

A Wild Night

By ESTHER WALDORF MESSENGER

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If Victor Lind had glanced twice at Miss Arline Drury, he might have discovered interest, and possibly something deeper in the face of the only daughter and heiress of his employer, Robert Drury. The very fact that she was such, however, seemed to place an insurmountable barrier between them. He was therefore contented with a mere casual look at a face rather intellectual than lovely, although the eyes were deep wells of expression likely to attract the seeker after real heart worth and fidelity.

Victor held only a fairly paid position in the establishment of Drury & Co., but he stayed on, making up for the boredom of routine days by spending leisurely evenings as enjoyably as possible.

Miss Arline Drury had visited the plant occasionally. It happened after Victor's first sight of her that she came more frequently. She had passed his desk several times and bestowed upon him the slight nod she awarded all whom she selected as knowing by sight. He was passing down a narrow roadway between two buildings of the plant one day, when dashing into its other end came a team of horses attached to a wagon loaded with iron. At a glance Victor recognized a runaway and fifty feet ahead his vision took in a girlish form shrinking to the brick wall. Victor realized her danger. He swiftly dashed toward her, snatched at her swaying form, backed into a niche where there was a door, burst it in with a powerful lunge of his stout shoulders, and held her shivering and overcome. For just a moment the grateful, expressive eyes of the girl held his own in thrall. Then he recognized her as the daughter of his employer.

"We can pass through the storeroom to the office, if you please," he said. Arline Drury, pale and trembling, bowed an assent and he left her as they entered the office building.

The next day Victor was sent for by Mr. Drury. The latter did not relax from his habitual cold dignity, but in a business-like tone announced to Victor his promotion to a higher position. As Victor went back to his desk young Ernest Drury followed him. He was a mere lad, but there was deep sincerity in his bearing as he grasped Victor's hand.

"My sister told me to convey her deep gratitude to you for saving her life," he said, "and she—she asked me to tell you she will not forget."

There was a thrill in the boy's tones, but the momentary impress of emotion passed from Victor's mind. He and some boon companions had arranged for a meeting and late hours that evening and his thoughts were centered on that. It was a wild night, for some roystering members of the coterie indulged freely in strong drink, an adjournment was made to a place where gambling was going on and Victor found himself in his room the next morning with no recollection of how he had arrived there.

He was mortified, then shamed and repentant, and then, as his memory cleared, startled and appalled. With the vividness of a lightning flash there recurred to him the events of the previous evening. He had fallen into the hands of a group of card sharks and had been induced to risk the money he had, and then he had indorsed a draft given to him for collection and had signed the name of his employer to a check for a large amount. He recalled the man who had lured him into this net of peril and guilt. His name was Jackson, and, realizing that he was in a terrible position, his reputation gone, his future blasted, Victor hurried on his clothes to seek Jackson. There was a knock at the door of his room. Serious faced, Ernest Drury entered.

"Mr. Lind," he said, "here are some papers you had better destroy and forget. I have no explanation to make. I come as emissary of another, whom I am not free to name, and who expresses the hope that you will never again yield to the influence of those who last night nearly led to your ruin."

Then the visitor was gone. Victor stood staring in startled bewilderment at the draft and check he had given Jackson. Then a conception of his narrow escape from ruin overcame him. He sank to his knees beside his bed and arose a penitent and grateful man, resolved never again to skirt the delusive path of guilty pleasure.

After that, young Drury seemed to put himself out of the way to act friendly and helpful toward Victor, but never would he discuss the matter of the forged documents. As if quite incidentally he invited Victor to the Drury home, and within a half-year Victor was engaged to Arline Drury.

It was just after their first child was born that Victor came across the papers that revealed to him that Arline had loved him from the first time she met him, that to her was due his rapid advancement in business and his rescue from the power of scheming gamblers. He replaced the papers reverently. He never told of their discovery, but the inspiration of the same gave to his life a new devotedness to Arline that became the one impulse of his being.

The chief aim of every alligator's life is to become a satchel.

"Dear Eleanor"

By OTILLIA FRANCES PFEIFFER

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"Dear Eleanor" everybody called her, if not to her face, at least behind her back, and the latter was the surest proof of her popularity. She was a bright faced, smiling girl, but just as ready to share and console in the troubles of others as to become a partner in their joys. Adaptability was the secret of her rare magnetic influence, and Vance Dunbar felt that he had acquired a precious prize when she consented to become his wife.

"You don't know what you are going to," said a friend of Eleanor Tyrrell, a week before wedding. "I have a relative living near the Dunbar home of which Gerald's mother is the mistress. They say it is a dismal, forbidding place. And as to your prospective mother-in-law, I hear she is a stern, antiquated, self-willed woman of the old time school."

But winsome Eleanor kept the same sunny smile on her face she always wore. "Yes," she nodded, "that may all be, but haven't I got Vance?"

So the girl who kept a town lively with her wit and pleasantness refused to think of the barren prospect outlined. Eleanor it was who had written a relative when he announced a visit: "It will be glorious to see you again dear uncle, and I will meet you at the station on your arrival. But I might not recognize you after all these years, and so I think that for purposes of identification it would be best for you to hold a long string of pearls in one hand and a bit of fur—say an ermine lined stole—in the other." Her spirits were not to be dashed, therefore, and if in her new life she could not draw on her mutual fund of fun and vivacity, she could find some way to win over a crabbed, selfish old woman or patiently learn her ways and follow them—for the sake of Vance.

She confessed to a sentiment of desolation as she and Vance reached the home of his mother. It seemed to step out of an old fashioned picture. Ten days dust had settled on the keys of the parlor organ. The stereoscope lenses were sadly in need of polishing and spider webs criss-crossed the basket of cathedral interior views. The five cruets of the dining room table were empty and the portraits on the wall looked as if they needed their faces washed.

"I find mother has been away at her sister's for over a week," remarked Vance. "It is not her way to neglect the house. You see, our coming a week earlier than we arranged has caught her unawares."

Next day Mrs. Dunbar arrived and Eleanor's martyrdom commenced just as her school friend had predicted.

The grim, set face of the elder woman, the sharp, mandatory accents of her voice chilled and depressed Eleanor, and the latter wondered if there was any use of hoping that beneath the rough surface lurked some sentiments of human emotion. "I don't believe in new jimcracks, son," observed Mrs. Dunbar crisply as Vance introduced into the house a Morris chair. "I'm not encouraging your wife in the cooking line, either. Things are dear, a hard winter is coming on and the closer we keep to plain hog and hominy the surer we'll be in pulling through." But there was a good deal of fiction about all this, for Mrs. Dunbar had a surplus at bank and had acquired recently a modern residence in the village.

Vance admired while he pitied Eleanor. Silently, patiently she bent to the iron rule of her husband's mother. She made no complaint as the winter came on and there was shivering in every part of the house. It nearly broke Eleanor's tender heart to be deprived of putting to practical experiment her knowledge acquired in a course of scientific cookery. Then fate intervened to change things. Mrs. Dunbar slipped on the ice in the yard one morning and for the first time in her life was flat on her back in a sick bed. The doctor announced a full three months' confinement with a broken limb and the draughty, half heated condition and general discomforts of the old house began to force themselves upon Mrs. Dunbar's consciousness.

Cook, nurse, housekeeper, how Eleanor strove to become all three in model perfection! Within a week she had won her mother-in-law to all kinds of dainties in the way of desserts, and the day she lifted the invalid to the Morris chair the old lady sank into its depths with a resigned sigh of perfect peace and comfort. Mrs. Dunbar began to appreciate the comfort of luxury and realize that she was growing old, but with a young, capable assistant who knew more than she did about the joys of living.

"It isn't right for Eleanor," she spoke to her son one day. "The house is getting too old to keep out the winter chill, and a clever young housekeeper like she is deserves a more convenient home. It is easier to lease the farm than the town house, and I think we'd better move. And say, Vance, the old melodeon is getting cracked and hoarse, and we might sell it and the old furniture and get new. And let Eleanor pick out the furnishings for the new house—your home, and hers."

You cannot repent too soon, because you do not know how soon it may be too late.—Thomas Fuller.

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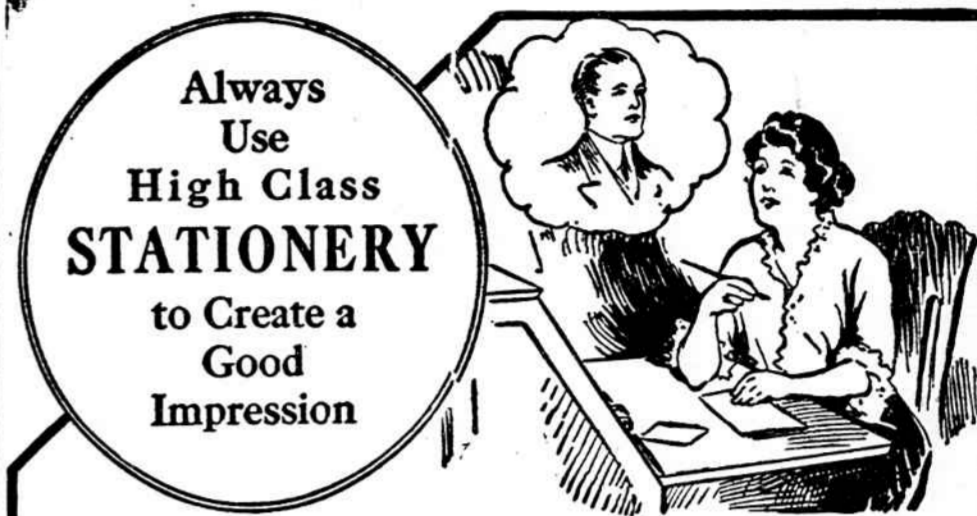
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