

SATURDAY EVENING, JANUARY 31, 1903.

## THE MINNEAPOLIS JOURNALS' CALENDAR

### FOR FEBRUARY

# 1903

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Now comes the month of lovers true,  
The gentle February.  
In four brief weeks shall bid adieu—  
There's naught can make her tarry.  
By ruthless Caesars act bereft,  
She's now of months the fleetest—  
Yet Valentines' glad day is left,  
Of all the year the sweetest!



## A Secret of the Sea

A MYSTERY STORY.

By MRS. C. N. WILLIAMSON.

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### CHAPTER XV.—Continued.

The man had left the room as they found it. The wardrobe door stood wide open, and two or three dresses of delicate tint and material had been flung out on the floor. The dim light of dawn struck out a gleam here and there on a sequin, or bit of damask embroidery. The inconspicuous effect of these disorders and faintnesses strewn over the scene of a tragedy appealed to Dick oddly. It seemed like an insult to vanished loveliness that should be allowed to lie there, perhaps to be trampled under foot by him—and the evil thing whose presence his nerves felt. He stooped and picked them up awkwardly. As he did so, something dropped from among the soft folds of lace and chiffon and satin, and fell back on the floor again. It was a little machine for electrical massage, such as Dick had sometimes seen in newspaper advertisements. He had laid the poor, pretty gowns on the bed, and took the thing up thoughtfully. "This could have given me that shock I got last night," he said to himself, "supposing it had been properly prepared, and some one had it hidden in the wardrobe. If there were a shelf that I hadn't noticed, perhaps—"

He left his sentence unfinished, and went to the wardrobe. The removal of the three or four dresses had left a clear space. There was no shelf but, peering into the dusk, he saw that the top piece, or roof of the wardrobe, into which many large brass hooks for holding a woman's clothing were screwed, did not extend from the front all the way to the back wall, as he had naturally supposed. When the roomy receptacle was full of fluffy dresses, all suspended from the top of the shelf, which was fully fifteen inches in width, it would be possible for a small man to conceal himself. But to pull

up his hand and arm, feeling along the shelf. Instantly he was caught round the wrist with a grasp like iron. A hot, panting breath was on his hand as two rows of teeth seized upon it and bit it to the bone.

### CHAPTER XVI.

"The Knight Counts for Something."

Eve Markham had wished beyond all things for the opening of the door behind the curtain in that room which, for a long afternoon, had been for her a prison. But when she heard the turning of the key in the lock her first feeling was more of terror than relief.

"The door creaked a little as it opened. Then came the sliding of the portiere on its rings along the fluted brass bar. The little dark woman who had admitted Eve to the house came in, carrying a tray, and behind her followed a tall young man, who looked at the girl with an insolent interest which brought the blood to her cheeks, as if she had had a blow in the face.

"I must beg your pardon for intruding," he said in English, "but I have a message from your mother. She wishes to see you. She cannot place, though she knew that it was not French. 'This servant, whom I have ordered to bring you some refreshment, is not a linguist. My one wish, in my mother's absence, is to save you discomfort. You must consider yourself my guest, as well as hers, until her return. I am, therefore, at your service.'"

The words were courteous, the eyes gave them impudent contradiction, and Eve retired a step or two, moving towards the woman, as the man approached her, bowing with exaggerated politeness.

"I do not know whom you mean when you speak of your mother," she said. "I came here hours ago in answer to a note of invitation from a lady who wrote that she was a friend of Mr. Knight, whom I am engaged to marry. I was shown into this room and expected every moment that my hostess or Mr. Knight would come to me. But nobody came. When I wanted to find some one to take a message, I discovered that the door was locked. Ever since I have been calling and trying to get out. If this is eastern hospitality, it does not suit my western ideas. I assure you. Now, if you will kindly let me pass, I will go, as I have been kept here long past a time which my father expected me."

"I am sorry that our desire to keep you under our roof as long as possible does not please you," said the young man, planting himself ostentatiously in front of the girl when she made a quick movement as if to fit past him to the door.

"If you were a woman of my mother even Mr. Knight whom I was asked here to meet?" Eve demanded, desperately.

The man shrugged his shoulders. "We

have not the pleasure of the gentleman's acquaintance—as yet."

"Why do you say 'as yet'?" the girl asked, bearing malice towards a woman of her charm. Any wish of yours, except to leave our house, I shall have great pleasure in granting."

Eve was tempted to retort: "Then take yourself out of my sight!" but to do so would be, according to the vulgar proverb, "cutting off her nose to spite her own face." Perhaps, she thought, if she controlled her anger and schooled herself to civility with this impertinent young man, who spoke English so well, and betrayed his nationality by calling her "signorina," she might at least obtain some information from him, possibly even induce him to let her go.

"If you are willing to do me a favor, then," she said, "tell me why I was brought to this house, and whose it is?"

"We will talk about that if you like," the man replied. "But you have complained of our hospitality. At least, signorina, we do not mean to starve you. Here is our good Enea waiting with English tea, and cakes for which she is famous. Will you give me a glass of wine? When you are refreshed you will be in a better mood for conversation."

As she spoke he looked at the girl always with his large, bright, insolent eyes, and she decided that, even for the sake of such information as he might be willing to give, she could not, and would not, calmly submit to "induce his society."

The Italian woman had set down her tray on a small trestle stand which she had brought into the room under her arm. It was rather an attractive looking tray, covered with a fine specimen of red and blue Moorish embroidery on delicate linen. The teapot was silver, with a tiny hanging strain; the two cups were of thin old china; and there was a plate piled with crisp little rolled brown cakes. Eve had been too excited to eat her luncheon and she was beginning to be hungry; but she turned her back upon these preparations for her refreshment.

"I don't care for tea, thank you," she said. "I am quite ill from anxiety. All I want is to be allowed to go back to my father. O, let me go. If I am being kept here for the sake of money, he will give it to you."

"Now, is that for the sake of money?" the man answered; then turning to the servant, he spoke to her in Italian. She bowed, went to the door, leaving the tray on the little table behind her. With a quick impulse, Eve started forward to follow; but the young man prevented her by intervening once more. He was tall, with an appearance of strength, and Eve realized that resistance would be useless and undignified. It came to a struggle, she would be like a reed in his hands.

"What is the motive then?" she inquired, her eyes fixed wistfully on the curtain over the door, behind which the woman had just disappeared.

"I suppose you do not believe me, signorina," said the man, with another of his glittering smiles. "I told you that it was entirely for the delight of your signorina."

"I should not," exclaimed the girl, sharply.

"Well, then, it would be useless for me to swear that in the beginning it was so. Now, however, since I have seen you, I can truly say that, were there no other reason, such a one would be sufficient."

"Is it true that you and your mother even Mr. Knight whom I was asked here to meet?" Eve demanded, desperately.

The man shrugged his shoulders. "We

played into her hands, without guessing. 'One must sacrifice something in a great cause, signorina—a cause for which we have sacrificed much, and may have to sacrifice still more. But in the one there can now be no doubt of our reward. It is to serve that cause that you have been brought into this house, which, for a certain purpose, we have lived in now for a month—as long and dull a month as I ever passed. There is no vulgar question of ransom, signorina. You were a pawn, as my mother said, in a grand game of chess. Now, however, that I have seen you, the situation is changed. You are no longer a pawn; if you know chess, you know that it is possible for a pawn, by crossing into the enemy's territory and reaching a certain position, to become a queen. That is what has happened now to you. I may call myself a knight in the game where my father and mother have played the great parts. But even a knight counts for something; and it is by crossing his path that you take your place as queen."

"I don't understand you," exclaimed Eve.

"I will make you understand," he answered.

"I shall think of you as you deserve," said the girl.

"Then I must try to deserve well of you—very well. I will begin by telling you that you have met my mother, and that it was really through you that she has gone to pay you a visit."

"Last night?"

"You must be mistaken. I met no one last night, for I didn't land. That is, no one but two English people who came out to my father's yacht to stay with us."

"Think again, signorina."

"It would be of no use. They were the only ones—O, excepting, of course, the fortune-teller."

"She told your fortune by looking into a topaz, did she not?"

"What—that was your mother?"

"She is clever at fortune-telling, as at all other things—my mother. But she is not a professional. She said you of the compliment of playing quite a new role in your honor. And you were very kind in return, as she hoped you would be. You told her—not a fortune—but everything she wanted to know; and to know all that you desire to know is a fortune in itself."

"I told her nothing!" exclaimed Eve, believing herself implicitly, of course. Nevertheless, she was satisfied. And she took a letter for you to Gibraltar this morning, so that you should be satisfied also."

"What an idiot I must have been!" ejaculated the girl, quivering with indignation.

"Pray, do not think poorly of yourself. I have never seen a human being who could not be outwitted by my mother—even my father, and he, too, is greatly my friend. I am proud of my parents. Did you not admire the fortune-teller's topaz, signorina, and the jewels of the governor's widow, which she offered for sale at such a low price?"

Eve did not answer, save by a sigh which was almost a sob of anger.

"The topaz is an heirloom of our family," the young man went calmly on, his eyes never straying from the girl's lovely face—that is, of the elder branch; but as it is an inconvenient motto, I have sometimes been glad that it was not quite necessary for us to live up to it. As for the jewels, they were my mother's own; she needed an excuse to get on board your yacht, and the English Lady Drayton

broke in Sir Peter, with a faint ring of irritation in his voice, which had never been there before when he addressed the young man he wished to make his son-in-law. "She was the best of women, and—her son has her eyes. Old thing, it was the look in the chap's eyes which attracted me to him when he first applied for a berth as my secretary. I believe I took him more on their recommendation than on the introduction he brought from Ather, a distinguished newspaper proprietor, though I didn't stop to define exactly what it was I liked in him. Now I know. And I think I know that his mother's son wouldn't lie."

But afternoon came, and nothing had followed up a new clue suggested by the police, who had heard of a white woman being seen flying with two men in the interior, about fifty miles away. He was occupied in engaging, and getting up an expedition in case the woman should play them false, but anyone who knew him well, would have seen that he was worn with the constant suspense.

A little after 1 o'clock the two men returned to the hotel from the English coast, where there had been a consultation, and found a telegram from St. Peter from Gibraltar, which had been waiting for some time: "The woman I told you of has been killed here." It ran: "This changes the situation. Nothing now to keep me here. Am leaving at once on friend's steam yacht for Tangier. Hope you have had news of Miss Markham, but fear no time for woman to arrange matters as agreed before her sudden death. Have much to tell you when we meet this evening.—Knight."

Sir Peter read the telegram aloud to Waverley. "You see, Knight is coming here," he said. "That rather gives the lie to your theory. If he had had anything to do with Eve's disappearance, he would want to keep out of my way."

"Who knows? It is early to make up one's mind on that subject," replied Waverley. "He says he has much to tell you. A clever man might—mind, I don't say this one did—but a clever man might have told you some such story as this for the sake of gaining a little time to carry out his plans, whatever they were. Anyhow, he has disposed of the woman, and has saved himself the trouble of having to produce her. I suppose now, as he says of himself, there's nothing to wait for. We can no longer hope that the alleged lady with the veil will suddenly appear to-day with Miss Markham."

"I'm afraid not," said Sir Peter, thoughtfully. "I wonder, though, what Knight meant by saying that there was no longer anything to keep him at Gibraltar. 'A mystery of that sort, which has not carried on his investigations, and leaving the yacht alone, or—is it that he has found out all he wanted to know?'"

"The last, I should say, was impossible," said Waverley, who had been told within the last twenty-four hours something about Dick's business on the desert. "A mystery of that sort, which has completely baffled everybody so far, isn't to be unseated by one man in a day or two—especially an amateur."

"It might be done with great luck and—genius," said Sir Peter, still reflectively.

"It would baffle the genius of a Le Cocq, or a Sherlock Holmes," retorted Waverley. "From what I've heard of Mr. Knight, there's no particular reason to credit him with either."

"He and I once had a conversation about that," remarked Sir Peter. And, despite