposterous. Nonetheless, while gazing over the list of foreign sailings at breakfast next morning his suspicion of Mellor again obtruded itself, but only to be once more put on one side.

"I'll leave it to the police, who are always right," he decided.

The clean-shaven man touched the bell-push. "Two glasses from the pink label, steward. Try one of these weeds, Mr.—Harvey, I think you said? I don't want to boast of my own cigars, but I must say they're a decent a smoke as any reasonably fastidious man could wish to have between his teeth. You were speaking of the Hampshire Blewitts."

"Yes, I was wondering if you were any relation of Jimmy Blewitt. He and I were at Oxford together," replied the other passenger.

Blewitt slowly shook his head. "No, no connection of the Hampshire crowd. All our lot came from the other end of the country—Northumberland."

"By the way, Jimmy Blewitt is a cousin of the man we were talking about a minute since—Ashby, of Aston Garden. It was a rummy affair. Pretty cute of the burglar chap to try and put the thing on to a friend of Ashby's so as to switch the police off the track of the bounder who did him out of the deal. Wanted, I suppose, to let him remain at large, so that he could come down on him when he got out of jail and make the beggar disgorge."

Blewitt puffed a thick cloud across the Severn's smokeroom. "Yes, that was the police reading of the business. They imagine they know everything."

"Surely you don't think it isn't the correct one?"

"Oh, I don't know. The burglar was probably telling the truth."

"But, hang it all, a man doesn't rob his own friend!"

Blewitt shrugged his shoulders. "There's a lot of cant about the innate honesty of mankind. How many men are really honest nowadays? The honest are swamped by the dishonest; the weak by the strong; the gullible by the cunning."

"What a banal cry!"

"Fill up your glass," said Blewitt. "Here's a toast—'To the survival of the fittest.'"—George M. Edwardes.

Effects of Ultra-Violet Rays.

The discovery by Professor Elmer Gates, of Washington, that certain wave-lengths of ultra-violet light and certain frequencies of electric undulations will pass through a dead animal body more completely than through a living one. The result is, it seems, that the living body under these rays will cast a shadow, a dead one not, says Harper's Weekly. The opacity of the living bodies Professor Gates finds to be due to the presence of electric currents in the nerves and muscles. While alive, the body is a bundle of electric currents through which electric waves cannot pass.

As described it seems a very pretty discovery, and it is taken with sufficient seriousness to be discussed as a practical means of determining whether life has gone out of bodies that seem to be dead. There are cases of catalepsy where ordinary tests of death fail and in which a new test would be useful, and in some cases of disease where it is important to know how low the vital forces have run at a given time. Professor Gates' discovery, if it turns out to be authentic, may be of practical use.

But whether of immediate practical use or not, it is very interesting (if true), as are all discoveries that push forward the limits of human knowledge. One effect of the curious things that scientists nowadays are constantly finding out is to impress upon thoughtful persons the incompleteness of the present state of knowledge. Our world knows enormously more about many things than the world of our fathers did, yet the more it knows the less inclined it is to believe that it knows all.

Discovery follows so fast upon discovery in these days as to make us realize more acutely than in slower times how vast a mass of nature's mysteries are still unexplored, and how much our views of what is credible and what is not may be affected by discoveries still to come. As a scientist said in commenting on this reported discovery by Professor Gates, "It is not safe, in these days of rapid advancement in scientific achievement, to deny anything."

MILITARY USE OF RED GLASS.

German Method of Detecting Troops Firing Smokeless Powder.

German military authorities are experimenting with a device by which the location of troops using smokeless powder may be easily discovered. By this device it is proposed to survey the landscape through pale red glasses.

The flash of smokeless powder appears strong in red light, while ordinary objects are dimmed. By furnishing field glasses with the device in question, which is provided with screens of the proper tint, the position of concealed marksmen can be detected.

To Stamp Out Trachoma.

The authorities of several states of Brazil are reported by the consul general of Rio de Janeiro as making determined efforts to stamp out trachoma, the eye disease that has been rapidly spreading in that country.

The AWAKENING.

By T. A. Roberts.

The night Barton discovered his wife singing a small part in a musical comedy at the Alcazar was buried beneath three years of intentional forgetfulness. It was not mentioned in the home and had never been a subject for gossip by outsiders; at times Barton almost believed it a hideous nightmare a fantasy of disordered sleep, and not an actual thing.

Therefore the lately growing restlessness of his wife carried to him no premonition that the discontent was still smoldering, that the sleeping dogs were growling half awake in a bed of deep slumber. There had been no scene in the first instance. The man's hatred for anything approaching the unconventional stirred the shock of first revelation, and when he called for her at the stage door after the performance it was with a calm assurance that utterly disarmed any lurking suspicion that it was an act in a domestic tragedy.

Six years ago, when he had married pretty, temperate Edith Grant after a summer vacation's courtship, people who knew them both approved heartily. He was ten years older, serious, ambitious and willing to be a plodder, a slave to the grindstone in the best years of his manhood, to acquire a competence for the luxury of his later life. The girl, they said, needed just this sober, restraining influence. She revealed in the riot of youth, life was a succession of red color schemes, there was time enough in the years to come for the comfortable warm browns and the somber, ashy grays. Elemental instincts of racing, red blood were but thinly veiled with the repression of conventionality; she had married primarily because she respected the man rather than as a surrender to a great, big love that had compelled and quickened her, but intangibly, indefinably, yet vaguely, conscious that the new life would give her greater freedom and a larger world than the restricted life of a little country mountain town afforded. In a sense it had, for immediately after the wedding trip they were established in a city home, comfortably modern, though not in the zone of extreme fashion.

Acquaintance she made did not ripen into friendship, because she had nothing in common with her husband's friends. Their wives were too old and their children too young to appeal to her, and her gracious apparent appreciation of hospitality received, and dissembled delight in returning courtesies came from breeding alone, not from sincere pleasure.

Barton was frequently called to remotely distant mining camps to pass judgment on properties for the magnates who employed him, and as no child came to claim her interest and awaken her love, time dragged with the young wife. In a moment of desperate rebellion she sneered at the Shakespeare club and berated Browning and his adorers, thereby putting between her husband's friends and herself a convenient barrier.

At this period of her life musty tomes of philosophy could not fill her need; she cried out for excitement, craved moving, active men and women for companions, and balked at amusements of the purely intellectual.

"I can't stand it! I can't! I can't!" she had almost screamed out to herself. "It was her moment of temptation, her mood of abandonment. Anything would have appealed to her then if the tempter had promised as the reward a new diversion for a plaything. Barton realized dimly, but the problem was beyond him. He saw nothing of what lay behind the evident unrest, thought it too much idleness, and in a flattering fancy once believed it was grief at his frequent absences.

He divined nothing unusual in her suggestion that she take up singing lessons—in fact, approved of it—and then blundered along with his mind clouded in drifts, and levels, and assays. The night he found her behind a scant concealing mask of grease paint and powder something of the real crisis flooded in upon him.

"Do what you will," she had cried defiantly. "I've disgraced you and your respectable middle-aged friends. Put me out of your house, out of your heart, out of your life," she raged.

"Oh, I'll go! This minute. Can't you see I want life? I'm tired of grown and food and eternal dullness. I want to live!" She spoke fiercely, uncaringly, as the elemental emotions surged to the top.

"But, my dear, you have everything a woman—"

"My dear," and her tone was provoking mockery. "my dear, I have nothing. Do you hear? Nothing! I'm not an old woman, but you're trying to make me one. Oh, you'd like me gray haired and mouse quiet. Where's my girlhood? Help me find that and maybe—Don't you see, I'm young, and I want what life holds for you. We've made a mistake, awful, stupendous—but you'll forget miserable me, and perhaps, perhaps somewhere I'll find a tiny taste of happiness."

Her rebellious rage gave way to tears, and a lover's tenderness, the

caress with the blessed balm of understanding, might have conquered. But Barton didn't understand. He only knew that he had been hurt and that the quivering, sobbing girl before him had in her heart a grievance.

They talked long that night. She told how the singing instructor praised her voice and obtained an engagement for her. She had attended rehearsals afternoons, and provisionally for her he had been called away just before the production's first night. She had feared telling him, though fully determined to remain with the theatrical company. He had returned unexpectedly, found her absent from home, and learned the truth from a frightened household servant in the confidence of her mis-ordered sleep, and not an actual thing.

Barton showed diplomacy that night in eliminating any chiding. He talked tenderly, quieting, pointing out that she was giving up home and husband and friends for the sake of the wisp; he urged that real abiding happiness did not lie in the calcium's glare; then he told calmly and dispassionately of his love for her, and somehow, some way, robbed the girl's spirit of its defiance, substituted therefore what he thought was a surrender, and believed he had regained his own. This was three years in the past.

Now the spark had sputtered again, the fire flamed more fiercely than ever. The old routine had resumed, work claimed his waking hours, and he neglected the warning signs he should have heeded. The night was bitterly cold, the winter was at its worst and it was a sullenly an evening for married lovers to spend at their own fireside, recalling, perhaps, earlier days of happiness, when the joys realized were in the planning. But Barton's idea of an evening's comfort was perusing a report of a new method of extracting copper ore. Mrs. Barton was apparently reading a novel, but in reality fighting down the rebellion in her soul. Barton's attention was distracted by a sob; he looked up, caught the old wild looks in her eyes, but did not comprehend even when she threw down the book, rose, and cried hysterically:

"It's no use!"

"What's no use, dear? Aren't you well?" inquired Barton from the depths of his comfortable chair.

"Well? Well, I need no pills, I need no pulse-feeling, tongue-inspecting ancient. I'm soul sick, John, you don't understand. You can't! I'm stifling, I'm choking, for life's out of doors." She went to a window, lifted it to let in blasts of chill air and swirling snow crystals.

"Edith, dear, you'll catch cold. I wouldn't do that," he protested, anxiously.

"Cold? What do I care? Somewhere out there are men and women who are laughing and happy. They're playing wild gypsy things, blood is running in their veins—red, red blood—they're dancing to the queer, compelling strains. They're alive! Don't you understand, John? They're alive!"

"Lord, Edith, is it the old fever, the old discontent come back?" he asked.

"Come back? It has never been away. Oh, I've fought it, I've denied it because of what I promised you, but it's there yet. And now I'll deny it no more. I'll surrender to it. Now! To-night!"

"You mean—"

"That I'm done with this convent of a house. That I'm going to do what you stopped me from doing three years ago. That I belong to the world, and I'm going into it. Oh, you needn't look so ghastly. I'm not going to the devil. I'll live, but I'll not live to God. I'll keep clean, your good name will not suffer, your honor will be unstained for aught I do."

"Edith!" Barton was seriously comprehending now. "Edith, I can't tell you the hurt of it. I've lacked understanding up to now. Years were not the only difference in the beginning. I've glimpsed your temperament for the first time to-night. As I should have seen it years ago. But I can't let you go; for your own sake reconsider this mad, wild whim, and—"

"No," and she spoke quietly.

"The six years you have had out of my life have been crowded with unhappiness and regret. You've been kind in your way, but, as you said, you didn't understand. You don't now, John, you never will. I'm not ungrateful for the shelter of your name, and I've deserved it in every action. I'm sorry for the hurt you confess, I'm sorry, but what you feel is only a part of what has been my daily portion. To-morrow we'll discuss it all calmly, John, and I'll go out of your existence. What's that?"

It was a sudden peal of the bell. Barton glanced at the clock; it was after 10, and he could conceive of no visitor at this hour but a messenger with a telegram. Well, anything would be a diversion at the moment, to let him think of some way out of this confused situation, to plan something that would prevent the loss that threatened him. They listened to the slithered maid as she went down the hall, heard her quick exclamation of surprise and her hurried call:

"Shure, Missus Barton, and will ye come here?"

Edith ran into the hall, and a moment later the two entered the living room. The maid carried a basket from the depths of which came a wailing cry, a sound foreign to Barton's ears, but which he vaguely recognized or surmised was a baby's wailing.

"Of all things, John, a baby! And on this night! Here's a note from

the mother, and it says: "Please, please, come for my baby. You've a good home. Save him from poverty or death, for that is all I can give him." What's it crying for, Mary? Oh, dear, I don't know the first thing about babies. What's the matter? Is it sick?"

"No, mum! It's hungry, the little craythur is, O'm thinkin'," replied the maid, out of the wisdom gained as one of an Irish-American family of ten, "all of them alive and well, thank ye, mum."

Barton watched the ensuing scene curiously. The womanfolk mused and fussed over the child; Mary barely stopped Mrs. Barton from giving the baby ice-cold milk, explaining that it *must* be warmed; there was a hurried search for adult's clothes that could be adapted to the newcomer's needs. For once the maid was mistress, and the mistress obeyed like a soldier.

The warm milk transformed the howling infant to a gurgling cherub, who kicked and thrashed as far as its swaddling clothes would permit, while the woman delightedly murmured the silly nothings babies are supposed to understand.

At midnight the mistress and the maid were still coddling the wail; a temporary cradle place had been fixed in the big Morris chair, but the little rascal had no desire for sleep, and while he was awake his nurses stuck to their posts.

"You go on to bed, John; we've got to wait until the baby goes to sleep," commanded Mrs. Barton, and John went.

The atmosphere seemed cleared of antagonism, her voice rang happy and contented in her new-found pleasure. But he felt it was only for the night. As a taxpayer and a member of half a dozen reform organizations he knew the city maintained institutions where foundlings were cared for. He knew it would be his duty to notify the nearest police captain in the morning. The abandonment of the child was a crime against the statutes and called for punishment of the offender.

His duty was obvious, and as soon as this fact was fixed in his mental note of to-morrow's duties he reverted to the unhappy climax which would confront him the next day. He lay awake for hours trying to devise some remedy, but none came. He wondered where Edith was that she did not retire, and when in the gray of early morning he fell asleep it was to slumber on until almost noon, a most unheard-of thing for this man of methods.

"Wake up, John, it's nearly noon. Come and see the baby, and we'll have breakfast after," he heard his wife call, and while the voice was familiar there was a note in it that was absolutely new.

The baby was well; it was cooling in its contentment, and Barton had to admit his wife's contention that it was "the dearest baby in the world." His opinion on this subject was not large, so it did not count as that of an expert. He knew more about mines. At the breakfast table he thought of his duty.

"Have the baby wrapped up well. Edith, and I'll take it to the police station—"

"You'll what?" gasped his wife in evident amazement.

"You know it cannot be kept here. There are foundling asylums for the city's waifs, and besides if you leave to-day—" But the thought of it hurt him, and he did not finish.

"If I leave to-day? John Barton, I'm not going to leave to-day, or any other day, and that cute, cunning little baby is not going to the police station. So there."

"You mean, Edith, dear—" and he arose and came to where she sat. Her arms stole around his neck, and the new light which came into her eyes and was reflected in his was pleasant to see.

"I mean, John, dear, I mean that I guess I don't care so much what other people are doing. I mean that we are going to be really and truly happy, you and I and the baby. And I mean this house isn't going to be a convent; it's going to be paradise, John, and Love is king."

And in a bewilderment of kisses John Barton excused his lack of fulfillment of the duties of citizenship, and decided that the unhappiness prevented more than justified the crime of omission he intended to commit.

Old Coins to Order.

The great productivity of the ruins of Babylon in the way of ancient coins has aroused the suspicions of visitors. An American who was going around with a guide became distrustful of the ease with which these relics could be misappropriated. Accordingly he remarked to his guide while they were searching about the tower of Nimrod that he particularly wished to find one coin with a special design. On the one side was a horse's head, with some sticks placed roughly between the ears and on the other side a bull, and a fowl in the act of crowing. The guide requested him to draw on paper a picture of the two sides of the coin, which the traveller did. About a week afterward the very coin came to light. There was no doubt of its genuineness, for on the obverse was a mare's nest and on the reverse a cock and a bull.

A Conditional Gift.

Sir John Sinclair, a Scottish baronet, has presented gramophones and records to 300 asylums and other institutions, on condition that they are played to the inmates for half an hour every day.

A national society for the preservation of wild flowers has been organized.