

The THOUSANDTH WOMAN

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY O. IRWIN MYERS



"You Ought to Have Been a Burglar, Sir," Said Mr. Drinkwater.

every sign of his being treated as a dangerous dog. He had heard her further protected by wire netting which stretched like a canopy over the whole cage; but Blanche let her...

CHAPTER VIII.

Finger-Prints.

Hilton Toye was the kind of American who knew London as well as most Londoners, and some other capitals a good deal better than their respective citizens of corresponding intelligence. His travels were mysteriously but invariably interwoven with business; he had an air of enjoying himself, and at the same time making money to pay for his enjoyment, wherever he went.

The appeal of a Blanche Macnair to such a soul needs no analysis. She had struck through all complexities to the core, such as it was or as she might make it. As yet she could only admire the character the man had shown, though it had upset her none the less.

She turned her wholesome mind to dogs which in some ways she knew better and trusted further than men. There was a dog at Uplands, and as yet she had seen nothing of him; he lived in a large kennel in the yard, for he was a large dog and rather friendly. But Blanche knew him by sight, and had felt always sorry for him.

still putting and clawing at his bars. "How did you come out, and where are the keys?"

"The old way," he answered. "I left them down there."

"And what did you find?" "I'll tell you later. I can't hear my voice for that infernal dog."

The dreadful barking followed them out into the yard, and round to the right, past the tradesmen's door, to the verge of the drive. Here they met an elderly man in a tremendous hurry—an unstable dotard who instantly abandoned whatever purpose he had formed, and came to anchor in front of them with rheumy eyes and twitching wrinkles.

"Why, if that isn't Miss Blanche! he quavered. "Do you hear our Roy? I haven't heard that go on like that since the night that happened!"

"Then Cazalet introduced himself to the old gardener whom he had known all his life, and by rights the man should have kept outright, or else smiled a rustic squireman laden with wise humor. But old Samsie hailed from silly Suffolk, and all his life he had belted his surname, but never the alliterative throb of his native county. He took the wanderer's return very much as a matter of course, very much as though he had never been away at all, and was demonstrative only in his further use of the East Anglian pronoun.

"That's a long time since we fared to see you, Mus' Walter," said he; "that's a right long time! And now here's a nice kettle of fish for you to find! But I seen the man, Mus' Walter, and we'll bring that home to him, never you fear!"

"Are you sure that you saw him?" asked Blanche, already under Cazalet's influence on this point.

Savage looked cautiously toward the house before replying; then he lowered his voice dramatically. "Sure, Miss Blanche, why, I see him that night as plain as I fare to see Mus' Walter now!"

"I'm thinking of finger-prints. If he'd just laid those things right down, he'd have left the print of his hand as large as life for Scotland Yard."

"The devil he would!" exclaimed Cazalet. "I wish you'd explain," he added, "remember I'm a wild man from the woods, and only know of these things by the vaguest kind of hearsay and stray paragraphs in the papers. I never knew you could leave your mark so easily as all that."

Toye took the breakfast menu and placed it face downward on the tablecloth. "Lay your hand on that, palm down," he said, "and don't move it for a minute."

Cazalet looked at him a moment before complying; then his fine, shapely, sunburnt hand lay still as plaster under their eyes until Toye told him he might take it up. Of course there was no mark whatever, and Cazalet laughed.

"You should have caught me when I came up from those foundations, not fresh from my tub!" said he. "You wait," replied Hilton Toye, taking the menu gingerly by the edge, and putting it out of harm's way in the empty wastebasket. "I can't see anything now, but if you come round to the Savoy I'll show you something."

"What?" "Your prints, sir! I don't say I'm Scotland Yard at the game, but I can do it well enough to show you how it's done. You haven't left your mark upon the paper but I guess you've left the sweat of your hand; if I show a little French chalk over it, the chalk'll stick where your hand did, and blow off easily everywhere else. Say, come round to lunch and I'll have your prints ready for you. I'd like awfully to show you how it's done."

Cazalet excused himself with decision. He had a full morning in front of him. He was going to see Miss Macnair's brother, son of the late head of his father's old firm of solitaires, and now one of the partners, to get them either to take up Scruton's case themselves, or else to recommend a firm perhaps more accustomed to criminal practice. Cazalet was always apt to be elaborate in the first person singular, either in the past or in the future tense; but he was more so than usual in explaining his considered intentions in this matter that lay so very near his heart.

"Going to see Scruton, too?" said Toye. "Not necessarily," was the short reply. But it also was elaborated by Cazalet on a moment's consideration. The fact was that he wanted first to know if it were not possible, by the intervention of a really influential lawyer, to obtain the prisoner's immediate release at any rate on bail. If impossible, he might hesitate to force himself on Scruton in the prison, but he would see.

"It's a perfect scandal that he should be there at all," said Cazalet, as he rose first and ushered Toye out into the lounge. "Only think: our old gardener saw him run out of the drive at half past seven, when the gong went, when the real murderer must have been shivering in the Michael-Angelo cupboard, wondering how the devil he was ever going to get out again."

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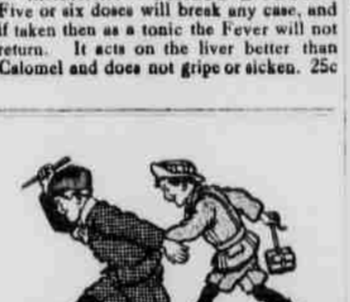
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