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J. D. ATKINS, Editor. J. W. ATKINS, Business Manager. No. 226 Main Avenue. PHONE NO. 50.

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GASTONIA County Seat of Gaston County After January 1, 1911.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 1909.

THE PANAMA CANAL

In the excitement over the Cook-Peary dispute and other matters that are engaging the attention of the public for the moment, there has been very little said in the press of late about the Panama Canal, which was for months, in fact has been for years, a standing topic for prolonged discussion. We therefore welcome the views expressed by Chief Justice Gudge, who is spending a vacation of some weeks at his home in Asheville, on the progress of the work and the general conditions in the canal zone. Justice Gudge is eminently qualified to give accurate and unbiased information on the subject, having made the canal zone his home since 1897, when he was appointed canal general. In 1894 he was made associate justice of the supreme court of the canal zone and in January of this year was promoted to the post of Chief Justice. He says that health conditions on the isthmus are now good and that the government has made the sanitary conditions as good as is possible; that there is practically no diphtheria, smallpox, yellow fever or such diseases; that of course there is some malaria. He expresses a firm belief that the great work of digging the canal will be completed as estimated by the engineers in charge by 1915, and compiments very highly the manner in which the work is being pushed by Colonel Goethals, chief engineer. The canal is by far the largest undertaking which the government has ever entered into, and while other matters may for the moment withdraw the attention of the people from its progress, it is still a matter in which the whole nation is deeply and vitally interested. Its completion will mark a great change in our commerce, especially at the South, and will most certainly mean, at least in many important respects, a great impetus to our manufacturing and shipping interests.

It seems to have struck pretty nearly every one that the Hudson-Fulton celebration week was a good time to make that long-deferred visit to New York City. The World of yesterday says that on Sunday night at 9:30 there were two million sightseers on Fifth Avenue alone, and the reports indicate that there are more visitors in the metropolis than ever were gathered there at any one time before in its history.

What promised to be an episode of at least national interest, when a State Judge in Georgia defied the federal courts a few days ago by refusing to release a prisoner upon habeas corpus proceedings brought before a United States District Judge, collapsed into insignificance last night when the State Judge yielded and allowed the prisoner to be brought before the federal judge. That the whole affair grew out of an attempt to show that the prohibition law was being violated because a United States storekeeper and gauger refused to testify before the State court, gave it another element of interest which has now faded away.

NEW CHURCH FOR SHELLEY. Methodists Let the Contract for Erection of Handsome \$5,000 Brick Structure. Charlotte Observer. Shelley, Sept. 27.—The Methodists of South Shelby have "warned" to use a time honored phrase, and the result is the early construction of a handsome brick house of worship. The contract was let today for this new church and when completed it will represent an outlay of \$5,000. The pastor in charge is Rev. Loy D. Thompson, a young minister of energy and consecration recently assigned by Bishop Atkins to this important work and it is largely due to his untiring zeal that the new church became a possibility. Abee & Wilkins have the contract for the brickwork while Bronson Bros. were awarded the contract for the woodwork.

The Lure of the Mask By HAROLD MAC GRATH

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CHAPTER III. MME. ANGOT.

THREE nights later, as Hillard and Merrihew were dining together at the club, the steward came into the parlor room and swept his placid eye over the groups of others. Smiling at Hillard, he came solemnly down to the corner table and laid a blue letter at the side of Hillard's plate. "I did not see you when you came in, sir," said the steward, his voice as solemn as his step. "The letter arrived yesterday."



He sat there staring.

turned the letter face downward and went on with the meal. "I did not know that your mail came to the club," said Merrihew. "It doesn't. Only rarely a letter drifts this way."

"Well, go on and read it. Don't let me keep you from it. Some charmer, I'll wager. Here I pour all my adventures into your ear, and I on my side never so much as get a hint of yours. Go on, read it."

"Adventures, fiddlesticks! The letter can wait. It is probably a bill."

"A bill in a fashionable envelope like that?" Hillard only smiled, tipped the cradle and refilled Merrihew's glass with some excellent Romanee Conti. "When does Kitty sail?" he asked after a while of silence.

"A week from this Saturday, Feb. 2. What the deuce did you bring up that for? I've been trying to forget it."

"Cigars, then?" But they both played a very indifferent game. At 10:30 Merrihew's eyes began to haunt the clock, and Hillard grew merciful for various reasons. "What time does the performance end?" he asked. "At 10:50, but it takes about twenty minutes to scrape off the makeup."

"I did not see you when you came in, sir," said the steward, his voice as solemn as his step. "The letter arrived yesterday."

In a fashionable quarter of the city there stood a brownstone house, with grotesque turrets, winding steps and glaring polished red tiles. There was a touch of the gothic, of the renaissance, of the old English manor; just a touch, however, a kind of blind man's bluff of a house. A very rich man lived here, but for ten months in the year he and his family fluttered about the social centers of the world. And with a house like this on his hands, one could scarce blame him. Twice a week during this absence a caretaker came in, flourished a feather duster and went away again. Society reporters always referred to this house as "the palatial residence."

This morning a woman stood in the alcove window and looked down into the glistening street. The venetian red of her hair trapped the reflected sunlight from the opposite windows, and two little points of silver danced in her blue eyes. Ah, but her eyes were blue—blue as spring water in the morning, blue as the summer sky seen through a cleft in the mountains, blue as lapis lazuli, with the same fibers of gold. And every feature and contour of the face harmonized with the marvelous hair and the wonderful eyes; a beautiful face, warm, dreamy, engaging, mobile. It was not the face of a worldly woman; neither was it the face of a girl. It was too emotional for the second, and there was not enough control for the first.

But the prophesy of laughter did not come to pass. The little wrinkles faded, the mouth grew sad, and the silver points no longer danced in her eyes. The pain in her heart was always shadowing. She had seen her fairest dream beaten and crumpled upon the reef of disillusion.

Yet again the smile renewed itself. She was a creature of varying moods. She twisted and untwisted the newspaper. Should she? Ought she? Had she not always recanted these singular impulses? And yet what harm to read this letter and return it to the sender? She was so lonely here. It was like being among a strange people, so long ago was it that her foot had touched this soil. Was it possible that she was twenty-five? Was there not some miscount, and was it not fifteen instead? Would not this war of wisdom and folly be decided ere long?

She opened the paper and smoothed out the folds. "Mme. Angot—There is a letter for you in the mail department of this office." It was so droll. It was unlike anything she had ever heard of—a personal inquiry column, where Cupids and Psyches billed and cooed. The merest chance had thrown the original inquiry under her notice. Her answer was an impulse to which she had given no second thought till too late. She ought to have ignored it. But she was lonely; the people she knew were out of town, and the jest might amuse her.

"This man was in all probability a gentleman, since he was a member of a gentlemen's club. But second thought convinced her that this proved nothing. Men are often called gentlemen out of compliment to their ancestors. Still, if this man only saw the affair from her angle of vision, the grotesque humor of it and not the common vulgar intrigue! She hesitated, as well she might. Supposing that eventually he found out who she was? That would never, never do. No one must know that she was in America, about to step into the wildest of wild adventures. No; she must not be found out. The king, who had been kind to her, and the court must never know. From their viewpoint they would have declared that she was about to tarnish a distinguished name, to outrage the oldest aristocracy in Europe, the court of Italy. But she had her own opinion; what she proposed to do was in itself harmless and innocent. But this gentleman who leaned out of the window? She had seen the match flare in the young man's face. Was it the face she had seen in that flash of light that interested her sufficiently to risk the note? Against the dark of the night it had appeared for an instant, clean, crisp, ruddy as a cameo. The face warranted confidence. She had sung because she had been happy, happy with that transient happiness which at times was her portion. Could she ever judge another man by his looks? She believed not. How she had run! The man, bareheaded, giving chase and the burly policeman across the street!

And he quick for... The man... "There was... then?" The points were dancing again in the blue eyes. "You may go. Perhaps," and Bettina's mistress smiled—"perhaps I may let you read it and answer it after I am done with it. That would be rather neat."

The slight nod was a dismissal, and the maid went about her duties, which were not many in this house. Meanwhile the lady with the venetian hair toyed with the letter. Club paper! Evidently he was not afraid to trust her. But would he amuse her? The contents gave her a genuine surprise. She ran to the window. Italian! It was written in Italian, with all the flourishes of an Italian born. She turned to the signature—Hillard. So he had signed his name in full? She ruminated. How came such a name to belong to a man who wrote Italian so beautifully? She looked at the signature again. John-Giovanni! She would call him Giovanni. She had been rather clever. To have had the wit to look in the library for the blue book and the club list—not every woman would have thought of that. Then a new inspiration came to her. She sent Bettina for the card basket. She scattered the contents upon the floor and sat down carefully, and so, she was presently rewarded. She held up the card in triumph. He had called at this house on Thanksgiving day. He was known, then, to the master and mistress. Very good. She now gave her full attention to the letter, which she had not yet perused:

"To the lady in the Fog: To begin with, let me say that I, too, have laughed. But there was some degree of chagrin in my laughter. On my word of honor, it was a distinct shock to my sense of dignity when I saw that idiotic personal of mine in the paper. It is my first offense of the kind, and I am really ashamed. But the situation was not ordinary. Ordinary women do not sing in the streets after midnight. As you could not possibly be ordinary, my offense has greater magnitude. To indite a personal to a gentleman: A thousand pardons! I doubted that it would come under your notice, and even if it did, I was sure that you would ignore it. To find a woman with an appreciable sense of humor is rare. Ordinary women do not sing in the streets after midnight. As you could not possibly be ordinary, my offense has greater magnitude. To indite a personal to a gentleman: A thousand pardons! I doubted that it would come under your notice, and even if it did, I was sure that you would ignore it. 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