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DRAWN BY F. B. MASTERS

Why a Young Man Should Vote the Republican Ticket

BY SENATOR A. J. BEVERIDGE

Beginning **A Link in the Girdle**—By Samuel Merwin

THE EAGLE'S SHADOW

By James Branch Cabell



DRAWN BY WILL GREFF
"BILLY SAYS THAT WILL
AIN'T TO BE PROBATED,"
HE INFORMED HER
TESTILY

XXX

THE next day there was a general exodus from Selwoode, and Margaret's satellites dispersed upon their divers ways. Selwoode, as they understood it, was no longer hers; and they knew Billy Woods well enough to recognize that from Selwoode's new master there were no desirable pickings to be had such as the philanthropic crew had batted on these four years past. So there came to them, one and all, urgent telegrams or insistent letters or some equally unanswerable demand for their presence elsewhere, such as are prevalent among our guests in very dull or very troublous times.

Miss Hugonin smiled a little bitterly. She considered that the scales had fallen from her eyes, and flattered herself that she was by way of becoming a bit of a misanthrope; also, I believe, there was a note concerning the hollowness of life and the worthlessness of society in general. In a word, Margaret fell back upon the

extreme cynicism and world-weariness of twenty-three, and assured herself that she despised everybody, whereas, as a matter of fact, she never in her life succeeded in disliking anything except mice and piano-practice, and, for a very little while, Billy Woods; and this for the very excellent reason that the gods had fashioned her solely to the end that she might love all mankind, and in return be loved by humanity in general and adored by that portion of it which inhabits trousers.

But "The rats always desert a sinking ship," said Miss Hugonin, with the air of one delivering a particularly original sentiment. "They make me awfully tired, and I don't care for them in the least. But Petheridge Jukesbury is a *dear*, and I may be poor now, but I *did* try to do good with the money when I had it, and, *anyhow*, Billy is going to get well."

And, after all, that was the one thing that really mattered, though, of course, Billy would always despise her. He would be quite right, too, the girl thought humbly.

But the conventionalities of life are more powerful than even youthful cynicism and youthful heart-break. Prior to devoting herself to a loveless life and the commonplaces of the stoic's tub, Miss Hugonin was compelled by the barest decency to bid her guests God-speed.

And Adèle Haggage kissed her for the first time in her life. She had been a little awed by Miss Hugonin, the famous heiress—a little jealous of her, I dare say, on account of Hugh Van Orden—but now she kissed her very heartily in farewell, and said, "Don't forget you are to come to us as soon as *possible*," and was beyond any question perfectly sincere in saying it.

And Hugh Van Orden almost dragged Margaret under the main stairway, and, far from showing any marked abhorrence to her in her present state of destitution, implored her with tears in his eyes to marry him at once, and to bring the Colonel to live with them for the rest of his natural existence.

For, "It's infernally impertinent of me, of course," Mr. Van Orden readily conceded, "and I suppose I ought to beg your pardon for mentioning it, but I *do* love you to a perfectly unlimited extent. It's playing the very deuce with my polo, Miss Hugonin, and as for my appetite—why, if you won't have me," cried Hugh, in desperation, "I—I really, you know, I don't believe I'll *ever* be able to eat anything!"

When Margaret refused him—for the sixth time, I think—I won't swear that she didn't kiss him under the dark stairway. And if she did, he was a nice boy, and he deserved it.

And as for Sarah Ellen Haggage, that unreverend old parasite brought her a blank check signed with her name, and mentioned quite a goodly sum as the extent to which Margaret might go for necessary expenses.

"For you'll need it," she said, and rubbed her nose reflectively. "Moving is the very deuce for wasting money, because so many little things keep cropping up. Now, remember, a quarter is quite enough to give *any* man for moving a trunk. And there's no earthly sense in your taking a cab, Margaret—the street car will bring you within a block of our door.

These little trifles count, dear. And don't let Célestine pack your things, because she's abominably careless. Let Marie do it—and don't tip her. Give her an old hat. And if I were you I would certainly consult a lawyer about the legality of that idiotic will. I remember distinctly hearing that Mr. Woods was very eccentric in his last days, and I haven't a doubt he was raving mad when he left all his money to a great, strapping, long-legged young fellow who is perfectly capable of taking care of himself. Getting better, is he? Well, I suppose I'm glad to hear it, but he'd much better have stayed in Paris—where, I remember distinctly hearing, he led the most dissipated and immoral life, my dear—instead of coming over here and upsetting everything." And again Mrs. Haggage rubbed her nose—indignantly.

"He *didn't!*" said Margaret. "And I *can't* take your money, beautiful! And I don't see how we can possibly come to stay with you."

"Don't you argue with me!" Mrs. Haggage exhorted her. "I'm not in any temper to be argued with. I've spent the morning sewing bias stripes on a bias skirt—something which, from a moral-ruining and resolution-overthrowing standpoint, simply knocks the spots off Job. You'll take that money, and you'll come to me as soon as you can, and—God bless you, my dear!"

And again Margaret was kissed. Altogether, it was a very osculatory morning for Miss Hugonin.

Mr. Jukesbury's adieus, however, were more formal; and—I am sorry to say it—the old fellow went away wondering if the rich Mr. Woods might not conceivably be very grateful to the man who had saved his life and evince his gratitude in some agreeable and substantial form.

Mrs. Saumarez and Mr. Kennaston, also, were somewhat unenthusiastic in their parting. Kennaston could not feel quite at ease with Margaret, brazen it as he might with devil-may-care flippancy; and Kathleen had by this an inkling as to how matters stood between Margaret and Billy, and was somewhat puzzled thereat, and loved the former in consequence no more than any Christian female is compelled to love the woman who, either unconsciously or with deliberation, purloins her ancient lover. A woman rarely forgives the man who has ceased to care for her; and more rarely still can she pardon the woman who has dared succeed her in his affections.

And besides, they were utterly engrossed with one another, and utterly happy, and utterly selfish with the immemorial selfishness of lovers, who cannot for a moment conceive that the whole world is not somehow benefited by their happiness and does not await with breathless interest the outcome of their bickerings with the blind bow-god, and from this providential delusion derive a meritorious and comfortable glow. So Mrs. Saumarez and Mr. Kennaston parted from Margaret with kindness, it is true, but not without awkwardness.

And that was the man that almost she had loved! thought Margaret, as she gazed on the whirl of dust left by their carriage wheels. Gone with a few perfunctory words of sympathy!

And, for my part, I think that the base Indian who threw a pearl away worth more than all his tribe was, in comparison with Felix Kennaston, a shrewd and long-headed man. If you had given *me* his chances, Margaret . . . but this, however, is highly digressive.

The Colonel, standing beside her, used language that was unrefined. His aspirations as to the future of Mr. Kennaston and Mr. Jukesbury, it appeared, were both lurid and unfriendly.

"But why, attractive?" queried his daughter. "May they be qualified with such and such adjectives!" desired the Colonel fervently. "They tried to lend me money—wouldn't hear of my not taking it! 'In case of necessity.' Bah!" said the Colonel, and shook his fist after the retreating carriages. "May they be qualified with such and such adjectives!"

How happily she laughed! "And you're swearing at them!" she pouted. "Oh, my dear, my dear, how hard you are on all my little friends!"

"Of course I am," said the Colonel stoutly. "They've deprived me of the pleasure of despising 'em. It was worth double the money, I tell you! I never objected to any men quite so much. And now they've gone and behaved decently with the deliberate purpose of annoying me! Oh!" cried the Colonel, and shook an immaculate, withered old hand toward the spring sky, "may they be qualified with such and such adjectives!"

XXXI

DOCTOR JEAL, better than his word, had Billy Woods out of bed in five days. To Billy they were very long and very dreary days, and to Margaret very long and penitential ones. But Colonel Hugonin enjoyed them thoroughly;

for, as he feelingly and frequently observed, it is an immense consolation to any man to reflect that his home no longer contains "more blanked foolishness to the square inch than any other house in the United States."

On all sides they sought for Cock-eye Flinks. But they never found him, and to this day they have never found him. The Fates, having played their pawn, swept it from the board, and Cock-eye Flinks disappeared in Clotho's capacious pocket.

All this time the young people saw nothing of one another. On this point Jeal was firm.

"In a sick-room," he vehemently

declared, "a woman is well enough, but *the* woman is the devil and all. I've told that young man plainly, sir, that he doesn't see your daughter till he gets well—and, by George, sir, he'll get well now just in order to see her. Nature is the only doctor who ever cures anybody, Colonel; we humans, for all our pill-boxes and lancets, can only prompt her—and very demoralizing advice we generally give her, too."

"Peggy!"

This was the first observation of Mr. Woods when he came to his senses. He swore feebly when Peggy was denied to him. He pleaded. He scolded. He even threatened, as a last resort, to get out of bed and go in immediate search of her; and, in return, Jeal told him very affably that it was far less difficult to manage a patient in a strait-jacket than one out of it, and that, personally, nothing would please him so much as a plausible pretext for clapping Mr. Woods into one of 'em. Jeal had his own methods in dealing with the fractious.

Then Billy clamored for Colonel Hugonin, and subsequently the Colonel came in some bewilderment to his daughter's rooms.

"Billy says that will ain't to be probated," he informed her testily. "I'm to make sure it ain't probated till he gets well. You're to give me your word you'll do nothing further in the matter till Billy gets well. That's his message, and I'd like to know what the deuce this infernal nonsense means. I ain't a Fenian nor yet a Guy Fawkes, daughter, and in consequence, I'm free to confess I don't care for all this mystery and shilly-shallying. But that's the message."

Miss Hugonin debated with herself. "That I will do nothing further in the matter till Billy gets well," she repeated reflectively. "Yes, I suppose I'll have to promise it, but you can tell him from me that I consider he is *horrid*, and just as obstinate and selfish as he can *possibly* be. Can you remember that, attractive?"

"Yes, thank you," said the Colonel. "I can remember it, but I ain't going to. Nice sort of message to send a sick man, ain't it? I don't know what's got into you, Margaret—no, begad, I don't! I think you're possessed of seventeen devils. And now," the old gentleman demanded, after an awkward pause, "are you or are you not going to tell me what all this mystery is about?"

"I can't," Miss Hugonin protested. "It—it's a secret, attractive."

"It ain't," said the Colonel flatly; "it's some more blamed foolishness." And he went away in a fret and using language.

XXXII

LEFT to herself Miss Hugonin meditated.

Miss Hugonin was in her kimono. And oh, Madame Chrysanthème! oh, Madam Butterfly! oh, Mimosa San, and Pitti Sing, and Yum Yum, and all ye vaunted beauties of Japan! if you could have seen her in that garb! Poor little ladies of the Orient, how hopelessly you would have wrung your henna-stained fingers! Poor little



DRAWN BY WILL GREFF
"I'VE BEEN FOR A DRIVE,
BILLY," SHE MENDACIOUSLY
INFORMED HIM

Ichabods of the East, whose glory departed irretrievably when she adopted this garment, I tremble to think of the heart-burnings and palpitations and hari-karis that would have ensued.

It was pink—the pink of her cheeks to a shade. And scattered about it were birds, and butterflies, and snaky, emaciated dragons, with backs like saw-teeth, and prodigious fangs and claws and very curly tails, such as they breed in Nankeen plates and used to breed on packages of firecrackers—all done in gold, the gold of her hair. Moreover, one might catch a glimpse of her neck—which was a manifest favor of the gods—and about it mysterious, lacy white things intermingling with divers tiny blue ribbons. I saw her in it once—by accident.

And now, I fancy, as she stood rigid with indignation, her cheeks flushed, it must have been a heady spectacle to note how their shell-pink repeated the pink of her fantastic garment like a chromatic echo; and how her sunny hair, a thought loosened, a shade disheveled, clung heavily about her face, a golden snare for eye and heart; and how her own eyes, enormous, cerulean—twin sapphires such as in the old days might have ransomed a brace of emperors—grew wistful like a child's who has been punished and does not know exactly why; and how her petulant mouth quivered and the long black lashes, golden at the roots, quivered, too; ah, yes, it must have been a heady spectacle.

"Now," she announced, "I see plainly what he intends doing. He is going to destroy that will, and burden me once more with a large and influential fortune. I don't want it, and I won't take it, and he might just as well understand that in the very beginning. I don't care if Uncle Fred did leave it to me—I didn't ask him to, did I? Besides, he was a very foolish old man—if he had left the money to Billy everything would have been all right. That's always the way—my dolls are invariably stuffed with sawdust, and I never have a dear gazelle to glad me with his dappled hide, but when he comes to know me well he falls upon the buttered side—or something to that effect. I hate poetry, anyhow—it's so mushy!"

And this from the Miss Hugonin who a week ago was interested in the French *décadents* and partial to folk-songs from the Romaic!

"Oh!" said Margaret with an indignant gasp, what time her eyebrows gesticulated, "I think Billy Woods is a meddling *piece*!—that's what I think! Does he suppose that after waiting all this time for the only man in the world who can keep me interested for four hours on a stretch, and send my pulse up to a hundred, and make me feel those thrilly thrills I've always longed for—does he suppose that now I'm going to pay any attention to his silly notions about wills and things? He's abominably selfish! I sha'n't!"

Margaret moved across the room, shimmering, rustling, glittering like a fairy in a pantomime. Then, to consider matters at greater ease, she curled up on a divan in much the attitude of a tiny Cleopatra riding at anchor on a carpeted Cydnus.

"Billy thinks I want the money—bless his boots! He thinks I'm a stuck-up, grasping, purse-proud little pig, and he has every right to think so after the way I talked to him, though he ought to have realized I was in a temper about Kathleen Saumarez and have paid no attention to what I said. And he actually attempted to reason with me! If he'd had any consideration for my feelings he'd have simply smacked me and made me behave—however, he's a man, and all men are selfish, and she's a skinny old thing, and I never had any use for her. Bother her lectures! I never understood a word of them, and I don't believe she does, either. Women's clubs are all silly, and I think the women who belong to them are all bold-faced jigs! If they had any sense they'd stay at home and take care of the babies, instead of messing with philanthropy, and education, and theosophy, and anything else that they can't make head or tail of. And they call that being cultured! Culture! I hate the word! I don't want to be cultured—I want to be happy."

This, you will observe, was, in effect, a sweeping recantation of every ideal Margaret had ever boasted. But Love is a canny pedagogue, and of late he had instructed Miss Hugonin in a variety of matters.

"Before God, loving you as I do, I wouldn't marry you for all the wealth in the world," she repeated with a little shiver. "Even in his delirium he said that. But I know now that he loves me, and I know that I adore him; and if this were a sensible world I'd walk right in there and explain things and ask him to marry me, and then it wouldn't matter in the least who had the money. But I can't, because it wouldn't be proper. Bother propriety! but bothering it doesn't do

any good. As long as I have the money Billy will never come near me, because of the idiotic way I talked to him. And he's bent on my taking the money simply because it happens to belong to me. I consider that a very silly reason. I'll make Billy Woods take the money, and I'll make him see that I'm not a little pig, and that I trust him implicitly. And I think I'm quite justified in using a little—we'll call it diplomacy—because otherwise he'd go back to France or some other objectionable place, and we'd both be very unhappy."

Margaret began to laugh softly. "I've given him my word that I'll do nothing further in the matter till he gets well. And I won't. But—"

Miss Hugonin rose from the divan with a gesture of sweeping back her hair. And then—oh, treachery of tortoise-shell! oh, the villainy of those little gold hairpins!—the fat, twisted coils tumbled loose and slowly unraveled themselves, and her pink and white face, half-eclipsed, showed a delectable wedge between big, odorful, crinkly, ponderous masses of hair. It clung about her, a heavy cloak, all shimmering gold like the path of sunset over the June sea. And Margaret, looking at herself in the mirror, laughed, and appeared perfectly content with what she saw there.

"But," said she, "if the Fates are kind to me—and I sometimes think I have a pull with the gods—I'll make you happy, Billy Woods, in spite of yourself."

The mirror flashed back a smile. Margaret was strangely interested in the mirror.



THEN THE EDGES CAUGHT AND CRACKLED AND BLAZED, AND THEIR HEADS DREW NEAR TOGETHER AS THEY WATCHED IT BURN

"She has ringlets in her hair," sang Margaret happily—a low, half-hushed little song. She held up a strand of it to demonstrate this fact.

"There's a dimple in her chin"—and, indeed, there was. And a dimple in either cheek, too.

For a long time afterward she continued to smile at the mirror. I am afraid Kathleen Saumarez was right. She was a vain little cat, was Margaret.

But, barring a rearrangement of the cosmic scheme, I dare say maids will continue to delight in their own comeliness so long as mirrors speak truth. Let us, then, leave Miss Hugonin to this innocent diversion. The staidest of us are conscious of a brisk elation at sight of a pretty face; and surely no considerate person will deny its owner a portion of

the pleasure that daily she accords the beggar at the street corner.

XXXIII

WE ARE credibly informed that Time travels in divers paces with divers persons—the statement being made by a lady who may be considered to speak with some authority, having triumphantly withstood the ravages of Chronos for a matter of three centuries. But I doubt if even the insolent sweet wit of Rosalind could have devised a fitting simile for Time's gait at Selwoode those five days that Billy lay abed. Margaret could not but marvel at the flourishing proportion attained by the hours in those sunlit spring days; and at dinner, say, her thoughts, harking back to luncheon, recalled it by a vigorous effort as an affair of the dim yester-years—a mere blurred memory, faint and vague as a Druidical tenet or a Merovingian squabble.

But the time passed for all that; and eventually—it was just before dusk—she came, with Martin Jeal's permission, into the room where Billy was. And beside the big, open fireplace, where a wood fire chattered companionably, sat a very pallid Billy, a rather thin Billy, with a great many bandages about his head.

You may depend upon it, Margaret was not looking her worst that afternoon. By actual count, Célestine had done her hair six times before reaching an acceptable result.

And, "Yes, Célestine, you may get out that pale yellow dress. No, beautiful, the one with the black satin stripes on the bodice—because I don't want my hair cast completely in

the shade, do I? Now, let me see—black feather, gloves, large pompadour and a sweet smile. No, I don't want a fan—that's a Lydia Languish trade-mark. And two silk skirts rustling like the dearest leaves imaginable. Yes, I think that will do. And if you can't hook up my dress without pecking and pecking at me like that I'll probably go stark, staring crazy, Célestine, and then you'll be sorry. No, it isn't a bit tight—are you perfectly certain there's no powder behind my ears, Célestine. Now, please try to fasten the collar without pulling all my hair down. Ye-es, I think that will do, Célestine. Well, it's very nice of you to say so, but I don't believe I much fancy myself in yellow, after all."

Equipped and armed for conquest, then, she came into the room with a very tolerable affectation of unconcern. Altogether, it was a quite effective entrance.

"I've been for a little drive, Billy," she mendaciously informed him. "That's how you happen to have the opportunity of seeing me in all my nice new store-clothes. Aren't you pleased, Billy? No, don't you dare get up!" Margaret stood across the room, peeling off her gloves and regarding him, on the whole, with disapproval. "They've been starving you," she pensively reflected. "As soon as that Jeal person goes away I shall have six little beefsteaks cooked and see to it personally that you eat every one of them. And I'll cook a cherry pie—quick as a cat can wink her eye—won't I, Billy? That Jeal person is a decided nuisance," said Miss Hugonin, as she stabbed her hat rather viciously with two hatpins and then laid it aside on a table.

Billy Woods was looking up at her forlornly. It hurt her to see the love and sorrow in his face. But oh, how avidly his soul drank in the modulations of that longed-for voice—a voice that was honey and gold and velvet and all that is most sweet and rich and soft in the world.

"Peggy," said he, plunging at the heart of things, "where's that will?"

Miss Hugonin kicked forward a little footstool to the other side of the fire, and sat down and complacently smoothed out her skirts.

"I knew it!" said she. "I never saw such a one-idea'd person in my life. I knew that would be the very first thing you would ask for, Billy Woods, because you're such an obstinate, stiff-necked donkey. Very well!" and Margaret tossed her head; "here's Uncle

Fred's will, then, and you can do exactly as you like with it, and now, I hope you're satisfied!" And Margaret handed him the long envelope which lay in her lap.

Mr. Woods promptly opened it.

"That," Miss Hugonin commented, "is what I term very unladylike behavior on your part. You evidently don't trust me, Billy Woods. Very well! I don't care! Read it carefully—very carefully, and make quite sure I haven't been dabbling in forgery of late—besides, it's so good for your eyes, you know, after being hit over the head," Margaret suggested cheerfully.

Billy chuckled. "That's true," said he, "but I know Uncle Fred's fist well enough without having to read it all.

(Continued on Page 23)

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THE EAGLE'S SHADOW

(Continued from Page 11)

Candidly, Peggy, I had to look at it, because I—well, I didn't quite trust you, Peggy. And now we're going to burn this interesting paper, you and I."

"Wait!" Margaret cried. "Ah, wait just a moment, Billy!"

He glanced up at her in surprise, the paper still poised in his hand.

She sat with head drooped forward, her masculine little chin thrust out eagerly, her candid eyes transparently appraising him.

"Why are you going to burn it, Billy?"

"Why?" Mr. Woods repeated thoughtfully.

"Well, for a variety of reasons. First is, that Uncle Fred really did leave his money to you, and burning this is the only way of making sure you get it. Why, I thought you wanted me to burn it! Last time I saw you—"

"I was in a temper," said Margaret haughtily. "You ought to have seen that."

"Yes, I—er—noticed it," Mr. Woods admitted with some dryness; "but it wasn't only temper. You've grown accustomed to the money. You'd miss it now—miss the pleasure it gives you, miss the power it gives you. You'd never be content to go back to the old life now. Why, Peggy, you yourself told me you thought money the greatest thing in the world! It has changed you, Peggy, this—ah, well!" said Billy, "we won't talk about that. I'm going to burn it because that's the only honorable thing to do."

"It may be honorable, but it's extremely silly," Margaret temporized, "and, for my part, I'm very, very glad God had run out of a sense of honor when He created the woman."

"Phrases don't alter matters. Ready, Peggy?"

"Ah, no, phrases don't alter matters!" she assented, with a quick lift of speech.

"You're going to destroy that will, Billy Woods, simply because you think I'm a horrid, mercenary, selfish pig. Well, you have every right to think so, after the way I've behaved. But why not tell me that is the real reason?"

Billy raised his hand in protest. "I—I think you might miss it," he conceded.

"Yes, I think you would miss it."

"Listen!" said Margaret quickly. "The money is yours now—by my act. You say you—care for me. If I am the sort of woman you think me—I don't say I am, and I don't say I'm not—but, thinking me that sort of woman, don't you think I'd—I'd marry you for the asking if you kept the money? Don't you think you're losing every chance of me by burning that will? Oh, I'm not standing on conventionalities now! Don't you think that, Billy?"

She was tempting him to the uttermost; and her heart was sick with fear lest he might yield. This was the Eagle's last battle; and recreant Love fought with the Eagle against poor Billy, who had only his honor to help him.

"Yes," said Billy gravely—"forgive me if I'm wrong, dear, but—I do think that. But, you see, you don't care for me, Peggy. So I'm going to burn the paper, dear."

Margaret bowed her head. Had she ever known happiness before? "It is not very flattering to me," she said, "but it shows that you—care—a great deal. You care enough to—let me go. Ah—yes. You may burn it now, Billy."

And promptly he tossed it into the flames. For a moment it lay unharmed; then the edges caught and crackled and blazed, and their heads drew near together as they watched it burn.

There (thought Billy) is the end! Ah, ropes, daggers and poisons! there is the end! Oh, Peggy, Peggy, if you could only have loved me! if only this accursed money hadn't spoiled you so utterly! Billy was quite properly miserable over it.

But he raised his head with a smile. "And now," said he—and not without a little, little bitterness; "if I have any right to advise you, Peggy, I—I think I'd be more careful in the future as to how I used the money. You've tried to do good with it, I know. But every good cause has its parasites. Don't trust entirely to the Haggages and Jukesburys, Peggy, and—don't desert the good ship Philanthropy because there are a few barnacles on it, dear."

"You—make me awfully tired," Miss Hugonin observed, as she rose to her feet. "How do you suppose I'm going to do anything for Philanthropy or any other cause

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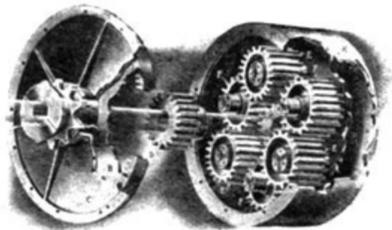
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when I haven't a penny in the world? You see, you've just burned the last will Uncle Fred ever made—the one that left everything to me. The one in your favor was probated, or proved, or whatever they call it, a week ago."

I think Billy was surprised.

"Listen! I told you I burned the other will. I started to burn it. But I was afraid to, because I didn't know what they could do to me if I did. So I put it away in my little handkerchief-box—and if you'd had a grain of sense you'd have noticed the orris on it. And you made me promise not to take any steps in the matter till you got well. I knew you would. So I had already sent that second will—sent it before I promised you—to Hunston Wyke—he's my lawyer now, you know—and I've heard from him, and he has probated it."

Billy was making various irrelevant sounds.

"And I brought that other will to you, and if you didn't choose to examine it more carefully I'm sure it wasn't my fault. I kept my word like a perfect gentleman and took no step *whatever* in the matter."

Margaret faced him defiantly. Billy was in a state of considerable perturbation.

"Why have you done this?" he asked slowly. But a lucent something—half fear, half gladness—was wakening in Billy's eyes.

And her eyes answered him. But her tongue was far less veracious.

"Because you thought I was a pig! Because you couldn't make allowances for a girl who for four years has seen nothing but money and money worshipers and the power of money! Because I wanted you—your respect, Billy. And you thought I couldn't give it up! Now I hope you know better. *Don't you dare get up, Billy Woods!*"

"Peggy," babbled Billy; "ah, forgive me if I'm a presumptuous ass—but was it because you knew I couldn't ask you to marry me so long as you had the money?"

She dallied with her bliss. Margaret was on the other side of the table.

"Why—why, of course, it wasn't!" she panted. "What nonsense!"

"Look at me, Peggy!"

"I don't want to! You look like a fright with your head all tied up."

"Peggy . . . this exercise is bad for an invalid."

"I—oh, please, sit down! Please, Billy! It is bad for you."

"Not until you tell me —"

"But I don't! . . . Oh, you make me awfully tired."

"Peggy, don't you dare stamp your foot at me! . . . Peggy!"

"Please sit down! Now . . . well, there's my hand, stupid, if you will be silly. Now, sit down here—so, with your head leaned back on this nice little cushion because it's good for your poor head—and I'll sit on this nice little footstool and be quite, quite honest. No, you must lean back—I don't care if you can't see me—I'd much rather you couldn't. Well, the truth is—no, you *must* lean back—the truth is—I've loved you all my life, Billy Woods, and—no, not yet, Billy—and if you hadn't been the stupidest beautiful in the universe you'd have seen it long ago. You—you needn't—lean back—any longer, Billy. . . . Oh, Billy, why didn't you shave?"

"She is skinny, isn't she, Billy?"

"Now, Peggy, you mustn't abuse Kathleen. She's a friend of mine."

"But that doesn't prevent her being skinny, does it?"

"Now, Peggy —"

"Please, Billy! Please say she's skinny!"

"Er—well, she's a bit thin, perhaps."

"You angel."

"And you're quite sure you've forgiven me for doubting you?"

"And you've forgiven me?"

"Bless you, Peggy, I never doubted you! I've been too busy loving you."

"It seems to me as if it had been—*always*."

"Why, didn't we love one another in Carthage, Peggy?"

"I think it was in Babylon, Billy."

"And will love one another —?"

"Forever and ever, dear. You've been to seek a wife, Billy boy."

"And oh, the dimple in her chin . . ."

Ah, well! There was a deal of foolish prattle there in the firelight—delectable prattle irresponsible as the chattering of birds after a storm. And I fancy that the Eagle's shadow is lifted from Selwoode now that Love has taken up his abode there.

(THE END)



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