THE GODDESS

By CHARLES GODDARD and GOUVERNEUR MORRIS

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FIRST INSTALLMENT

CHAPTER I.

Dear Barclay:

Every individual voter feels that he could run the nation better than those appointed to do so by himself and thousands of others just like him. One voter would put the tariff higher than it ever was before; the next would abolish it. But, whichever type of thinker gets his candidates into power, there remain always in these United States millions of people who have to be poor, dirty and discontented.

From this even a child would conclude either that a vast majority of people are doomed to unhappiness by the God who made them or that a vast majority of politicians are incapable governors. As to the first conclusion, we know nothing; but as to the second, we are certain beyond peradventure. With mighty few exceptions, those whom we put over us to govern us are the most incompetent lot of legislators and administrators in history. For the most part they are men vaguely trained to the law. They talk better and oftener on a greater variety of topics than the average man who is making or trying to make an honest living. They make it their business to be conspicuous, instead of the opposite, and so get themselves elected. As a body of men they know practically nothing about anything useful or important, and their small minds are so tangled with the little law they know that they are unable to see through the tangle into the heart of law, which is justice. If lawyers could be counted on to do right the pawnbroker down the street and the shoemaker round the corner would not have to be called away from affairs, important to them, to sit on juries and do justice.

But the thing goes deeper. What in each voter's judgment is the one chief thing that is wrong with these United States? There would be almost as many answers as there are voters. I've asked lots of men, and no two agreed, but I liked one man's answer a lot. He said: "The chief trouble with the country is that its citizens have to pay taxes when they ought to be receiving dividends. And this," he said, "would be the case if from the start we had been governed by our best minds instead of by our worst; if as a nation we had been run from the beginning the way Standard Oil, for instance, has been run as a trust."

I am not standing up for the rapaciousness of trusts, only for their efficiency. As a nation we have been more rapacious and dishonest than any trust that ever lived. This being so, and a blot upon us that can never be wiped out, a wrong of our own doing that can never be righted, it is ten thousand pities that we haven't been efficient, too.

How many billions of dollars was this country worth, as land, coal, oil, forest, gold, silver, iron, etc., etc.? Only astronomers think in big enough figures to answer that. Anyhow, as a nation we grabbed, stole and cheated it all away from the people who owned it. And then we began to play ducks and drakes with it. If from the start our resources could have been handled by a Rockefeller he—well he might be a thousand times richer than he is, but we—we would none of us be poor. And our house would be clean and efficient from garret to cellar, and not gutted and creaky and full of vermin and half the ceilings down.

Think of a whole country run as a trust, with employment at more than a fair return for every able-bodied man, and fat dividends for everybody in good years! In such a state by force of public opinion even a Bryan might be made useful. Even in Utopia there are offices which have to be swept out.

If there is salvation ahead of us, instead of ruin, something of this sort will have to be worked out from what is left to us of our natural resources.

Failing this those of us who are rich enough and contented enough as individuals will be pulled down from our high places and trampled by an unreasoning mob until there is no longer anything stable nor anyone contented. The air of this great city which we breathe is 10 per cent air and 90 per cent revolution. In other parts of the country the percentage of revolution is greater.

The only man with sufficient mind and power to effect anything good is yourself. But if you personally were to preach the gospel of efficiency people would think you were working, to put it bluntly, for your own pocket. This gospel then ostensibly must not come from you. It must not come from the rich. From whom then? From the poor, you answer. But alas, my friend, even the champions of the poor are open to suspicion.

This gospel then must come from where? Why, from heaven, of course, whence all good gospels have come, or are generally believed to have come. And, seeing that we are in America, where the women are given the best of everything, our heaven-sent messenger must be a woman.

I see your gesture of horror. But she shall not be as you see her. She shall be young and beautiful and good and sincere. She shall not speak her own thoughts, but ours. The masses will believe in her. The classes may, and if they don't they will have sense enough to pretend to.

With you to help, I believe, upon my word of honor, that I can make this thing happen. Will you help? What do you think?

Yours as ever,
MILES STILLITER.

To this letter Professor Stilliter received the following answer by return messenger:

Dear Stilliter:

I'll help if you can answer one thing satisfactorily. To be a successful gospelist the woman, as you intimate, must be sincere. She must believe what she preaches. If she is sincere, how can she tell people that she comes from heaven? You say she must come from heaven in order to believe. It is quite a rigmarole. I know that you have been thinking and experimenting for years toward some such end as this. But I am a business man, and I have to be shown.

Yours with sincere interest. B.

Professor Stilliter answered to this:

Dear Barclay:

She only has to believe that she comes from heaven. If she can be made to believe that, are you satisfied? S.

That night the two men met by appointment. Outlining his plan, and occasionally going into detail, Professor Stilliter talked rapidly for almost two hours without stopping, till the sweat stood on his brow and his voice began to fail him. He finished with these words: "And for a few of us, as a mere side issue, there's billions in it."

Gordon Barclay remained for a long time in profound thought.

"There is, as you say," he said at last, "billions in it. Yet if I was sure that we could make it happen, really make everybody contented and not poor, I'd be content to give up everything I have already, and I could die happy."

"So would I," exclaimed Stilliter hurriedly. "But I'd rather make the world happier and myself with it. Wouldn't you?"

Barclay shook his heavy shoulders, lifted his lionesque head and smiled.

"Of course," he said, "I was dreaming. I believe the thing can be done. And without any sacrifice whatever, either spiritual or material."

"It will take a long time."

"I understand that. You have to teach her almost from the beginning."

"I don't teach her exactly. I make her believe."

"Have you a child in view?"

"Now that you're with me, I shall soon find one."

"What are the chances against us?"

"Only these: That before we bring her to earth to preach our gospel you are dead, or I am, or the revolution has already come, and borne a different and better fruit for us all."

Professor Miles Stilliter was never idle, except when he was asleep. On a certain morning in the spring of 1900 Professor Stilliter, having mislaid his glasses, was unable to tell what time it was, though he held his watch as near to his eyeball as he could without touching it. It was, however, his usual time for beginning the day, for at that moment his valet brought in the morning papers.

The following headline in a New York newspaper almost immediately caught his eye, and put an end to any further search for news:

"TRAGIC END OF A EUGENIC ROMANCE.

"Brilliant John Amesbury, Who Married One of America's Greatest Beauties, Killed by a Trolley Car—Widow, Prostrated by News, Not Expected to Recover."

A cut of a handsome young man and a beautiful young woman lent to this unusual item of news a tinge of real tragedy.

Professor Stilliter was out of bed in a twinkling of an eye.

The late John Amesbury's house was at Scarsdale. On the morning in which this narrative opens a number of village boys were pulling off a dog fight in the quiet country road that bordered the narrow front lawn. Tommy Steele, aged twelve, hearing this racket from afar and full of the tragedy which had overtaken the kind and friendly people in the big house, came up on a dead run. His efforts to interfere with the sport and to secure peace and quiet for the sick woman in the house were not met with approval, and indeed for a moment it looked as if the noise of the dog fight was going to be swelled by the noise of a boy fight, a dozen to one. Fortunately for Tommy, the door of the house opened, and a trained nurse, with a long face and a domineering eye, came running down the front walk with an expression so ominous and formidable that without a word spoken, the dogs were dragged apart and the boys made off at high speed. Something in Tommy's face attracted the nurse's attention. She was far kinder than she looked.

"Do you want anything?" she said.

"The papers said," said Tommy, "that Mrs. Amesbury wouldn't get well." He said no more, but his whole attitude and expression was a poignant question. The nurse laid her hand suddenly on his brown head, patted clumsily, shook her own head just the veriest trifle and hurried back to the house.

A shadow fell upon Tommy, and he found himself looking into the immense, thick-rimmed glasses of Professor Stilliter. Intuitively the boy and the man disliked each other. Professor Stilliter would have rather asked almost any other small boy if that was the Amesbury house. Tommy would have preferred to tell almost any other man that it was. Professor Stilliter, his question answered, moved energetically upon the house, and from the maid who answered the bell inquired for the latest bulletin of Mrs. Amesbury. He stepped forward as if to enter the house, and the servant made the least show in the world of shutting the door in his face. Professor Stilliter turned reluctantly away and heard the closing of the door.

At that moment a buggy, driven furiously, stopped at the front gate, and, thanks to his glasses, which gave his helpless eyes an almost hawklike vision, Professor Stilliter recognized Doctor Wainwright, an old acquaintance if not a friend.

"Glad to see you," said Professor Stilliter. "Are you in charge here?"

"Yes," said Doctor Wainwright.

"Then you can help me, and nobody else can. I never knew Amesbury. I don't know his wife, but as a eugenist I was immensely interested in their marriage, and I have a deep scientific interest in seeing the daughter. Now at such a time as this I could not very well force myself upon the household, but if you could slip me in with you as a consulting physician I will be immensely obliged to you, and there will be no talk of splitting fees."

Doctor Wainwright smiled and nodded.

The object of Professor Stilliter's interest was not hard to find. She was seated, forlorn and disconsolate, upon the bottom step of the front stair. Doctor Wainwright picked her up in his arms and kissed her. He made her shake hands with Professor Stilliter.

Professor Stilliter could not conceal the fact that the child's appearance delighted him, and that his appearance did not furnish her with the same delight affected him no more than a duck's back is affected by water. She had been too well brought up and carried her three or four years with too much dignity to run from him and hide, as her instincts prompted her. She did not resist when he lifted her from the floor, asked her age and said, "My, how heavy she was!" She winced a little and flinched a little when he prodded her arms and chest and felt with evident admiration the firm and chubby calves of her legs, and when he made her open her mouth and looked in and murmured, "Colossal!" But when he asked wouldn't she show him the pretty house in which she lived, she did so gladly, for it seemed to put an end to being handled.

For his immediate purpose Professor Stilliter did not need to penetrate beyond the cheerful living room, for here his eyes at once singled out from many three photographs, in which justice had pretty nearly been done, not only to his small companion, but to her famous father and her mother.

"What is that funny thing on the piano?" asked Professor Stilliter. The little girl looked in the direction indicated, and told him that it was a Chinese "ephelent."

During the moment in which he had succeeded in diverting her attention the young man had slipped the three photographs in their folded leather frame into one of his capacious pockets. His mission in the house finished, he asked her if she would give him a kiss. This was a thing which, it seemed to her she could neither accord nor refuse. She simply burst into tears. The professor shrugged his great shoulders, grunted like a pig and abruptly took his departure.

Still weeping, the little girl found her way to a piazza that opened off the living room and a few moments later Tommy Steele, still lingering about the premises, traced the infantile wails to their source. The sight of his sympathetic face above the veranda railing, across which he had thrown one leg, started tears again, for he was her best friend in the world, and she

The Abduction of the Child.

wished to tell him all about the wicked man with the black-rimmed spectacles. Tommy took her on his knee and listened and gave comfort. Presently he took from his pocket a little rag doll, and, very shyly, for now that he looked at it again, it seemed a poor gift, he offered it to her.

CHAPTER II.

There was silence in the room, at once so rich and repressed in its moldings and furnishings, where Gordon Barclay received and gave orders to such of his fellow millionaires as were in his confidence.

Semmes and Sturtevant, of all men deepest in his confidence, were strangely moved. The great man for once had not been dealing with facts, but with fancies. Very quietly and earnestly he had been painting for them that terrific future to which, as he saw it, the restless forces of the world were driving.

It may have been that the presence of Professor Stilliter in the room had a kind of hypnotic effect upon the two men. He stood in shadow against the wainscoting, and his eyes never left the back of their heads.

At first Barclay showed them some of the achievements of capital—steamers too great to be tossed by the waves, interminable freight trains creeping over high trestles, square

She Never Recalled the Long Drive into the Woods.

miles of corrugated iron roofs, the chimneys belching black smoke; streets as bright at midnight as at noon, and as crowded.

And then he showed them some of the failures of capital—men and women starving in hundreds, rotting of disease or perishing of sheer disappointment and despair. Bread lines, soup kitchens he showed them; roofless men dying of exposure. And then in swift flashes he showed them, standing upon a soap box at the corner of a slum, a man in tattered rags, with the forehead of the first Napoleon and the lion-roar voice of Mirabeau—a man who spoke to the wretched and the unfortunate, and the idle and the mischievous, and filled their hearts with fire and passion and hate.

He showed those same men, armed with guns, with poles, with machetes, with hammers, stopping a limousine on Fifth avenue, dragging out an old man in a fur-lined coat and hanging him, more dead than alive, to the nearest lamppost. He showed them that same crowd, ever growing in numbers and anger, tearing a policeman to pieces; he showed them banks and other strongholds of capital that rose suddenly heavenward in puffs of sordid-smelling gray smoke, and were—not.

And he showed them themselves fleeing by night, in disguise, a price upon them, dead or alive; and he showed them Napoleon-Mirabeau bringing order out of chaos, and preparing to hold what he had taken, now begging, now commanding, now wheedling, now killing, and then he showed them battles and leaping cannon—and at last a white flag raised over a fortress, and themselves personally, all three, in the uniform of generals, led forth blindfolded and bound and stood with their backs against a whitewashed wall.

Finally Sturtevant looked his friend and master in the face and said: "Well, what's the answer?"

"I think," said Barclay, "that I have devised a remedy which shall serve us all. Mr. Stilliter."

As Professor Stilliter advanced Mr. Barclay said to the others: "The world's greatest psychologist."

"You do not have to tell us that," said Semmes, and they bowed to the professor.

"Well," said Barclay, "let's have a look at her."

Professor Stilliter drew from his pocket a folded picture frame of red leather.

"But," said Sturtevant, "what is the remedy?"

For answer Barclay simply touched the photograph of the little Amesbury girl with the tip of his finger.

"She is the answer," he said, "but, by the way, Stilliter, what do you hear of the mother?"

Professor Stilliter shrugged his shoulders very slightly.

"Dead?"

"Dying."

Barclay was not unmoved. "She thinks," he said, "that she is only dying of grief. As a matter of fact, she is taking a great place in the march of events."

"What are the child's habits?"

"She has a nap," said Professor Stilliter, "from 10 to 10:30, and from 3 to 3:30. At other times she is mostly out of doors with her nurse. There is a wood back of the house, in which she has a playhouse, a seesaw, etc. If you wished to see her it would be a simple matter, but I am ready to stake my reputation on her. She is absolutely cut to our plan."

"Which," said Semmes, "is so far a complete mystery to Sturtevant and myself."

CHAPTER III.

In spite of Professor Stilliter's guaranty, the triumvirate, as they were both popularly and unpopularly called, determined to have a look at the little Amesbury girl for themselves. Togged out in Indian dress so that she resembled the ornamental side of a cent, they found the object of their search.

"Well," he said brusquely, "am I right? Is she the finest child you ever saw, or isn't she? Just see the breadth of her skull above the ears."

He would have touched her, but she shrank from him. When Barclay, however, spoke to her she showed neither fear nor aversion, only a pleasant shyness.

"I have never seen you before," he said, "but I am very fond of little girls, and since I have none of my own I do not propose to lose sight of you in a hurry."

The little Amesbury girl was of an age when most impressions do not long survive. She would neither remember her father nor her mother nor her nurse, nor her Indian dress, nor the playhouse, nor the seesaw in the woods; but always she had a vague recollection of three great and important personages, who treated her as if she were more important than they were, and who on parting from her bowed over her chubby, dimpled hand and kissed it for all the world as if she had been a princess. It wasn't exactly a recollection, either, for she did not remember their faces nor how they came into her life, nor how they departed. It was more like a dream, only fragments of which here and there survive in the waker's mind. It wasn't altogether a pleasant dream. There mingled with it a certain something of the essence of a nightmare. Whether it was another man in the background or some monstrous beast with extraordinarily large, black-rimmed eyes she did not know.

It is curious that she should remember a little of all this and nothing of that message which came presently from the house—a message brought by one servant to another and crudely blurted forth in the hearing of a child.

"Come quick, Mary, and bring the baby; the missus is dead." She does not remember running to the house between two women, dragged by the hand, and if she did it is most likely that she should remember only the novelty of the swift locomotion, and not the reason that called for it.

The little Amesbury girl continued to live on in her father's house. The law said she might until things were straightened out. There were no relatives to interfere.

But it was a strange life. There was no longer any discipline in the house; even the trained nurse had to go. The servants began to neglect their work and to amuse themselves.

But being neglected by nurse had its advantages, for Tommy Steele came every day to play with her, and often many times in one day. He was a much better nurse than nurse was. He took good care of one all the time, and she loved him with all her heart. Once nurse told them that they could play hide and seek in the wood if they would be very good and not get lost or wet or let rotten trees fall on them or wasps sting them. And that was a morning to be remembered in many ways. Tommy Steele was always "it." At first she would hide behind the nearest tree and make a great deal of noise and peek out to see if Tommy was hunting for her or not. But gradually she learned to keep mum, and to tuck herself into very small places, or to move quietly or to keep mousy still.

Gradually she hid with more and more boldness, running quite long distances before she called "cuckoo," and the last time she went to hide she ran a long way, and just when she had dodged behind a big white oak and was going to call "cuckoo" she found herself looking into the great, round, black-rimmed glasses of Professor Stilliter. Before she could scream he had seized her around the waist with his left arm and had muzzled her with his right hand. Then he picked her up and started to run. As the hand over her mouth prevented her screaming, she simply opened her mouth and bit it.

In his rage and pain Professor Stilliter almost dropped her. He snatched his bitten hand from her mouth, and she began to scream at the top of her lungs, to struggle and kick and to make herself limp between times. And once she twisted clean away from the arm that had her round the waist. Still she was only a little child, and Tommy Steele saved her. He came out upon them in a shower of broken twigs, hatless and bleeding from an altercation with a greenbrier. Professor Stilliter did not at once realize that he was only being attacked by a small boy. He let go of the little girl completely, then tried to catch her, as he realized the caliber of his assailant, in so doing, his attention momentarily diverted, received a savage kick on the ankle bone and something like twenty-five blows upon the head and face. During this assault Professor Stilliter's glasses were knocked from his nose.

It was as if, for his sins, some supernatural power had struck him stone blind.

CHAPTER IV.

That night about twelve o'clock nurse's bed in the little Amesbury girl's room was empty. The house was in darkness, except for the kitchen. From this came sounds of revelry and of a talking machine. The little Amesbury girl dreamed that a man with immense, black-rimmed eyes was bending over her and she waked with a scream.

For once in her life she had dreamed true, for Professor Stilliter was bending over her, and the fingers of his left hand were clasped almost chokingly about her baby throat. In his right hand he held before her eyes a lump of rock crystal the size and shape of a hen's egg. The crystal appeared to exercise an instant fascination upon her. She forgot that she was afraid and that she wanted to scream for help. She even forgot the presence of Professor Stilliter. She thought, indeed, that she was all alone and that somebody had opened a door through which she was at liberty to look into fairyland.

Very far away she heard a voice that said very quietly, "Now you can't scream."

Of course she tried to, and found that she couldn't.

"And now," said the voice, "you can't do anything unless I tell you to. Get up." She slipped obediently out of bed.

"Dress yourself," said the voice.

For the first time in her baby life the little Amesbury girl dressed herself. She even tied her own hair ribbon in a presentable bowknot and buttoned her own tiny boots.

"Now, give me your hand," he said, "and don't make any noise." He led her downstairs and out into the night.

She never afterward recalled anything of the journey to the north woods which she made with Professor Stilliter. The long automobile ride, the Montreal express held up between stations, the long drive into the woods, and, after that, when they had come to the end of the road, the long, toilsome up-and-down-hill tramp, through which she rode first on the shoulders of one man and then on the shoulders of another, until the party came to a wild spot at the foot of the cliff. Here, in the warm spring sunshine on ledges of rock, a number of drowsy rattlesnakes were coiled in a horrid mass. She does not remember that here, as if waiting for her, were three men who wore black masks over their faces.

When the men who had brought her to the foot of the cliff had gone, with the exception of Professor Stilliter, the three masked men removed their masks. So that when Professor Stilliter withdrawn a little so that she should not see him first of all and be frightened, told her to wake up, she looked into the friendly faces of Barclay, Semmes and Sturtevant.

Barclay advanced with great ceremony, dropped on one knee before her

The Child's Appearance Delighted Him.

and kissed her hand for all the world as if she had been a princess. Then Sturtevant came forward and did likewise, and then Semmes.

Although Professor Stilliter had told her to wake up, the spell of the crystal was still upon her like drowsiness after sleep. To reduce her once more to a complete state of hypnosis it was only necessary for him to say quietly, "Go to sleep again."

What looked like a portion of solid cliff rose suddenly, without any sound, and disclosed a black passage that appeared to lead to the bowels of the earth. In the mouth of this passageway stood a handsome woman, a little under middle age. There was a diamond star in her dark hair, and she wore a white garment that fell from her shoulders in stately folds like those of a Roman toga. She came forward, caught the little Amesbury girl up lovingly in her arms, turned, and, without a word, walked back into the passageway and disappeared. For a long time the sound of her sandaled feet upon the rocky floor could be heard. Then the moving portion of the cliff slid slowly and noiselessly back into place, and the four men who remained without turned somewhat slowly to each other.

Barclay was the first to break the silence. "Gentlemen," he said, "fifteen years from today she will leave that cavern and bring the world to her feet—and to ours."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)