

GRAND SERIAL STORY.

JUDGMENT.

The Most Amazing Story Ever Penned.

FOR NEW READERS.

SIR JOHN MILLBANK, a successful, but stern judge, quarrels with his only son,

JACK, who leaves his father's house to fight his own way in the world; and whilst serving with the Australian contingent, under the name of Dick Foster, he meets, and falls in love with

KITTY, the adopted daughter of Sir John. However, Sir John has arranged for her marriage with

LORD HAVERHAM. In a moment of despair, Kitty writes to Dick, asking him to meet her in the Blue Room at Rivercourt Mansions. At the appointed hour, Lord Haverham goes to the Blue Room to write some letters, and, unbeknown to the guests, Sir John meets him there. An altercation arises between the two men, resulting in the accidental death of Lord Haverham. Later, Dick arrives in the Blue Room, is caught and accused of murder, and found guilty. Whilst passing the sentence of death, Sir John recognises the prisoner as his own son Jack! A few days later, Sir John interviews the prisoner at his private residence under escort of the warders, and tells him he will have to serve at least three years' imprisonment. Just as they are leaving, Dick with the assistance of Kitty makes his escape, and that night they decide to drive into Wimmerleigh; but the car breaks down, and they are forced to accept the hospitality of

BEAUMONT CHASE, a millionaire. The following morning, Dick's host informs him that Sir John had called during the night and taken his daughter away. Dick, believing this story, leaves that morning for Wimmerleigh. Kitty goes down to breakfast, and is cross-examined by Mr Chase, but on his promise of assistance tells him the whole story. At a fabulous price Mr Chase engages the services of

MR. PELHAM WEBB, a clever but unscrupulous detective, to find Dick Foster, and extracts a promise from Kitty not to attempt to see or write to her lover until a year has elapsed. Dick arrives at the residence of

CLARA CLARKE, a clever actress and a friend of Kitty's. With the aid of grease-paints she transforms Dick to a life-like representation of her father. Just at this moment the police arrive to search the house.

THE ACTRESS.

Clara Clarke had not obtained her reputation as a great actress without deserving it.

Her talent was of the natural and convincing quality, which is so rare even among those who have achieved fame on the modern stage.

In the present emergency her powers did not fail her.

As the stolid police official made his announcement she stared at him in open-eyed wonder.

"An escaped convict? Here? In my house?"

Her tone and manner conveyed just the right amount of alarm and incredulity.

"Yes, madam," said the official coldly and a little suspiciously.

The actress gathered her skirts about

her with the instinctive gesture of one who is afraid of contamination, and, with her expressive eyes still fixed on the officer, glided to Dick Foster's side.

"Oh, please find him and take him away!" she exclaimed agitatedly. "But don't leave us alone—my father is old. He cannot protect me. Let one of your men remain here while you search the house."

Inspector Biggs was a painstaking and experienced officer, but a far shrewder man than he was would have been deceived by the accomplished actress.

All his suspicions were immediately allayed, and he even felt a little guilty at having so rudely disturbed this charming woman in the serenity of her own home.

When he spoke his manner was quite apologetic.

"It is all right, ma'am. There is no need to be alarmed. It is true the man was convicted of murder, but he is not a desperate ruffian. We do not anticipate violence of any kind. You and your father will be quite safe if you remain here. Have you heard no unusual noises in the house?"

Miss Clarke's face assumed an earnestly thoughtful expression.

"No," she said, after a pause—"no; I think not. Oh, do you think he has been here long? The servants?" A startled look came into her eyes. "Is it possible? Can they be in league with him? Can they be hiding him?"

She pressed her hand to her bosom as though to stay the beating of her heart.

"I cannot believe it! It is too dreadful! And I have been so kind to them—so generous! Oh, it is infamous!"

There was so much tense dramatic feeling put into the last words that Inspector Biggs was deeply moved.

"Pray do not be alarmed," he said anxiously. "According to my information the man has been hiding in this house for some time; but there is no danger. I won't deny that I had a suspicion that you were protecting him." He smiled apologetically.

"You will forgive me for that, madam. Our profession makes us suspicious. You give us permission to search the house?"

"Oh, of course—of course! Go everywhere! Don't for Heaven's sake, miss him! I should die of fright if you went away and left him in the house."

The officer smiled complacently.

"You need have no fear of that, madam. Will you, please, remain here until we have completed our search? Then, if you will permit me, I will see you again."

And his two men withdrew, closing the door after them.

Dick Foster gave a gasp of relief and opened his lips to speak, but the actress raised her finger warningly motioning him to silence.

"Oh daddy," she exclaimed, in an agitated voice, "what a dreadful thing to have happened! We might all have been murdered in our beds! A convict! A murderer! If they don't find him I won't sleep in the house to-night—I simply won't!"

Her voice was shrill and high-pitched, and with a note of fear in it that seemed so genuine that even Dick Foster could scarcely believe she was acting.

He watched her in blank amazement as she strode agitatedly up and down the room, wringing her hands with the air of a tragedy queen.

Suddenly she glided to the door, opened it an inch, and listened.

Then she turned and faced Dick, and her eyes were laughing.

"You'll never make an actor, Mr

Foster," she declared; "I was in mortal fear you'd give the show away. Do try to look a little frightened."

"A little frightened!" gasped Dick. "Good heavens, I'm sweating with fear!"

"You don't look it. It is no good feeling the part if you don't get it across the footlights. Just fancy the feelings of an old gentleman who is suddenly informed that an escaped murderer is concealed in the house. Get that into your mind and behave accordingly. Don't overdo it. A judicious blend of indignation and alarm is what is wanted."

"I don't like the look of that fellow. He means business. He won't leave the house until he has got me," said Dick moodily.

"Bah! He's a fool! Leave him to me, and keep your courage up," said the actress cheerfully. "Sit down in that chair, and here—this is my poor pa's snuff-box. Take it and play with it. It will give you something to do when the crisis comes. You need not say anything; but can't you snuffle and wheeze like an old man?"

Dick did his best, and the actress went off into fits of suppressed laughter.

"Not a bit like it. You keep quiet. 'Sh! Someone is coming! It's all right, daddy dear," she added raising her voice. "Don't excite yourself. You know your heart won't stand it, and there's nothing to be afraid of. If there's any danger these brave men will defend us. Keep calm."

The door opened and Inspector Biggs reappeared.

He was alone, and his face wore an expression of ill-concealed annoyance.

"The fellow has slipped through our hands," he said shortly.

Clara Clarke clasped her hands in an agony of doubt and suspense.

"Oh, are you sure you have not overlooked him? Have you searched the roof? There is a space between the ceiling and the rafters!"

"We have searched everywhere," declared the man, irritably. "I have also severely questioned the servants. They appear to be honest, but the fact remains that the fugitive could only conceal himself here with the connivance of someone living in the house."

"How dreadful!" exclaimed the actress, pressing her hand to her bosom.

"Quite so," replied the inspector drily. "Don't imagine for a moment that I suspect either you or your father, madam, but—"

"Suspect us!"

The woman's eyes were wide open, and her whole demeanour was one utterly taken by surprise.

"I say I do not suspect you," returned the man eagerly. "At the same time, it is my duty to leave no stone unturned. Therefore, I am compelled to ask both of you certain questions, and I must beg that you will answer me frankly. Moreover, I must see each of you alone. I propose first to examine Mr Clarke, your father. If you will, therefore, leave us alone together I shall be obliged."

The actress was genuinely alarmed, not only by the suggestion, but also by the note of dogged tenacity in the man's voice.

Hitherto the inspector had scarcely looked at Dick, but if he came to hold a lengthy conversation with him, face to face, he would almost certainly penetrate the disguise, clever as it was.

She made one last desperate effort to avert such a calamity.

"I am sorry, but my father is old and infirm. He is not equal to the ordeal. He knows nothing. How could he? I shall be pleased to answer any questions."

Her manner was quietly emphatic, and intended to put an end to the discussion; but Inspector Biggs was obstinate by nature and not easily turned from his purpose.

"I must see the gentleman and question him alone," he said bluntly.

The actress glanced desperately at Dick. He was twiddling his snuff-box. In his clear, youthful eyes, gazing out of his make-up, there was no glint of fear—only a dull resignation.

"Go, Clara," he said, in a low but steady voice. "I will see the gentleman alone."

In despair the actress moved towards the door, realising that all her efforts had been in vain and that discovery was imminent.

Before she reached the door, however, it opened, and a maid appeared.

(Continued on page 6.)

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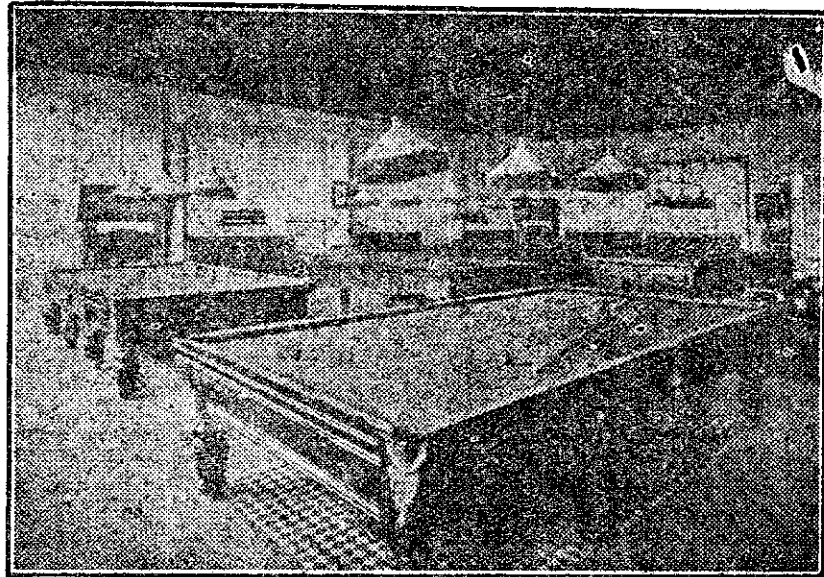
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BILLIARD NOTES.

McConacy, the expert billiard player, will give an exhibition tournament in the Civic Billiard Saloon, on Wednesday, April 7th.

LONG IN-OFF THE WHITE AFTER THE BALLS ARE TOUCHING.

With the very best of players, as well as with the average player, the cue-ball will not infrequently remain in contact with an object ball after playing a cannon. When this happens with a professional player, it is, as a rule, during a run of close nursery cannons; but a touching of the balls may occur to any player from the most unlikely positions. The touching of the cue ball with another ball has two entirely different aspects, viz., when it causes good position to be compulsorily abandoned, and when it rescues a player from a practically impossible scoring position. When the cue ball remains in contact with another ball, the red, of course, goes on the billiard spot and the white on the centre spot.

When the balls are so placed, the stroke that is almost invariably played nowadays is an in-off from the white into one of the top pockets. Whichever pocket is selected, the stroke is absolutely the same, both as to itself and the after position. Most players, however, perhaps from habit, always play for the same pocket—some for the left, others for the right. The stroke should be played as a half-ball one, without the use of side, and to make the correct angle the cue ball should be spotted about 3 1/2 in from the end of the D when playing with ivory balls. With the old Bonzoline balls, the cue ball had to be spotted nearly 2 in nearer the end of the D, but with the latest make of these balls it is only necessary to spot about half an inch nearer, and with Crystalate balls the angle for this stroke is practically the same as with ivory balls.

Speaking generally, the best way of playing the in-off is by means of a nice free stroke of sufficient pace to cause the

object white to strike the side cushion, top cushion, and side cushion, and finally to come to rest in good position for an in-off into the centre pocket. Unfortunately, the strength of different tables varies so very greatly that a stroke which leaves perfect position on a fast table might, if played in the same way, and with the same strength, on a slower table, leave very bad position. In this case the object ball has simply not travelled far enough. Of course, it would be quite possible to score from this position, but no shot would be anything like a certainty for any player.

In the shot under discussion, the object ball has to strike three cushions, and, naturally, each contact takes a lot of pace out of the ball. On a very slow table the white requires a lot of driving to bring it right round into position, and, in attempting to do this, one might easily put too much strength into the stroke, and thus miss the pocket by making the shot approach a forcing stroke. In any case, when playing the stroke at a pretty fast pace, though not at forcing pace, the cue ball should always be placed half an inch or so nearer the end of the D to allow for the somewhat stronger than normal impact between the balls.

When the object ball is struck a true half-ball, it will strike the side cushion at a point about twenty-seven inches from the top pocket, travel round the table, but, without the in-off being missed, a so-to-speak somewhat thin half ball in-off will sometimes cause the object ball to kiss the red as it rebounds from the top cushion, or even to go behind the red; but if the stroke be at all well played the object white should always pass in front of the red.

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