Bride of the Yellowstone

By FRANK LOVELL NELSON

How Carlton Clark Solved a Strange, Weird Mystery in the Western Country.

His Telepathic Suggestion Tells of Strange Condition of Affairs—Detective Proves Worth of His Theory When Man is Confronted—Master Mind Finally Triumphs.

THE man was English; that was evident at first glance. Moreover he was of that ubiquitous type of sneering, fault-finding Britisher whose favorite tipple has won him, in the far east, the opprobrious title of "Limejuicer." The woman—well, we had more difficulty in classifying her. The accent and the clothes were English beyond the possibility of the most charitable error. But the piquant, sad face, the soulful brown eyes, the cheeks of dark but wholesome and even color, the full red lips, the small and delicately molded features, these were legacies perhaps of French ancestors, more likely tokens of that conglomerate strain now called the American type; but English, never.

As she came opposite my elbow she raised her head and gave me a look full in the eyes, a look so full of helpless appeal that it startled me.

Our drawing-room connected with the stateroom of the English couple by a door so that the two might on occasion be thrown together en suite.

I looked down and saw the corner of an envelope appear. I called Clarke's attention and we watched it until the entire envelope, a long, white one, stuffed so full of papers that it went under the door with difficulty, lay on the floor at our feet.

"Our pretty Hason progresses," whispered Clarke. "There is a billet doux for you."

I hastily seized the envelope and emptied its contents on the reading table. And then Clarke and I stared and gaped in helpless and idiotic astonishment. Before us lay bonds of the United Zinc Corporation to the value of $750,000.

With them was a single sheet of note paper with the crest of the Los Angeles limited at the top. Clarke and I read it silently.

"To Mr. Carlton Clarke: I am taking what I believe to be the only course to save these papers and my life. By the time we reach Old Faithful inn I hope to devise some disposition to ask you to make of them. Until then guard them well. I know I can trust you. Destroy this note at once. Lady Ethelbert Snively."

After breakfast at Yellowstone station the next morning our entire party, numbering about 50, were loaded into the big M.-Y. stages for the 32-mile drive to the Upper Geyser basin and Old Faithful inn. Clarke and I had a surrey to ourselves in charge of one Bo Hughes. "Bo" being Yellowstone slang for driver. We also traveled "special." That is, we were relieved from adhering to the regular schedule laid down by the stage company.

We reached the Fountain lunch station and the Lower Geyser basin in advance of the rest of the party and Clarke roused to his duty sufficiently to walk out with me over the "formation," as the acres of limestone deposit made by the geysers is officially and technically known. Here again we met my lord and lady when the rest of the tourists came up, and were grouped reverently in a circle to watch the Fountain geyser play. Lady Snively clapped her hands in glee as the boiling water, throwing clouds of soothing steam, shot 50 feet in the air.

The shadows of the western snow-peaks were lengthening when we drew up, in advance of the rest of the party, again by virtue of our "special," before the log portals of that wonderful piece of forest architecture, Old Faithful inn.

I was assigned to room 17 and Clarke to room 18. Lord and Lady Snively followed us and drew No. 19. Whatever the destiny that bound us together it seemed unbroken.

"This would be a dangerous place to travel about on at night, Bo," I said to Hughes as we clambered up and down the mounds of calcareous deposit, between bottomless pools of boiling water, peering down into the growling, sulphurous depths of the "Lion and the Cubs," threading the treacherous and precipitous sides of the "Grotto" and feeling beneath our feet the hollow crunch of the crust that seemed but a thin partition between the beautiful world above and the regions of the inferno beneath.

"You're mighty right," answered Hughes. "I never knowed of but one man that ever come over here at night and he wandered out o' the hotel, drunk er crazy er somethin', and never showed up no more. No sir, I reckon there's a devil awaitin' at the bottom of every one o' these here holes with a hook. Why, even the swattles, that's the soldiers, you know, what's detailed out here, like that fellow over there, to see that the tourists don't carry off none o' the formation, they couldn't no more be dragged out here at night than you could get a cow puncher to herd sheep."

It was all innocent enough at dinner.

"But my deah," drawled the husband, "you surely cawn't believe all that beastly rot. Cawn't a fellow have a beastly clipping in his bag without being a bloomin' crook? Haven't I brought you out to this beastly hole and given you everything you wanted?"

"Yes, with my own money," interrupted the wife.

"You know I couldn't stay in London another day with the beastly hay fever coming on, Alice. Now, what have you done with those papers?"

"Yes, I knew you had searched my luggage, liar. Don't give yourself any false hopes. You will never see them again."

"Thea—" The sentence was lost in a hiss of rage.

"Oh, yes. I know you are perfectly capable of killing me just as you did those other women."

"Great guns, she's making for the formation! It's suicide," I whispered.

We reached the edge of the treacherous sea of alternate limestone and boiling water. There, already far out upon it, was the woman dashing blindly and heedlessly along with instant and awful death on either side of her. Behind her the man picked his way carefully and cautiously.

And so in Indian file we started, following Hughes and picking our way gingerly between the spurting jets of steam.

The woman had stopped her headlong flight and was kneeling on the formation as if in prayer. In her clasped, uplifted hands we saw the glint of polished metal. Behind her the husband crept with outstretched arms. Closer and closer he came, but she seemed unmindful of his presence. Were we to witness a murder or a suicide prevented? It was hard to tell.

We could do nothing but stand idly by and await the denouement. To cry out, to advance, would be but to precipitate the tragedy. Clarke dropped on one knee and drew a careful bead on the advancing man. Bo Hughes did the same. As for me I was too fascinated for action.

Suddenly there was a scream of agonized fear. The man threw up his hands and disappeared as if the earth had swallowed him up. Veritably it had, for when we rushed to the spot where we had last seen him we found only the boiling, swirling waters of "The Devil Well."

"Thank God!" she exclaimed. "I fear it is wicked to feel so, but it is better than suicide for me or hanging for him."

The absence of Lord Snively would be a difficult thing to explain at the hotel and none of us relished the idea of an inquest with its consequent delay, to say nothing of the incriminating colors with which suspicious minds might invest the events of the night. But manifestly there was nothing to be done but to tell the truth and so Clarke and I took Lady Snively between us and piloted by Hughes we picked our way carefully back over the quarter of a mile of treacherous formation. When we set foot on solid and safe ground again "Old Faithful" was just beginning to play. He had played just as we started out and so, according to his schedule, maintained throughout the centuries, we had been on the formation just 69 minutes. It had not seemed more than ten.

When we reached the hotel we found two very potent agencies at work in our favor: Clarke's reputation, which had penetrated even into the Yellowstone, and Bo Hughes, whose straight story admitted of no doubt. Without the knowledge of a single one of our fellow passengers it was quietly arranged that we should all proceed in the morning by a special stage in charge of Hughes to Mammouth station at the northern end of the park there to make report to the cavalry colonel in command. This plan admitted of a few hours' sleep of which we hastened to take advantage.

"And now, Lady Snively," began Clarke, when we were comfortably stowed away in the stage the next morning, "perhaps you can tell us your story and we can advise you as to the future."

"Please do not call me Lady Snively," answered the brave little woman. "That name was my undoing and henceforth I am content to be plain Alice Hathaway. The story is brief and if it would only prove a warning to all foolish American girls I would feel that I have not lived it in vain. My father died when I was 18. He was one of the organizers of the United States Zinc Corporation, but before his death he had converted all of his stock into bonds. I was an only child and I suddenly found myself in the possession of the bonds which you have now. That was two years ago. I was young and foolish and my ideas of life had been gained from reading fiction, not the best, I believe. When a real lord in the person of Lord Snively met me and asked my hand in marriage I was innocent enough to believe I was making a great match.

"We went first to London. The world and the future looked lovely for a time, but the dream was soon dispelled. Suspicion began to gnaw upon my happiness when, instead of proceeding at once to his ancestral castle in Surrey as he had promised, we suddenly packed in an hour and made a hurried return to the United States. On the passage home I found in his luggage a newspaper clipping that set me thinking all the harder. It was the story of some villain in England who, under various names, was suspected of marrying a number of women, securing possession of their wealth and then murdering them."

"J. Frederick Bannister was it not?" interrupted Clarke. "Do you know, Sexton, I rather suspected from the first it was him. He was a sort of English Johann Hoch and went under a number of aliases."

"Yes, Bannister was one of the names used and the description in the paper fitted him so perfectly that struggle as I might against the awful thought I could not get it out of my mind. He knew of my wealth and knew the safe deposit company with which it was kept. I determined to draw it out secretly and place it elsewhere. I had secured the papers when, with the suddenness that marked all his movements, he told me we were going to the Yellowstone. I had no opportunity to place the bonds anywhere, so closely did he watch me. I am now convinced he knew I had them on my person for our journey was a constant series of quarrels over the question of my placing all my fortune in his hands that he might redeem from mortgage his ancestral estates.

"During one of these quarrels, about the time we reached Chicago, I charged him directly with the clipping I had found in his luggage. His first look of terror and anger told me the shaft had struck and then he became the same inscrutable, oily villain as before. But I knew the truth and I knew that upon my wits alone rested the safety of my fortune and my life.

"When you gentlemen entered the train I studied you closely. Then I learned Mr. Clarke's name and it was at once familiar to me because Mrs. Richard King, whom I know quite well, had told me of your wonderful work and how you had rescued her and her husband from the wiles of a worker of black magic. I knew I could trust you.

"You received the note I slipped through the crack in the wall, Mr. Clarke, directing the disposition of my fortune in case of my death?"

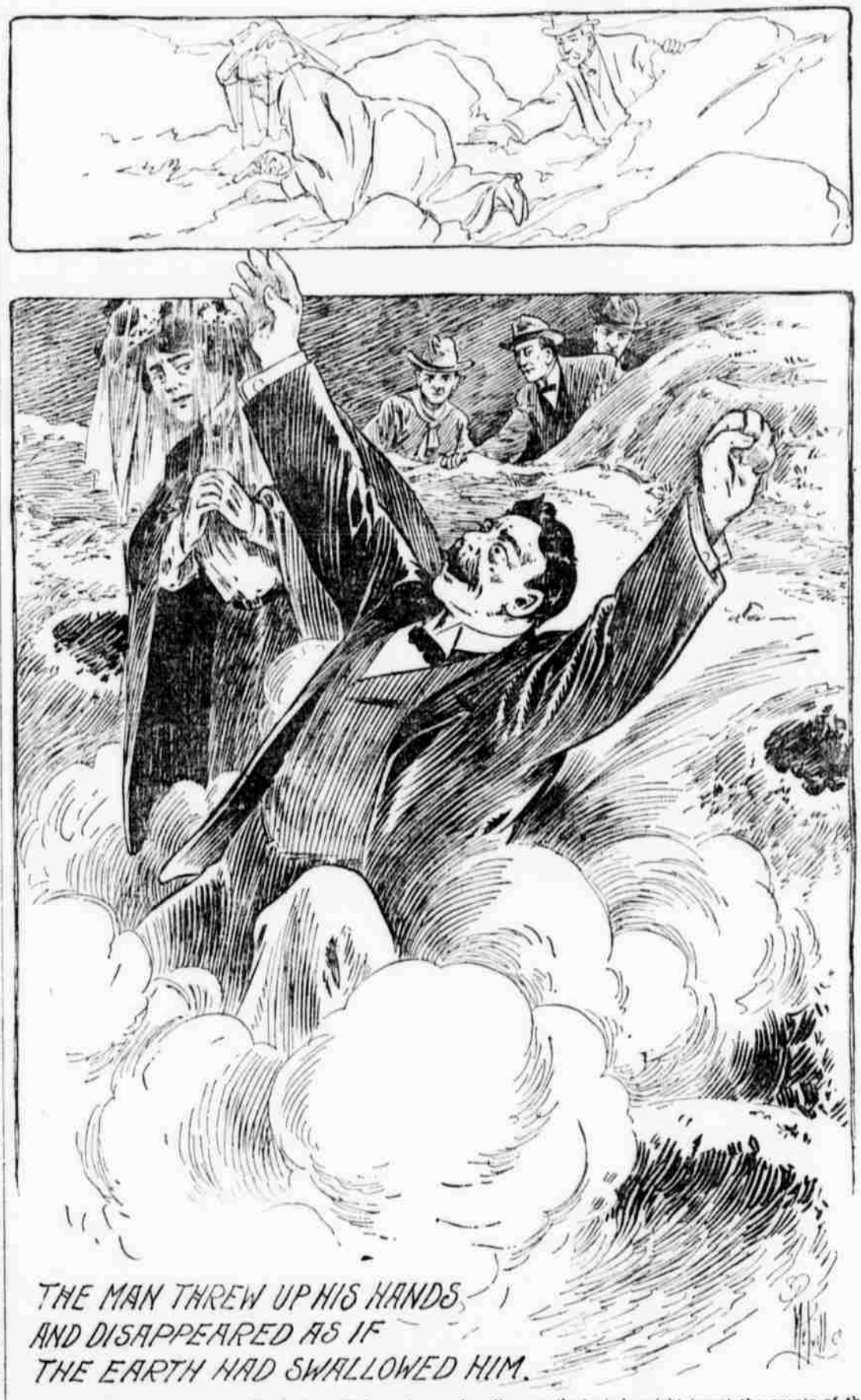
"Yes, I received it all right," answered Clarke. "But now I have the happiness to be able to restore it to its rightful owner living."

We found the commandant at Mammouth a most reasonable man. He was fully satisfied with our story, exacting only the promise, readily given, I assure you, that we would keep him advised of our whereabouts in case powers above him should wish to inquire more closely into the matter. The stage company also treated us with marked consideration in insisting that we should resume our interrupted tour as their honored guests. Lady Snively, or Miss Hathaway, as we now called her, we saw safely on the train at Granger bound for the east, her fellow passengers no doubt little suspecting that she carried with her almost a king's ransom.

"Do you know," remarked Clarke, after we had resumed our sightseeing, "women are always unreasonable. If she really wanted to make away with herself why did she wander over almost three-quarters of a mile of formation with certain death on either side of her to do it with a pistol?"

As the question involved a problem that dates from Adam's loss of a rib it necessarily remained unanswered.

We never saw Miss Hathaway again, but twice each year Clarke and I receive each the interest upon $10,000 worth of bonds of the United States Zinc Corporation. I suppose the bonds stand in our names, else why should they send us the interest? But I am sure neither of us is conscious of having earned any such reward.



THE MAN THREW UP HIS HANDS AND DISAPPEARED AS IF THE EARTH HAD SWALLOWED HIM.

LEFT IT TO MRS. BROWN.

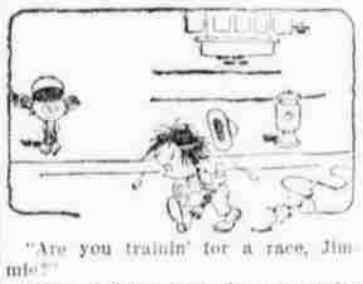
Reverend Gentleman Very Willing to Evade Responsibility.

The trust and dependence which characterized Rev. Mr. Brown's attitude toward his wife's judgment in all practical affairs were sometimes touching, but occasionally they were amusing.

"I'm sorry you've been troubled with the toothache," said the family dentist, when Mr. Brown appeared in his office one day. "I gave you the first minute I had free after receiving your wife's telephone message. Let's see, which tooth is it that's troubling you?"

"M-m, it's not aching just at present," said Mr. Brown, after a moment's hesitation, during which he made a cautious investigation with his tongue. "Didn't Mrs. Brown mention to you which tooth it was? I always rely on her in such matters."—Youth's Companion.

REASON FOR EXERCISING.



"Are you trainin' for a race, Jimmie?"

"Naw, we're goin' to have meat for dinner to-day an' I'm gettin' up an appetite."

Too Rough for the Cows.

Mrs. Rorer, of cook-book fame, tells of seeing a maid drop and break a beautiful platter at a dinner recently, says Everybody's Magazine. The host did not permit a trifle like this to ruffle him in the least.

"These little accidents happen most every day," he said, apologetically. "You see, she isn't a trained waitress. She was a dairymaid originally but she had to abandon that occupation on account of her inability to handle the cows without breaking their horns."

The Usual Luck.

Hewitt—That new watch of yours is a beauty.

Jewitt—Yes, but I don't get any chance to show it; whenever anybody asks what time it is somebody is sure to see a clock before I can get my watch out.

Development.

"Remember," said the earnest inventor, "it ain't so very many years since the telephone caused laughter."

"That's true," answered the man who has trouble with central. "At first it caused laughter; now it causes profanity."

Hoax—"There's one thing that will give you the shake and yet stay right with you." Joax—"What can that be?" Hoax—"Chills and fever."

Talk not of a good life, but let thy good life talk.—Schiller.

If you have anything to do, do it; don't loaf on the job.

One cannot quarrel if the other will not.