

dying of thirst. Can't we find a well about the old place?"

"We'll see. Get a drink and make for the city," put in a third voice, and the three men disappeared around the house.

"H'm!" muttered Jim, getting to his feet, "they're stealing the trunk. Yes, they've busted the front door open. And there's an automobile out in front. I think I guess the riddle. Drink and be merry, my friends, for you'll have a long, dusty walk before you!"

Jim chuckled as he made for the road, looked over the machine, chugging low and steadily. He took in its mechanism with a practiced eye, for he had once done some chauffeur work. Then he was in the seat. Gr-r-up-zip! it started up like a met-tled steed!

Jim had sized up the situation completely. The three men were city thieves on a looting expedition, apparently financed by one Darby. They had stopped at the village, the halt at the house Jim was guarding being merely incidental. Primarily all that Jim cared for was the rescue of the trunk, but, as he glanced into the rear seat of the machine and noticed various boxes and bags, he decided that he had done something of real importance in divesting the criminals of their means of transportation and their booty.

Jim had a definite point in view as he whizzed down the smooth country road. He had gathered from what Miss Davis had said, the location of her new home. He had gone about 15 miles when he observed a trim feminine figure coming down the road, clearly silhouetted in the misty moonlight. He slowed down with a jerk and peered forward with a stare.

"I declare!" he shot out briskly. "Oh, ma'am!—please, it's me."

"Mr. James," warbled up the melodious tones of Miss Davis.

"Yes, ma'am."

"And in an automobile?"

"Borrowed, ma'am—that trunk and all. But you, ma'am?"

"The wagon broke down. It's just ahead. It will have to stay here all night. I was going back to the next village to stay until morning," explained Miss Davis.

"Why not go to your sister's, ma'am?" suggested Jim. "I'm a careful driver, being sober, ma'am. Besides, I want to get to some safe, sure place, for I'm thinking there's a lot of valuable stuff in that back seat of the machine, and we want to protect it."

The eyes of his interested passenger glowed with keen interest as Jim recited the story in detail. They expanded to their widest after they reached her sister's home. The trunk had not been opened. In the various boxes and bags they found a great mass of silverware, watches and the like. Obviously some jewelry store in the village had been burglarized.

"I think I guess out just what has happened," observed Jim, "and someone is probably worrying back there at Reedsville. If I may stow the automobile in that shed, and sleep in it till morning, then I'll go back my tracks, and see what turns up."

Miss Davis was up and around when Jim awoke. She suggested that they telephone Reedsville. Their call brought back a vivid response. The main jewelry store of the town had been looted the evening previous and nearly five thousand dollars of its contents carried away.

Within two hours Roscoe Woods, a well-appearing, eager and anxious young man, the proprietor of the despoiled store, appeared in an automobile. He was overjoyed at the discovery that the entire plunder was intact. He had just started in business, and his entire capital was invested in the recovered goods. He insisted on pressing \$100 on Jim. He selected a dainty brooch and asked Miss Davis to accept it, for, indirectly through her, affairs had come fortunately for him.