LAURENS, SOUTH CAROLINA, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 1920.

NUMBER

# COPYRIGHT BY CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SOMS

(Continued from Last Week.)

His age might have been thirty. He was a suave, polished, sophisticated person. Nothing was more natural than that he should pause in his travels to call upon two agreeable women he had met on a Pacific steamer. Possibly he was in love with Alice Bashford; this was not a difficult state of heart and mind for a man to argue himself into. She was even more strikingly beautiful tonight than I had thought her before. She was again in white-it was only in daytime that she wore black-and white was exceedingly becoming to her. As we talked she plied listlessly a fan-a handsome trinket of ostrich plumes. A pretty woman and a fan are the happiest possible combination.

There is no severer test of grace than a woman's manner of using a fan. A clumsy woman makes an implement of this plaything, flourishing it to emphasize her talk, or, what is worse, pointing with it like an instructor before a blackboard. But in graceful hands it is unobtrusive, a mere bit of decoration that teases and fascinates the beholder's eye.

With all his poise and equanimity I was distinctly conscious that Montani's dark eyes were intent upon the idly swaying fan. I thought at first it was her hands that interested him as they unfallingly interested me, but when, from time to time, she put down the fan his gaze still followed it. And yet there was nothing novel in the delicate combination of ivory and feathers. I had seen many fans that to all appearances were just like it. Once, as she picked it up and lazily opened it, I saw him bend forward eagerly, then, finding that I had noted his eagerness, he rose, pretending that a brass screen before the fireplace had caught his eye, and asked whether it was not a Florentine production, which shook my faith in his connoisseurship, as I had bought the thing myself from a New York brassworker who had made it to

Montani spoke of the porcelains. "(th, to be sure! They don't show to best advantage in electric light, do they? But I can have a few of the prize pieces taken into the dining-

room," said Alice. Mrs. Farnsworth had excused herself to finish a letter, and from my chair I could see her head bent over the big desk in the library. Alice rang for Antoine, and I followed her into the hall to offer my aid.

"Oh, don't trouble," she said. "Antoine can do anything necessary. Yes: thanks; if you will turn on the diningroom lights."

I was gone hardly half a minute. When I reached the drawing-room door Montani had crossed the room to the table on which Alice had dropped the fan and was examining it closely. He faced the door, and the moment he detected me exclaimed carelessly: "An exquisite little bauble! I am always curious as to the source of such trifles. I was looking for the maker's imprimatur. I know a Parisian who is the leading manufacturer of the world. But it is not his, I

As we stood talking of other things he plied the fan carelessly as though for the pleasure of the faint scent it exhaled, and when Alice called us he put it down carefully where he had found it.

He really did seem to know some thing about ceramics and praised, with lively enthusiasm, the pieces that had been set out on the table. One piece, as to whose authenticity my uncle had entertained serious doubts, Montani unhesitatingly pronounced genuine and stated very plausible reasons for his epinion.

On the whole, he was an interesting When he had finished his inspections he lingered for only a few minutes and took his leave, saying that he was spending the night at an inn near Stamford.

"Well," said Alice when the whir of his machine had died away, "What do you think of him?"

"A very agreeable gentleman," I answered. "If he doesn't know porce lains, he fakes his talk admirably." "And as to fans-" suggested Mrs.

Farnsworth. I had not intended to mention Mon

tani's interest in Alice's fan, and the remark surprised me.

"Oh, I saw it all from the library," laughed Mrs. Farnsworth. "My back was to the door, but I was facing a mirror. The moment you and Alice went into the hail he pounced upon the fan-pounced is the only word that describes it. He concealed his interest in it very neatly when you eaught him examining it."

"Fans are harmless things," said Alice, "and if there's any story attached to this one I'm not aware of it. My father bought it in Paris about three years ago, and It has never been out of my possession except to have it repaired. There's a Japanese jeweler who does wonderful things in the way of repairing trinkets of every kind. I left it with him for a few days. I can't tell now which panel was broken, he did his work so deftly."

I took it from her and balanced it in my fingers. It was a beautiful plece of workmanship with the simplest carvings on the ivory panels.

"He couldn't have seen it anywhere before tonight," observed Alice mus-"In fact, I hadn't used it at all for a year. It was really by mistake that my maid put it into my trunk when I went to Japan. I didn't want to risk breaking it again, so I've been carrying it in a handbag. The last day we were in Tokio I think I had it in our sitting room in the hotel, to make sure it wasn't jammed into the trunk again. We had a good many callers—a number of people came in to bid us good-by, but I'm sure Count Montani was not among them, and it would have been impossible for him to see it at any other time."

"Oh, there is nothing disturbing in the count's interest in the thing," said Mrs. Farnsworth with an air of dismissing the matter. "If it were a jade trinket inscribed with Chinese mysteries, you might imagine that it would be sought by some one-I have heard of such things-but Alice's fan has ne such history.'

"We weren't very hospitable," said Alice. "I might have asked Count Montani to dine with us tomorrow; and we might even have put him up for the night in this vast house."

I exclaimed. "Autoine is convinced that the man is what we call in America a crook. And Antoine takes his respondbilities very serb usly."

While I was breakfasting at the gaçage the next mornine Antoine apappeared and, waiting until Figur was out of hearing, handed me a slip of paper.

"That's a New York automobile number," he said. "It was on the tag of that machine the party came in last night. I heard him saying, sir, as how he had motored up from the Elkton inn at Stamford. Visitors from Stamford would hardly send in to the city for a machine."

I bade him wait while I called the Elkton by telephone. No such person as Giuseppe Montani had spent the night there or had been a guest of the house within the memory of the clerk. Antoine's chest swelled at this confirmation of his suspicions.

"If the man returns, treat him as you did last night—as though he were entitled to the highest consideration."

"He won't come back-not the same way," said Antoine. "He mentioned the Elkton just to throw you off. The next you hear of him will be quite different."

"You mean he'll come as a burglar?" "That's what's in my mind, Mr. Singleton. Everything seems very queer, sir."

"Such as what, Antoine?"

"The widow has been telegraphing and telephoning considerable, sir."

"There must be no spying upon these ladies!" I admonished severely. 'All the people on the place must remember that Mrs. Bashford is mistress here, and entitled to fullest respect."

He had hardly gone before Torrence had me on the wire to hear my report and to say that Raynor had left Washington for a week-end in Virginia.

I assured him that nothing had occurred to encourage a suspicion that Mrs. Bashford was not all that she pretended to be. The day was marked

by unusual activities on the part of the waiters and bell-hops. Instead of the company drills to which I had become accustomed they moved about in pairs along the shore and he lines of the fences. I learned that Antoine had ordered this, and the "troops" were obeying him with the utmost seriousness. The "service" on the estate was certainly abundant. It was only necessary to whistle and one of the Tyringham veterans would come

In spite of the complete satisfaction I had expressed to Torrence as to the perfect integrity and honest intentions (Continued on page two, this section.)

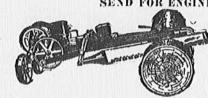
of the two women, the curlosity of the American state department and the visit of Montani required elucidation beyond my powers. At dinner they were in the merriest humor. The performances of the little army throughout the day had amused them greatly.

"How delightfully feudal!" claimed Alice, "Really we should have a moat and drawbridge to make the thing perfect. Constance and I are the best protected women in the

We extracted all the fun possible from the idea that the estate was un-

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1 lot 36-inch all Wool Serge, all new shades for Dresses and Suits, worth \$1.50, sale price \$1.00
1 lot Men's Underwear, worth \$2.00, our price now\$1.00
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