

The GODDESS

by CHARLES GODDARD and GOUVERNEUR MORRIS

Novelized from the Photo Play of the Same Name Produced by the Vitagraph Company

SYNOPSIS.

Professor Stilliter, psychologist, Gordon Barclay, Semmes and Sturtevant, millionaire, plan to preach to the world the gospel of efficiency through a young and beautiful woman who shall believe that she is a heaven-sent messenger. They kidnap the little Annesbury girl, orphaned offspring of a eugenic marriage, and conceal her, in care of a woman, in a cavern, to be wedded to their plan as she grows up. Fifteen years elapse. Tommy Barclay, adopted son of Millionaire Barclay, develops radical tendencies which threaten the elder man's plans, loses his prospective heiress, and on a hunting trip discovers Celestia, who thinks she has just come from heaven to save the world.

THIRD INSTALLMENT

CHAPTER VIII.

To rescue the girl who called herself Celestia from Professor Stilliter had been the work of instants and impulse. But what to do next was not to be decided without plenty of reflection. Reflection did not come easily to Tommy, however, especially in the present circumstances.

He could not make her out at all to his satisfaction. At one moment she seemed perfectly sane, at the next completely mad.

"How long have you known that man?" he asked, referring, of course, to Professor Stilliter.

"Not so long as I have known you, but sometimes I feel as if I had seen you both before. But I can't ever have seen you, can I? You can't ever have been in heaven and I've never been on earth."

"If you were seeing him for the first time why were you afraid of him?"

"For the same reason that I'm not afraid of you."

"And you're not—not a bit?"

"He," said she, simply, "is bad and ugly. You are good and beautiful."

As Tommy guided her through the woods toward his camping ground of the preceding night, he kept saying to himself: "But there's got to be a showdown soon. What am I to do about her?"

They came to a black pool of rain water. Before Tommy could prevent Celestia had stepped upon the surface, as if upon a solid pavement, and gone in above the knee.

She gave a little cry of amused astonishment.

"Why it's—it's"—she cried.

"Yes," said Tommy. "It's wet water. You appeared to think it was a board walk. But never mind, you'll soon dry out. Don't they have water in heaven?"

"Of course, but not black and still like that. In heaven it's all alive with rainbows in it."

"They speak English in heaven?"

"Oh, yes, and French and Italian and Spanish and German and American and all the others."

"Can you speak them all?"

"Of course. What good could I do on earth if I couldn't talk to people?"

"Just what good are you going to do?"

"I'm going to tell people to be better and not so foolish, and they are to do as I tell them."

"That's a splendid idea," said Tommy, feeling that it was best to humor her, "and then what?"

"Then? Why, when I've made everybody rich and happy I'll go back to heaven, of course, and be happy, too."

"Are you unhappy now?"

"No; not unhappy, but if I were back in heaven I wouldn't be all wet and muddy and hungry and thirsty, would I?"

"Of course you wouldn't, you poor child," said Tommy, "but soon we'll be at my camp, and then I'll hustle around and make you comfortable."

"And I feel as if my face were on fire, too," she complained.

"Feverish," thought Tommy with dismay. And then he said:

"Stand still a moment and let me look."

He noticed for the first time the extraordinary whiteness and delicacy of her skin. It was as if she had always been veiled from the sun.

"You're getting sunburned," he said with concern. "That's what's the matter."

She touched her face with her fingers and then looked at their tips as if expecting that the burn had come off on them.

"I've got some stuff at my camp that will take the burn out," said Tommy. "Look out for that green stuff. It's got thorns, and you can't afford to tear that dress."

They had begun to climb the eminence on which Tommy's camp was perched, and with every step Celestia showed increasing fatigue.

"Of course I'm not used to walking," she said; "I'm sorry. I suppose I'll get used to it."

"If you are determined to push on to New York you will," said Tommy. His quick ears caught the sudden appetizing cluck of a partridge.

"Let's see if we can get that fellow!" he exclaimed. "You sit down and rest yourself, Celestia. Nobody hunts much in these woods, and the birds are tame as chickens."

She sat down and leaned against the stem of a birch, her breath coming and going quickly, her great eyes following every movement that Tommy made.

Having located the partridge Tommy "assembled" his trout rod and, with the end of the line, made a running noose. Then he began very quietly to poke the rod up among the branches of the spruce tree. An interested clucker attested to the fact that more eyes than Celestia's were on Tommy.

Tommy, his right hand clasping the butt of the rod, his thumb bracing the reel, reached gradually higher and higher until his arm was extended to its full length. He added a few inches to his reach by standing on a tip-toe. But even this was not enough. So Tommy bent his knees a little and then jumped.

Before his feet regained the earth a frightful squawking and flapping arose in the spruce tree, and then there was dragged from it what looked like a pinwheel going at top speed.

"It has wings like an angel," she said, "only darker."

Tommy was just going to say: "It's got whiter meat than an angel," but stopped himself in time, and changed to:

"Even people who come here to make the world better, Celestia, have to eat."

And he slipped the dilapidated bird into his pocket.

A few minutes later they reached Tommy's camp, and after he had given Celestia a cupful of spring water he cut fresh balsam boughs and made a thick mat for her to rest on, and rolled his coat and some other odds and ends into a pillow, so that she could watch him make the fire and do the cooking.

For lunch they had tea, biscuits (one of Tommy's most lamentable culinary failures) and the partridge. Cooked, he no longer looked like the victim of murder, but very beautiful and appetizing.

Celestia ate her full share and then lay back on her balsam boughs and watched Tommy fill and light a pipe. "Why do you do that?" she asked. "Wasn't the partridge cooked enough?"

Tommy narrowed his eyes at her and for some moments did not answer. Then he said: "I don't know what to make of you at all. First you say you come from heaven and act as if you did, then you pretend that you never saw a man smoke before. And then—what are you trying to do to me, anyway? Is that really the only dress you've got in the world? Do you always wear a golden band around your hair with stage jewels in it?"

And then suddenly a light dawned on Tommy, and he smote his thigh in applause of his own cleverness.

"I know what you are," he said. "You're the queen of the movies. You're up here staging a show, and you got bored and let me run off with you for a lark. Professor Stilliter has had something to do with the scenario. The heroine is supposed to be



He Heard Her Calling to Him.

a little looney. That's you, Celestia—and you're practicing all the time on me. Well, thank heaven, it's only acting. Why, I really thought you were mad as a hatter?"

"No," said Celestia. "I'm not in the least angry. But I don't know what you mean, but I like you when you get excited and talk fast and your eyes smile. It rests me."

Tommy shook his head at her and smiled reprovingly.

"You can't keep on fooling me," he said. "Come now, what's your real name?"

"Celestia," she said. "All right, if you don't want to tell me yet, it will keep, it's bound to. But tell me, then, are you—?" he hesitated and blushed. "I'd really like to know. You see, I'm rather crazy about

you. You're not Mrs. Somebody or other, are you?"

The embarrassed smile froze on his lips. He leaped to his feet and stood listening. Faint and clear, sounding cheerful rather than ominous, there rose to them from the valleys below a baying of dogs.

He climbed swiftly to the top of the Hub, and stood listening. His field glasses glued to his eyes.

A glimpse of two bloodhounds and four men, one of whom was Stilliter and another a full-blooded Indian, crossing an open space, recently crossed by Celestia and himself during their hurried escape in the same direction, brought Tommy down from the Hub in a great hurry.

"We've got to beat it, Celestia," he said. "I'm sorry, because you are tired, but that man—here he is—encircling his eyes with his hands, he indicated Professor Stilliter's eye-glasses—is after us."

She rose obediently to her feet. "I don't know why he wants to catch you," said Tommy, "and, either you don't know, or you won't tell. But you dislike him, and you're afraid of him, and that's enough."

They were soon under way, following the higher ground, where the granite outcroppings neither received any impress from their feet, nor long held the scent of the leather soles. But the crests of the ridges were not all granite, and Tommy knew very well that in places they were making what woodmen call a broad trail. A trail of footprints and bent and broken branches which an Indian will read as casually as a commuter reads his newspaper; and which, aided by bloodhounds, he will follow as easily as small boys follow a procession through a city street.

That broad reaches of unbroken granite would occasionally baffle their pursuers was all that Tommy could hope for.

He had at first only a vague idea as to just what part of the wilderness he would take her, but gradually his mind became occupied with the problem of getting to that place by a route which their pursuers would find the most difficult possible in following. He had hopes indeed of throwing them completely off the trail.

They turned a little more to the westward, and began to descend from the high ground. The baying of the hounds at this time seemed if anything a little closer.

"Where are we going?" she asked suddenly.

"We're going to hide on a little island in a deep lake, Celestia. Even if they find out that we are on it, they'll have trouble getting to us. Very few sailors and fewer woodsmen know how to swim. I used to fish in that lake a lot, and I've an old dugout hidden on the shore, and there's the remains of a hut on the island. And I left an old moth-eaten buffalo robe and a blanket there only last fall. If there's anything left of them they'll come in mighty handy, I can tell you."

They came to a broad, shallow stream that flowed brightly under an arch of dark foliage. "Here's where we begin to make trouble for them," said Tommy. Holding her elbow with his free hand, he kept her from stumbling and falling. Tommy led Celestia to the middle of the brook, and then they waded down it for upward of a mile, as if it had been a winding road, and only left it when the rocky nature of the country through which it was passing offered them an opportunity of so doing and leaving a minimum trail.

All at once Tommy realized that a great silence had fallen in the forest. And he knew that at last the bloodhounds were in difficulties, for they had ceased to bay.

CHAPTER IX.

The oftener Tommy helped Celestia through, over or under some difficulty of the wilderness, saved her from being torn by brambles, or encouraged her with his voice, the more infatuated he became with her.

Mary Blackstone's image could be recalled only by an effort of memory. And yet it was only a few days since he had fancied himself in love with her. He confessed this to himself more than once, and could but feel ashamed and sheepish. How long would it be before he fancied himself in love with Celestia, after how long a separation would he discover that he did not love her in the least? He had no stability. Was he never to have a serious purpose in life? Love? Even hate?

All of a sudden they caught glimpses of blue water between the tree stems, and in a few moments they saw before them and below them a lovely lake with densely wooded shores and in its midst a densely wooded island.

"Oh!" exclaimed Celestia. "But this earth is beautiful."

"Remind you at all of heaven?" asked Tommy, a little mischievously. "Not in the least!" said Celestia, and as if she did not wish to discuss the comparative beauties of the two places. "Is that our island?" she asked.

"We'll be hard to find," said Tommy, "and now the work is almost all over."

They descended the narrow strip of land which divided the lake from the forest, and here Tommy told Celestia to sit down and rest while he hunted for the dugout and got it into the water.

He returned in ten minutes, padding quietly, and found Celestia playing with the sand as if she had been a little child. Her eyes were bright with animation, and she had got sand on her forehead and in her hair. Perceiving Tommy, she tossed a

double handful of sand into the air, and as the sunlight caught the myriads of bright surfaces, she cried "What is it? Oh, what is it?"

"Sand," said Tommy.

"Sand!" cried Celestia.

"Didn't you ever play in the sand when you were little?"

"I used to play with diamonds and rubies," said Celestia. "Oh, but this is wonderful. See, you can write in it and draw pictures. Look, I am making the man Stilliter."

And, indeed, with her forefinger for pencil, she made an excellent caricature of him.

"Who taught you to do that, Celestia?"

"An angel," she said simply.

"Well," said Tommy, "I've heard of people who could draw like angels—but—oh, Celestia, aren't you a little tired of playing this heavenly origin business on me? I don't take any stock in it."

She looked at him with a sudden grave wonder.

"When I tell you that I come from heaven, you don't believe me?"

"Why, Celestia," he said, meeting her gaze with equal gravity, "you're just a regular girl. Why there's blood on your cheek, where a deer fly has bitten you—"

"You've got to believe me," she said, and it seemed to Tommy she was trying to master him with her eyes.

"What are you trying to do to me?" he said. "Hypnotize me?"

And then he laughed, and looked so brown and handsome and good natured that Celestia had to smile at him.

"Now, Celestia," he said, "I'm going



Laughing and Scolding, Tommy Pulled Her Out.

to take you for a boat ride. But you've got to sit still—mighty still. You pretend that you're back in heaven listening to Israel accompanied by the Spheres."

But she spoke with a sudden sternness that made him very uncomfortable.

"Is there no reverence left on earth? No faith? It's high time that I came."

He helped her into the dugout, his eyes on the back of her head, enamored with the way her dark, strong hair met her straight white neck and as he paddled he kept saying: "Who the deuce is she, and what the deuce is she?"

And to these questions he could not find any answers that were altogether satisfactory.

Just as they were landing on the island there came to them once more, faintly, and from far-off the baying of the bloodhounds. Celestia gave Tommy a look full of anxious appeal.

"Don't be afraid," he said. "They are miles and miles from us."

So they were. All of them. Stilliter, the guides, the bounds, and the Indian who rejoiced in the name of Old Man Smells-good, which if it referred to anything about him except his ability to follow a trail was an inappropriate name. They were all there, several miles away; but Old Man Smells-good was in the head of an exceedingly tall pine, which overtopped the rest of the forest, and from which the view was exceedingly fine and expansive. Old Man Smells-good had a pair of eyes that resembled a pair of telescopes. He could see anything that was in sight.

"See anything?" Stilliter called up to the Indian.

"No see a d— thing," answered the Indian without changing his expression. As a matter of fact, by miracle of optics, he had just discovered Tommy helping Celestia ashore on the island.

Smells-good dismounted the tree and stood shaking his head.

"No see any d— thing," he said. "Dog no good. Smells-good he think a little. Think up where um mos' likely to go."

The old faker. He seated himself upon his heels, filled and lighted his pipe, and closed his eyes as if in deep thought.

Stilliter began to show signs of impatience, but one of the guides said: "Better leave him alone; he's got a hunch, like as not."

Not until he had finished his pipe did Old Man Smells-good give any sign of what had been going on in his head. When he rose to his feet, he said simply: "Me find um soon," and he started off in the direction of the lake.

after a moment's sniffing and said: "Me got um, sure." Then he ordered one of the guides to remain behind with the dogs.

And then he went forward, pretending to follow a trail, pointing to marks, which the other couldn't see, for the simple fact that they didn't exist, listening, pretending to hear sounds that couldn't be heard, sniffing, kneeling and poking his long nose into the ground. Once he poked it into a ground hornet's nest and had a narrow and undignified escape from being badly stung.

He led them to the shores of the lake and pointed quietly across at the island. Even Stilliter could see a pale column of bluish smoke coming from among the trees.

"Bimeby, swim over," said Old Man Smells-good, "for two dollars. Fetch dugout. Better wait till dark."

And they waited till dark. Then Old Man Smells-good, having been definitely promised an extra two dollars for the wetting, stepped forth stark naked, except for a newly filled pipe, and slipped quietly into the lake.

Meanwhile, with Tommy and Celestia all had gone well. Tommy's old camp was less dilapidated than he expected. A few balsam boughs had made the rotten roof sound above and sweet beneath. Celestia had had a long rest and then she had followed Tommy along the shores of the island, while he fished. Finally Tommy's long casts were rewarded. He hooked a fine trout and began to draw him strongly toward the beach. In her excitement and eagerness to help, Celestia ran into the shallow water, stepped in a deep hole and, falling forward, was for the moment completely submerged.

here than anywhere else; because I've had a good supper, after plenty of exercise; because the night smells of balsam; because the moon is shining, and because I've got a delightful companion."

"All these things make me happy, too," said Celestia, "but they couldn't keep me happy for long."

"No?" said Tommy, somewhat chagrined. "If these things are enough, why want more?"

"Why," said Celestia, "after a while I'd get thinking about people who haven't delightful companions, and for whom the moon isn't shining; I couldn't rest then until I'd gone to them and tried to make their lives easier and their hearts stronger and—here she laughed softly—"their heads fuller of sense."

"It would be the opposite with me," said Tommy; "the longer we stayed here, the less I'd get thinking about other people and the more I'd get thinking about us. Every mortal man, I suppose, has his conception of heaven"—he pulled luxuriously at his pipe—"and this is mine."

After that they were silent for a little.

Then Tommy said: "Are you warm? Are you comfortable?"

She nodded.

Then very softly:

"Celestia," he said. "Are you happy?"

"I don't know," she said. "Can you be happy when it isn't right for you to be happy? It isn't right for one to be happy, because other people aren't."

"I am," said Tommy. "At this moment the sufferings of others don't get me. You see, I have to be shown. Suppose at this moment the entire population of China, having eaten immoderately of contaminated rice, was dying of fits. I wouldn't care. I wouldn't even know. Celestia, if you stayed long enough in the woods, don't you think maybe you'd forget all about heaven and your mission to earth, and be content to be happy? Listen. Once in my life I was really happy. I was a little girl; she was a little girl. If she'd grown up she would have looked like you. Perhaps that's why I'm so happy to be with you. She and I were always happy when we were together or looking forward to being together. Then one day she went away, Celestia. She went to heaven, they told me. And for a long time I was terribly unhappy."

Celestia sighed. "But I'm happy with you," said Tommy, "because I can almost imagine that you are she—grown up, I'm going to pretend that you are she. That she is the angel they've sent back to earth to make us all better." And he smiled very tenderly upon her.

After awhile Celestia became sleepy, and then she slipped her hand into one of Tommy's, and leaned against him and laid her head on his shoulder. It was as if she had been a little child. Tommy was deeply moved and touched, and at the same time the close physical contact began to trouble him, to frighten him. He spoke and it seemed as if with his voice he was trying to lift a weight.

"You poor baby," he said, "you're dead tired. It's bedtime."

He rose, a little roughly, and helped her to her feet.

When they reached the little hut, Tommy said:

"Now, you turn in there and make yourself comfy. Good-night."

"Good-night," she said, and went into the hut.

Tommy stood looking at the fire. He stood for quite a long time, in a deep reverie. Celestia's voice brought him out of it.

"Aren't you coming?" she said. He turned and looked her in the eyes. What was she? Was she the most innocent and guileless creature



No Word or Motion Was Lost on Professor Stilliter.

in the world, or was she something quite different? Was he a chivalrous young man in her eyes, or simply an idiot? His heart suddenly began to beat hard and fast.

And toward that theatrical, beautiful, and entrancing figure in the door of the hut, all silver in the moonlight, he began to walk slowly.

In his hiding place close at hand, no word or motion had been lost on Professor Stilliter. White with reluctance and antipathy, but strongly resolved, he rose on one knee, cocked his Winchester and aimed at the small of Tommy's back.

(TO BE CONTINUED)