

his mind. Some chap might do a good play, he thought, about dual personality. There were angles of that subject that the theatre hadn't touched. It wasn't for him; he was through with writing plays. Not for \$50,000 in advance royalties would he go through such an experience again. Still, the idea was interesting.

Before the train had passed Englewood he called the porter and asked for one of those small tables they give you on Pullman's. He got paper and pencil from his bag. The last call for luncheon found him completely absorbed in the scenario of his first act. He wondered if, perhaps, he oughtn't to wire Frobert from Cleveland and let him know what he was doing.

BUT at Cleveland he was much too busy to think of sending a telegram. Never had an idea intrigued him so much. Characters came to life and compelled him to recast his first act. A girl more fascinating than any he had ever known danced into the action, to his bewildered delight—he hadn't thought of her at all. He stopped and did think about her—made little sketches of her at the side of his paper. He frowned as he tried to think of an actress who could play her. Then he wrote some more.

He got up abruptly, forgetting he was on a train. The table tripped him, and he scrambled into the aisle without any dignity at all, convinced that his shins would never be the same again.

"Look here," he said to a girl in the action opposite him. "Suppose you were in love with a man, and had quarreled with him, and wanted to make up, but wanted him to make the first move, how would you make him do it?"

She looked up, not smiling exactly, and yet distinctly amused. It struck Stockton as extremely curious that the description he had set down on paper of the girl in his play should so exactly fit this young woman whom he had never seen before, and whom he hadn't noticed at all on the way from Chicago.

"Well," she said, "I might do it one way, and I might do it another. It's absurdly simple, of course."

"Oh!" said Stockton rather blankly. "I thought it would be hard."

Now she laughed. She laughed quite pleasantly, because she had very pretty, very even, very white teeth, and her lips were redder than lips usually are. Also her laugh broke her face into bewitching creases, and made her nose wrinkle in a manner odd and interesting.

"Not at all!" she assured him with decision. "Of course, if you'd turned your question around—if you wanted to make a man do it—then it wouldn't be hard; it would be impossible! But a girl! Oh, dear—there are so many ways! She might be ill—interestingly ill, you know. Or she might arrange some situation so that he would be frightfully in the wrong. Tell me—how serious a quarrel are they having? Are they still speaking to one another? You'd better tell me just how things are—then I may be able to suggest something."

That seemed sensible. And when, after a time, they were informed that if they wanted any dinner at all they'd have to go back to the dining-car, it was the most natural thing in the world for them to go together, and keep on talking while they dined. Stockton found this girl charming. There was no nonsense about her. She understood his problem perfectly; she took an intelligent interest in it. He didn't have to explain technical terms. He was surprised and pleased, because most of the women he knew when he found himself talking to them about plays, made him frightfully uncomfortable. They looked soulful, and said it must be so interesting to write plays, and asked him how he got his ideas? Did he wait for inspiration?

This young woman didn't act in that silly fashion at all. Moreover, she was, he discovered, extremely attractive.

"Here's a funny thing!" he told her. "Most curious coincidence! I was sitting there, writing—just scribbling down rough notes. But I had a per-

fectly definite idea about the character of Helen. I described her. And the description fits you perfectly! Listen!"

He found the page and read: "Helen—about twenty-three. Modern young woman—extremely smart and up-to-date. Slender—not too tall. Brown hair—almost red, but not quite. Beautiful complexion, but doesn't look as if it came down from a shop—a little bit tanned. Small hands and feet—slender ankles. Nose turns up a little bit. Eyes quite large—sort of dark gray color with long lashes—they laugh a good deal. Dimple in left cheek. Very pretty rather than beautiful!"

He stopped, because the young woman was, it seemed, on the verge of hysterics. He frowned. Nothing he had said struck him as funny.

"Well," he said rather sulkily, "that description does fit you. And it's queer, because I never saw you before I wrote it. I suppose you were sitting across the aisle, but I was so busy I didn't notice you."

"It's—it's just a coincidence, as you say," she gasped. She rose. "I suppose you're not going to smoke?"

He considered the suggestion thoughtfully.

"Why, yes," he said, "I'd better have a cigarette, I think. I'll be able to work better afterward. I hadn't thought of it."

He went off gratefully to the club

at the idea of seeing it to-morrow morning that I don't suppose I'll sleep a wink to-night. I've come all the way from California since Monday morning."

He felt rhapsodic about New York. He didn't exactly remember why, but he did know that he had climbed on this train with Te Deums bursting for utterance.

"Wonderful town!" he said sentimentally. "A great city is the only place where you can get peace and quiet. It's big enough to hide in. If people won't let you alone, you can get away from them anyway." He frowned, with the air of a man trying to remember something. "People always trying to get you to promise to go to things—dances, teas, things like that," he said confidently. "Easier to promise than to say no—and then you forget and go to a club and tell them to say you're out if any one telephones. There's something like that some time soon—I think I told a man in Chicago I had to be back to go to it. Shan't go, though—silly thing—costume dance or something. But I didn't want to travel with the man in Chicago. Complicated thing, life, isn't it?"

She laughed rather helplessly—and disappeared behind the curtains of her berth. He went to bed himself soon after that, because the porter said he wanted to make up his berth, and

remarkably obtuse in the matter of recognizing cues.

"Oh!" she said then, "do I—do I look all right?"

He examined her with some care. "I think so," he said judicially. "Why, yes—I think you look very well indeed."

She bit her lip. "Thanks," she said. "I'm afraid I've interrupted you!"

It was quite true. He had bent for his little table again, and was working. He glanced hungrily at the scattered sheets of paper.

"It's quite all right," he assured her. "I'm just getting some ideas down before I forget them." He glanced from the window. "Oh—Yonkers! We'll be in the station in about half an hour."

And he began writing again. The young woman looked at him in powerless irritation. Her eyes seemed to ask what you could do with a man like that? She liked him immensely: he represented something quite new in her experience with his sex. He wasn't bad looking, at all, although you wouldn't have called him handsome. He was reasonably tall, and loosely put together; he had something of the engagingly awkward quality of a setter pup. His forehead was high, and although he had probably brushed his hair earlier in the morning, it was disordered now, because he was always running his hand through it while he worked or talked. She liked his soft collar and his rough woolly suit; she liked a certain absence of precision that, she thought, was wholly characteristic of him. And she certainly wondered who he was, and whether she would see him in New York. Her eyes snapped as she decided that if she did, she would have chance to thank. Plainly, he didn't mean to do anything to that end.

Stockton, of course, simply hadn't had thoughts like that about her at all—consciously, at least. Had he had them, he would have become bashful at once. Had he thought of her as an attractive young woman, pleasing to the eye, delectable, as the girl in his play was delectable, he would have fled to the club car long since. He had pronounced views about men who scraped acquaintance with women on trains. He didn't like that sort of thing. If any one had suggested to him that in this case he had done something of the sort, he would have repelled the suggestion indignantly.

This was entirely different. His dealings with her amounted to no more than asking a man for a match for a cigarette, or an inquiry about the time. And yet, in the tunnel, after the porter had come and taken his table away, and made him stand up to be brushed off, vague stirrings of his conscience made him turn to her.

"Your friends—are to meet you, I suppose?" he said. "I mean—you know about cabs and things?"

"I think so," she said in a choked voice. "Oh, yes—they're sure to meet me."

"Of course," he said. He looked at her, vaguely dissatisfied. He knew he wanted to say something or ought to say something more, felt that there was something he wanted to ask her. But while it was still on the tip of his tongue, the train rolled up along the platform and stopped, and there was the confusion of getting off. He stood around, first on one foot and then on the other, while a porter gathered her bags, and then he suffered agonies of embarrassment because the man thought they were together, and tried to take his things too.

"Well"—he said much confused. He lifted his hat and ran away, as if something tremendously important had to be done at once. He didn't see the way she doubled up to laugh, of course. And he was still so upset, when he reached the gate, that he didn't see Mrs. Ransom and her two daughters until he was fairly on top of them, when it was much too late for him to chide them. He gasped indignantly. How had they known he was coming on this train? And what the devil did they mean by coming to meet him? That was going too far—altogether too far.

"Oh—oh!" the blonde daughter



HE HAD HIDEOUS MEMORIES OF THE LAST TWO WEEKS; FANTASIES OF REHEARSALS AT GROTESQUE HOURS.

car, and sat there while he finished a half-dozen cigarettes, wrapped in smoke and his own thoughts. The new play was shaping well—very well, indeed. The young woman across the aisle had been really helpful; her suggestions had been to the point. Thanks to her, he had worked out a most amusing situation in the second act; he thought he would be able to begin dictating his first act before the end of the week.

She smiled at him when he went back to his section and began work again; he nodded, remembering her dimly but gratefully. And a little later, when the porter was making up her berth, she came and sat opposite him in his section.

"I suppose you live in New York?" she said. He nodded. "I haven't been there since I was six! I'm so thrilled

Stockton hadn't mastered the art of defying people like porters.

HIS neighbor nodded to him cheerfully at breakfast in the morning. He thought she looked awfully well. She had put on a little fur hat that was tremendously becoming, and she wore a blue serge suit that was delightfully severe and very amusing in its contrast to her own piquant femininity. Soft brown furs lay on the seat opposite hers. She leaned across the aisle and spoke to him.

"I'm frightfully excited," she said. "I love coming to New York! I'm visiting an aunt and two cousins I haven't seen since I was six, you know, and they'll probably think I'm an awful bore."

For a man who dealt in plays he was