

## MR. AND MRS. SMITH—Continued

haunted him! Like Polly's eyes, they were. And the memory of his little dead sister's eyes reminded him—reminded him—yes, reminded him, of that voice he had heard, and not heard, at the top of the hotel steps. Polly'd been like that—falling silent and shrinking, instantly, when he turned on her and butted her, but never taking her eyes from his face, watching and pleading mutely until generally he flung away from her in a rage, or sometimes even struck her, but sometimes—oh, yes, sometimes, as on that last occasion before he had cleared out after a final savage conflict with his father—had given way to her, had even let him kiss her, and blubbered a little. . . .

But why should brown eyes haunt him now, when Polly had been dead fifteen—seventeen years—and he had let her kiss him before he'd gone, and the Maori kid was by now probably making itself sick again with that lump of sticky toffee it had had in its hand?

And when—and now at last, Mr. Smith had to let the thought in—Alice, his wife's eyes were not brown, but blue? Very blue, and grave, and unafraid. . .

Mr. Smith swore softly and suddenly again to himself, and went back once more to the pavement edge, and cogitated darkly, and suddenly threw back his shoulders and dug his hands deeper in his pockets. Darn it all—only he didn't say "darn" exactly—what was the matter with him? Was he turning into a "mug," that he couldn't face his own mind when it was made up. He was going home, wasn't he? Hadn't he come into town for that express, if unexpressed even to himself, purpose? Most fellows did go

home, didn't they, when their job's ended, especially at Christmas? Well, and if he hadn't sent her any money during his absence, wouldn't the cheque he'd got safely in his pocket make that up, and more than make it up?

Mr. Smith was assailed by a sudden secret doubt on this subject, and growling and hulking, to pacify it, set himself to the task of finding a present to take home to his wife. It was a difficult matter. He did not know what size hat *she* took, or if she liked scent, or whether she already had an umbrella. But Mr. Smith was determined, and at last, after half-an-hour of elbowing and gazing, he emerged doggedly from a shop doorway with the present—a gorgeous necklet of big blue beads—in his pocket. This was all right, this ought to do her all right. And now to get home.

He'd walk, he decided, and it would save waiting for a car and give him a chance to stretch his legs. But no sooner had he emerged from the town into the quieter streets as if from a confused dream into realities, than he regretted his decision and looked ahead anxiously for the nearest car stop.

It would mean a goodish time to wait, if he walked, to see if she was still there. And Mr. Smith was quite suddenly by no means sure that she would be still there. Although—and he hunched himself and made himself walk past the stop after all—there was no reason why she should not be still there. She had a good dress-making connection, and had had a fair amount in hand when he had—er—left. Mr. Smith recollected that it was because of this amount and her firm refusal to

give it to him or tell him where it was that he had knocked her down and then escaped, believing, for a bad few hours until he had sobered up, that he had killed her.

But still, it was a goodish way to walk—when it was Christmas Eve, and the early summer dark all about him was full of calling voices, and the pavement echoed everywhere to the hurrying of feet. Kids' excited voices, mostly kids' eager feet.

THAT was it, Mr. Smith reflected sourly, kids were the trouble, or rather, no kids. . . . If there had been a kid, perhaps things might have been different. Alice's school-ma'am speech and ways and manners—she had been a school teacher—would have come in handy for it then, instead of irritating him, as they'd sometimes done, to the point of brutality. . . . Three of them might have got on better than the two of them had done. For instance, he could have taken it to the football match on Saturday afternoons, and she could have had tea ready for them when they got home, and then the two of them could have taken it out, to the pictures, or up town. And to-night, say. . . .

But here he was at last—already—at the top of the street. Mr. Smith had actually to force himself to turn his eyes in the direction of the house, and then he felt just a little sick, for there was a light in the window. There always had been a light in Alice's window—a window that he had wanted, savagely, sometimes, to smash; a lamp that he had felt goaded, sometimes, to cruelly put out and triumphantly overturn. Only, no matter how much he had raged and struck, Mr.



## S. P. ANDREW

### Photographer

FOR FINE PRINTS  
ENLARGEMENTS  
AND  
:: MINIATURES ::

STUDIOS:  
AUCKLAND (BARTLETT  
STUDIOS)  
and  
WELLINGTON 10 WILLIS  
STREET



We desire to bring before your notice that we have opened a Showroom in Fletcher's Buildings, Willis Street, Wellington, and are exhibiting a splendid range of "GAINSBOROUGH" Ladies' Wear, which, although well known in other parts of New Zealand, is now introduced to the ladies of Wellington for the first time.

## For Economy

Should you honour us with a visit of inspection we will be more than pleased to display for your benefit our extensive stock of Ladies' Wear, which, we are sure, will be a revelation and a delight to you.

BEING actual manufacturers dealing direct with the public, we are able, by cutting out retailers' profits, to sell at prices considerably below those usually charged for these classes of articles, without, in any way, sacrificing quality for cheapness.

## GAINSBOROUGH

FLETCHER'S BUILDINGS (1st Floor)  
WILLIS ST., WELLINGTON Phone 1190

Become a Subscriber.  
Fill up a Form  
TO-DAY.

When Writing to Advertisers, Please Mention the "Mirror."

Please pass this  
copy on to your  
friends.