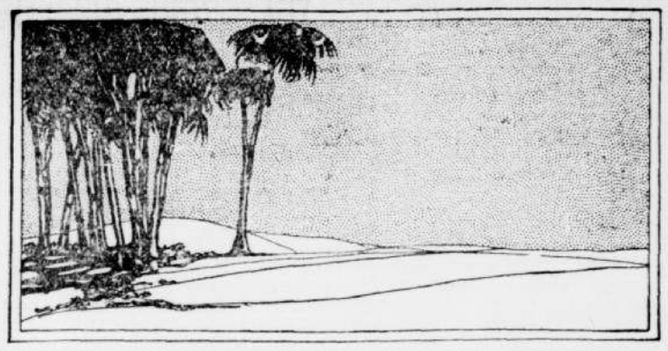

The Carpet from Bagdad

by HAROLD MAC GRATH

Author of HEARTS AND MASKS, The MAN ON THE BOX etc.

Illustrations by M. G. KETTNER . . .

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Here Was the End of the Puzzle.

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SYNOPSIS.

George Percival Algernon Jones, vice-president of the Metropolitan Oriental Rug company of New York, thirsting for romance, is in Cairo on a business trip. Horace Ryanne arrives at the hotel in Cairo with a carefully guarded bundle. Ryanne sells Jones the famous holy Yhiordes rug which he admits having stolen from a pasha at Bagdad. Jones meets Major Callahan and later is introduced to Fortune Chedsoye by a woman to whom he had loaned 150 pounds at Monte Carlo some months previously, and who turns out to be Fortune's mother. Jones takes Mrs. Chedsoye and Fortune to a polo game. Fortune returns to Jones the money borrowed by her mother. Mrs. Chedsoye appears to be engaged in some mysterious enterprise unknown to the daughter. Ryanne interests Jones in the United Romance and Adventure company, a concern which for a price will arrange any kind of an adventure to order. Mrs. Chedsoye, her brother, Major Callahan, Wallace and Ryanne, as the United Romance and Adventure company, plan a risky enterprise involving Jones. Ryanne makes known to Mrs. Chedsoye his intention to marry Fortune. Mrs. Chedsoye declares she will not permit it. Plans are laid to prevent Jones sailing for home. Ryanne steals Jones' letters and cable dispatches. He wires agent in New York, in Jones' name, that he is renting house in New York to some friends. Mahomed, keeper of the holy carpet, is on Ryanne's trail. Ryanne promises Fortune that he will see that Jones comes to no harm as a result of his purchase of the rug. Mahomed accosts Ryanne and demands the Yhiordes rug. Ryanne tells him Jones has the rug and suggests the abduction of the New York merchant as a means of securing its return. The rug disappears from Jones' room. Fortune quarrels with her mother when the latter refuses to explain her mysterious actions. Fortune gets a message purporting to be from Ryanne asking her to meet him in a secluded place that evening. Jones receives a message asking him to meet Ryanne at the English Bar the same evening. Jones is carried off into the desert by Mahomed and his accomplices after a desperate fight. He discovers that Ryanne and Fortune also are captives, the former is badly battered and unconscious. Ryanne recovers consciousness and the sight of Fortune in captivity reveals to him the fact that Mahomed intends to get vengeance on him through the girl. Fortune acknowledges that she stole the rug from Jones' room. She offers to return it to Mahomed if he will free all three of them. Mahomed agrees to liberate Fortune and one of the men in return for the rug. A courier is sent to Cairo for the rug, but returns with the information that Mrs. Chedsoye and her brother have sailed for New York. Fortune spurns offered freedom which does not include her two companions. The caravan continues the journey toward Bagdad. Ryanne tells Jones that Mrs. Chedsoye is the most adroit smuggler of the age, and is overheard by Fortune. The three captives are rescued by Henry Ackermann, who is in charge of a carpet caravan. Mahomed escapes. Mrs. Chedsoye discovers the absence of Fortune and leaves for New York, taking the girl's belongings with her. Through forged letters Mrs. Chedsoye, the major and their accomplices take possession of Jones' New York home. Jones, Ryanne and Fortune arrive at Damascus. Ryanne fails in his resolution to lead a better life. Ryanne secretly leaves for New York. At Jones' solicitation his partner, Mortimer, offers Fortune a home, but she declines. Jones then declares his love and finds that it is reciprocated.

CHAPTER XX.—(Continued.)

"I love you," he said; "I love you better than all the world."

"Are you sure?"

"Sure? Can you doubt it?"

"Sometimes."

"Why . . . ."

But she interrupted him quickly. "In all this time you have never asked me if I love you. Why haven't you?"

"I have been afraid."

"Ask me!"

"Do you love me?" his heart missing a beat.

She leaned toward him swiftly. "Here is my answer," pursing her lips.

"Fortune!"

"Be careful! I've a terrible temper."

But she was not quite prepared for such roughness. She could not stir, so strongly did he hold her to his heart. Not only her lips, but her eyes, her cheeks, her throat, and again her lips. He hurt her, but her heart sang. No man could imitate love like that.

"That is the way I want to be loved. Always love me like that. Never wait for me to ask. Come to me at all times, no matter how I am engaged, and take me in your arms, roughly like this. Then I shall know. I have been so lonely; my heart has been so filled with love and none to receive it! I love you. I haven't asked why; I don't care. When it began I do not know either. But it is in my heart, strong and for ever."

"Heart o'mine, I'm going to be the finest lover there ever was!"

The great ship came up the bay slowly. It was a clear, sparkling, winter day, and the towering minarets of business stood limned against the pale-blue sky with a delicacy not unlike Japanese shell-carving. A thousand thousand ribbons of cheery steam wavered and slanted and dartled; the river swarmed with bustling ferries and eager tugs; and great floats of ice bumped and jammed about the invisible highways.

"This is where I live," said George, running his arm under hers. "The greatest country in the world, with the greatest number of mistaken ideas," he added humorously.

"What is it about the native land that clutches at our hearts so? I am an American, and yet I was born in the south of France. I went to school for a time near Philadelphia. America, America! Can't I be an American, even if I was born elsewhere?"

"You can never be president," he said gravely.

"I don't want to be president!" She snuggled closer to him. "All I want to be is a good man's wife; to watch the kitchen to see that he gets good things to eat; to guard his comforts; to laugh when he is sad; to nurse him when he is ill; to be all and everything to him in adversity as well as in prosperity; a true wife." She touched his sleeve with her cheek. "And I don't want him to think that he must always be with me; if he belongs to a man-club, he must go there once in a while."

"I am very happy," was all he could say.

"George, I am uneasy. I don't know why. It's my mother, my uncle, and Horace. I am going to meet them somewhere. I know it. And I worry about you."

"About me? That's foolish." He smiled down at her.

'Ah, why did my mother seek to renew the acquaintance with you? Why did Horace have you kidnaped into the desert? There can be no such a thing as the United Romance and Adventure company. It is a cloak for something more sinister."

"Pshaw! What's the use of worrying, little woman? Whatever schemes they had must be out of joint by now. Sometimes I think I must be dreaming, little girl."

"I am not little. I'm almost as tall as you are."

"You are vastly taller in many ways."

"Don't be too sure. I am human; I have my moods. I am sometimes crotchety; sometimes unjust and quick of temper."

"All right; I want you, temper and all, just the same."

"But will they like me? Won't they think I'm an adventuress, or something like that?"

"Bless your heart, not in a thousand years! I'm a pretty wise man in some ways, and they know it."

And so it proved to be. Both Mr and Mrs. Mortimer greeted them at the pier in Hoboken. One glance at the face of the girl was sufficient. Mrs. Mortimer held out her arms. It was a very fine thing to do.

"I was in doubt at first," she said frankly. "George is so guileless. But to look at you, my child, would scatter the doubts of a Thomas. Will you let me be your mother, if only for a little while?" with a wise and tender smile.

Shyly Fortune accepted the embrace. Never had she been so happy. Never had she felt arms like these about her.

"What did he cable you?" she asked in a whisper.

"That he loved you and wanted me to mother you against that time when he might have the right to take you as his own. Has he that right?"

"Yes. And oh! he is the bravest and tenderest man I know; and below it all he is only a boy."

Mrs. Mortimer patted her hand. A little while later all four went over to the city and drove uptown to the Mortimer home. On the way Fortune told her story, simply, without avoiding any essential detail. And all her new mother did was to put an arm about her and draw her closer.

The Mortimer home was only three blocks away from George's. So, when dinner was over, George declared that he would run over and take a look at his own house. He wanted to wander about the rooms a bit, to fancy how it would look when Fortune walked at his side. He promised to return within an hour. He had forgotten many things, ordinarily important; such as wiring his agent, his butler and cook, who were still drawing their wages. He passed along the street above which was his own. He paused for a moment to contemplate the great banking concern. And the president of this bank was the elder brother of Ryanne! Lots of queer kinks in the world; lots of crooked turnings. He passed on, turned the corner, and strode toward his home, ran up the steps. Three doors below ecstasy thrilling his heart. Lightly he noticed two automobiles. He gave them only a cursory glance. He took out his ring of keys, found the night-latch and thrust it into the keyhole. He never had believed in this putting up of iron gates and iron shutters. A night-latch and a caretaker who came round once a day was enough for any sensible person. He turned the key. Eh? It didn't seem to go round. He tried several times, but without success. Puzzled, he struck a match and stopped before the keyhole.

It was a new one.

CHAPTER XXI.

A Bottle of Wine.

George stood irresolutely upon the steps. A new keyhole! What the deuce did the agent mean by putting a new keyhole in the door without notifying him? As the caretaker never entered that door, it was all the agent's fault. There was no area-way in front, but between George's house and the next there was a court eight feet in width, running to the dividing wall between the bank property and his own. A grille gate protected this court. George had a key. The gate opened readily enough. His intention was to enter by the basement-door But he suddenly paused. To his amazement he saw just below the library curtain a thin measure of light. Light! Some one in the house! He did the most sensible thing possible: he stood still till the shock left him. Some one in the house, some one who had no earthly or heavenly business there! Near the window stood a tubbed bay-tree. Cautiously he mounted this, holding the ledge of the window with his fingers. That he did not instantly topple over with a great noise was due to the fact that he was temporarily paralyzed.

Here was the end of the puzzle. The riddle of the United Romance and Adventure Company was solved. At last he understood why Mrs. Chedsoye had sought him, why Ryanne had kidnapped him. But for his continuing his journey upon the German-Lloyd boat, he would have come home a week too late; he would have missed being a spectator (already an innocent contributor) to one of the most daring and ingenious bank-robberies known in the pages of metropolitan crime. There was Mrs. Chedsoye, intrusively handsome as ever; there was her rascally card-sharper brother, that ingrate who called himself Ryanne, and three unknown men. The impudence of it; the damnable insolence of it! And there they were, toasting their success in a brace of his own vintage-champagne! But the wine was, after all, inconsequential. It was what he saw upon the floor that caught him by the throat. His knees weakened, but he held on grimly to his perch.

White bags of gold, soiled bags of gold, and neat packs of green and yellow notes: riches! Twenty bags and as many packets of currency; a million, not a penny under that! George was seized with a horrible desire to yell with laughter. He felt the cachinnations bubble in his throat. He swallowed violently and gnawed his lips. They had got into his house under false pretenses and had tunneled back into the Merchant-Mechanic Bank, of which Horace's brother was president and in which he, George P. A. Jones, always carried a large private balance! It was the joke of the century.

As quietly as he possibly could, he stepped down from his uncertain perch. In the fine fury that followed his amazement, his one thought was to summon the police at once, to confront the wretches in their villainy; but once outside in the street, he cooled. Instantly he saw the trial in court. Fortune as witness against her own mother. That was horrible and not to be thought of. But what could he do? He was shaken to his soul. The stupendous audacity of such a plan! To have worked out every detail, down to the altering of the keyhole to prevent surprise! He saw the automobiles. They were leaving that night. If he acted at all, it must be within an hour; in less than that time they would be loading the cars. His mind began to rid itself of its confusion. Without the aid of the police; and presently he saw the way to do it.

He was off at a dog-trot, upon the balls of his feet, silently. Within five minutes he was mounting the steps to the Mortimer home, and in another minute was inside. The others saw directly that something serious had happened.

"What's the trouble, George? House vanished?" asked Mortimer.

"Have you got a brace of revolvers?" said George quietly.

"Two automatics. But . . . ."

"Give them to me," less evenly in tone. "Will you call up Arthur Wadsworth, president of the Merchant-Mechanic Bank?"

"The bank?"

"Yes, the bank. You know, it is just in the rear of my house."

Here Fortune came forward. All the bright color was gone from her cheeks; the old mask of despair had re-formed. She needed no further enlightenment.

"Are you going back there?" she asked.

"Yes, dear; I must. Mr. Mortimer will go with me."

"And I?"

"No, heart o' mine; you've got to stay here."

"If you do not take me with you, you will not find me here when you return."

"My child," began Mortimer soothingly, "you must not talk like that There will be danger."

"Then notify the police, and let the danger rest upon their shoulders," she said, her jaws set squarely.

"I can't call in the police," replied George, miserable.

"Shall I tell you why?"

"Dearest, can't you understand that it is you I am thinking of?"

"I am determined. If I do not go with you, you shall never see me again. My mother is there!"

Tragedy. Mrs. Mortimer stretched out a hand, but the girl did not see it. Her mother; her own flesh and blood! Oh, the poor child!

"Come, then," said George, in despair. "But you are hurting me, Fortune."

"Forgive me, but I must go with you. I must!"

"Get me the revolvers, Mr. Mortimer. We'll wait for Wadsworth. Will you please telephone him? I'm afraid I couldn't talk steadily enough. Explain nothing save that it concerns his bank."

George sat down. Not during those early days of the journey across the desert had he felt so pitiably weak and inefficient.

Fortune paced the room, her arms folded tightly across her breast. Strange, there was neither fear nor pain in her heart, only a wild wrath.

When Mortimer returned from the telephone, saying that Wadsworth would be right over, he asked George to explain fully what was going on. It was rather a long story. George managed to get through it with a coherency understandable, but no more.

George inspected the revolvers carefully to see if they were loaded.

The bell rang, and Arthur Wadsworth came in. Mortimer knew him; George did not. He drew his interest as it fell due and deposited it in another bank. That was the extent of his relations with Arthur Wadsworth, president of the Merchant-Mechanic Bank of New York.

Arthur was small, thin, blond like his brother, but the hair was so light upon the top of his head that he gave one the impression that he was bald. His eyes looked out from behind half-shut lids; his cheeks were cadaverous; his pale lips met in a straight, unpleasant line. There was not the slightest resemblance between the two brothers, either in their bodies or in their souls. George recognized this fact immediately. He disliked the man instinctively, just as he could not help admiring his rogue of a brother.

"I want you to go with me to my house at once," began George.

"Please explain."

George disliked the voice even more than the man himself. "Everything will be explained there," he replied.

"This is very unusual," the banker complained.

"You will find it so. Come." George moved toward the hall, the revolvers in his coat-pocket.

"But I insist . . . ."

"Mr Wadsworth, everything will be fully explained to you the moment you enter my house. More I shall not tell you. You are at liberty to return home."

"It concerns the bank?" The voice had something human in it now; a note of affection.

Arthur Wadsworth loved the bank as a man loves his sweetheart, but more explicitly, as a miser loves the hoard hidden in the stocking.

"It concerns the bank?" he repeated, torn by doubt.

George shrugged. "Let us be going."

"Will it be necesary to call in the police?"

"No."

"I suppose, then," said Wadsworth bitterly, wondering, too, over the strange animosity of this young man he did not know—"I suppose I must do just as you say?"

"Absolutely." George's teeth came together with a click.

The four of them passed out of the house, each singularly wrought with agitation. Fortune walked ahead with George. Neither spoke. They could hear the occasional protest from the banker into Mortimer's ear; but Mortimer did not open his lips. They came to the house, and then George whispered his final instructions to Wadsworth. The latter, when he understood what was taking place, became wild with rage and terror; and it was only because George threatened to warn the conspirators that he subsided.

"And," went on George, "if you do not obey, you can get out of it the best you know how. Now, silence, absolute silence."

He pressed back the grille gate, and the others tiptoed after him.

* * *

Ryanne tipped the third bottle delicately. Not a drop was wasted. How the golden beads swarmed up to the brim, to break into ttle essences of perfume! And this was good wine; twelve years in the bottle.

"It's like some dream; eh?"

Wallace smacked his lips loudly.

"Wallace," chided Ryanne, "you always drink like a sailor. You don't swallow champagne; you sip it, like this."

Major Callahan swayed his glass back and forth under his nose. "Smells like a vineyard after a rain."

"There's poetry for you!" laughed the butler.

Mrs. Chedsoye seemed absorbed in other things. She was trying to discover what it was that gave this supreme moment so flat a taste. It was always so; it was the chase, the goal was nothing. It was the excitement of going toward, not arriving at, the destination. Was she, who considered herself so perfect, a freak after all, shallow like a hill-stream and as aimless in her endeavors? Had she possessed a real enthusiasm for anything? She looked back along the twisted avenue of years. Had anything really stirred her profoundly? From the bags of gold her glance strayed up and over to Ryanne. Love? Love a man so weak that he could not let be the bottle? She had a horror of drunkenness, the inane giggles, the attending nausea; she had been through it all. Had she loved him, or was it because he loved her child? Even this she could not tell.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Ryanne Tipped the Third Bottle Deli cately.

Glass Paving a Failure

Seven or eight years ago a plant was established at La Demie Lune, a suburb about four miles from Lyons, for making glass paving material. After many experiments carried out at the factory, the manufacturer applied to the Lyons municipality for the right to make a trial on one of the chief thoroughfares. The necessary authorization was granted, provided that the inventor would bear the entire expense of the undertaking. The place chosen for laying the glass pavement was a section of the Place de la Republique, where traffic of cabs, automobiles and wagons of all kinds is very heavy. The glass bricks remained in place for less than two years, and were then taken out, as they were in very poor condition. The edges were all broken, and in many cases the blocks were split through and through. The opinion of officials at that time was to the effect that this glass pavement could be used under favorable circumstances for footpaths, but not for the middle of streets.

Scandinavians.

The term "Scandinavians" is not confined to the Norwegians. The Norwegians are indeed Scandinavians, but so also are the Swedes, Danes and Icelanders. For that matter, the Germans, English and Americans of English stock are also of the Scandinavian stock, since it is more than probable that Germany was originally stocked from the land of the Northmen, and it is from the North German stock that the so-called "Anglo-Saxon" comes. The Northman has written his name large in history and his breed is today ruling the world, and will continue to rule it, in all likelihood, to the end of time. There is no other blood so virile and powerful.

Danger to Aviators.

It is difficult to determine the cause of most aeroplane accidents, but during the investigation which followed the fatal accident to Lieutenant Sevelle recently in France an important discovery is said to have been made by eye-witnesses. This was that the wing of his Bleriot broke downward instead of upward, indicating that there was an extreme downward pressure as the operator started to volplane. Experiments lately made in France are said to have confirmed this, and it is now believed to be necessary to guy the wings as substantially above as below.

English School Boy Camps.

We are familiar with the open-air school, but at Harrow, in England, the County Council is of opinion that this system is capable of extension, so the headmaster has arranged for every boy in the county school to encamp for a week in turn in the playing fields. The boys will sleep in tents, and attend themselves to all their wants, even doing their own cooking one day during the week. They will rise at 6:30 a. m. and turn in at 9:30 p. m., and there will be five hours' teaching daily. There can be little doubt that such a system carries with it many advantages. It teaches boys to be self-reliant, tidy, and useful, and will entail no extra cost on the rates, other than that of the tents, for the boys provide their own food.

Swiss Now Welcome Motor Cars.

The Swiss have relaxed their well known hostility to motoring some what. The barring of motor cars affected principally Lucerne, the center of all cosmopolitan tourists. This action was due to local efforts. The authorities of the canton of Schwyz, after stubborn resistance, have now yielded and will permit motoring along the Kussnacht road, whereby the Italo-Swiss through route is now free.

King Owns All the Swans.

King George's gift of swans to Owen Sound recalls that all tame swans in British dominions belong to King George, and are lent by him to municipalities or individuals who he wishes to honor. In England, if straying swans are found, they are promptly forwarded to his majesty, who frequently rewards the finder by permitting him to keep the birds.

THE LOBBY INVESTIGATION ON

WITNESS LAUTERBACH SAYS HE HAD BEEN "VICARIOUS SACRIFICE."

Lobby Investigators Listened to Stories Told of Founding of Vast Fortunes; a $80,000,000 Deal, Etc.

Washington.—The strange tale of Wall street operations begun before the senate lobby committee last week by David Lamar had another chapter added Monday when Edward Lauterbach, Lamar's associate in many undertakings, pleaded that he had been the innocent victim and the "vicarious sacrifice" in negotiations that have involved the Morgan firm, the steel interests, New York attorneys, members of congress and men of lesser prominence.

Lauterbach had already testified before the committee. But since his former appearance Lamar had told his unexpected story, involving himself and Lauterbach in the preliminaries of the steel trust investigation in an extraordinary effort to restore Lauterbach to the good graces of the Morgan firm, and Lewis Cass Ledyard had added his sworn statement that Lauterbach had represented himself as the emissary of Speaker Clark, Senator Stone and democratic leaders in an effort to effect a "reconciliation" with the Morgan-Steel interests and shut off investigation or opposition in congress.

Lauterbach, long prominent in legal circles in New York, admitted most of the facts alleged by Ledyard. The witness admitted his long association with Lamar, and said it had been an honorable and a profitable one for him. He told of talking over with Lamar the trust investigation and of seeing the proposed resolution and admitted urging Lamar to withhold it until he could see J. P. Morgan and others and urge them to authorize him to prevent its introduction.

Throughout the entire proceeding he declared there was no thought of reward on his part. He raised himself in the witness chair and shouted "No" with vehement emphasis when Senator Reed suggested that there had been an effort to "shake down" the Morgan and steel trust interests.

"That insinuation is an insult and an outrage," he exclaimed.

Lauterbach admitted he had told Ledyard that he had the authority of Speaker Clark, transmitted through Senator Stone, to make certain "proposals for peace" to the Morgan interests, but said this authority came from Lamar. He declared he had never seen Clark or Stone.

Washington.—A story of misrepresentation, impersonation of public men and an organized effort to influence Wall street financiers, probably without parallel in the history of congressional investigation, was unfolded Thursday before the senate lobby committee.

A prosperous looking individual, calling himself Lamar, self-described as an "operator in stocks," and admittedly the bearer of several assumed names, was the principal in the remarkable session. With entire abandon, arousing the committee to laughter at times by his naive admissions, he told of his impersonations, his participation in attempts to influence Wall street operations and his association with a New York lawyer, in efforts to have the lawyer retained by the Morgan firm, the Union Pacific and other great interests to head off congressional activity in Washington.

He telephoned to financial men and lawyers in the names of Representative Palmer and Representative Riordan. He assumed the guise of Chairman McCombs of the democratic national committee to telephone to Chairman Hilles of the republican national committee. Lewis Cass Ledyard of New York, counsel for the Morgan firm, was one of his attempted victims. Mr. Ledyard came to the witness stand Wednesday armed with almost a verbatim account of all the conversations held with Lamar, who had represented himself as Congressman Palmer. As he read the record of the conversations, in themselves unusual in their tone, Lamar, sitting near by, laughed and nodded, saying, "That's right."

Paul Cravath, one of the attorneys for the Union Pacific, and Maxwell Evarts, counsel for the Southern Pacific, testified briefly as to their experiences with the telephone impersonator. During his testimony early in the day Lamar interjected an attack upon the Union Pacific, claiming there had been a falsification in the books of the company in 1901 by which about $80,000,000 had disappeared from its surplus.

While Lamar was on the stand Chairman Overman endeavored to make him give his real name, but the witness refused. He admitted under Overman's questioning that he had been in Denver under the name of David H. Lewis, but denied he had used the name of Simon Wolf. He said Lamar was not his name, but declined to give the committee further information.

He described a "double entry" of $82,000,000, representing securities the Union Pacific assumed in taking over the Oregon Short Line and the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company.

The items, he said, were carried on "the consolidated balance sheet" of the Union Pacific June 30, 1900, but between that time and June 30, 1901, he alleged, some one had erased the $82,000,000 item from one side of the ledger, leaving it as a credit balance on the other side.

Servia Appeals for Nurses.

Paris.—The Servian government Monday made an appeal through its legation in Paris for doctors and nurses to aid the Servian wounded, who are so numerous that they are beyond the surgical resources of Servia.

Gonzales Scholastic Population.

Gonzales, Tex.—The scholastic census of the county just completed shows a total of 7,692. Of this number 4,101 are white and 1,758 colored.