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A CRITICAL MOMENT
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By George Elmer Cobb.

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Alan Deane felt in harmony with all the world, as he left the little vine-embowered cottage where the treasure of his heart was bestowed—Edna Wilton. It was quite dusk. The stars seemed to sparkle like happy eyes,



Gave the Man a Push, And the Latter
Fell to the Ground.

the gentle nightingales sang a soothing melody to his rapturous heart.

"She is mine—mine!" whispered Alan in subdued ecstasy. "Coward heart! Why did you not urge me to seek the blissful assurance of her love before?"

In rare humility he accepted the great gift love had given him. Business life had only recently begun for Alan and it was decidedly desultory.

He had been disappointed as to securing employment. His, however, was not a nature to remain waiting or idle. He picked up the first task that came to hand. Alan was something of an artist. For a few months he assisted a scenic artist in getting up the scenes for a grand spectacular drama.

This led to his introduction to a successful manufacturer, who was making a specialty of his celebrated "Red Rose Soap." The man had got the idea of advertising the same on all the cliff sides he could find in Idaho. The more inaccessible the place, the more daring the feat of thus giving his soap publicly, the more liberally was he willing to pay.

At a salary that would enable Alan to set aside enough to begin house-keeping on in a nice way, the latter was given charge of the expedition. A wagon, a driver, all the tackle and other paraphernalia necessary to swing from lofty heights and scale great pinnacles were put aboard. The painting was to be crude, but loud. The red, red rose was a 10 by 16 daub of carmine, the lettering white and 30 feet in length, so the great sign could be read miles away.

With all this arranged and a surety of good money ahead, Alan went to Edna and proposed. He had hesitated before because there was a rival in the field. There was one Burt Ridgeway. He had been figuring about the town as a young man of wealth, and had shown Edna marked attentions. Edna had entirely disabused Alan's mind of the fear that she ever dreamed of Ridgeway as a possible suitor.

So, he was very happy as he left the Wilton home in the early twilight. He passed down a hedgerow, weaving glowing fortunes for the future. Suddenly at a lonely spot he heard a suspicious rustle, then quick footsteps. Alan turned just as some one fairly leaped upon him.

"Ridgeway, I've found you at last!" was hissed in his ear.

Alan was strong, his assailant no