



SYNOPSIS.

George Anderson and wife see a remarkable looking man come out of the Clermont hotel, look around furtively, wash his hands in the snow and pass on. Commotion attracts them to the Clermont, where it is found that the beautiful Miss Edith Challoner has fallen dead. Anderson describes the man as raw, wash his hands in the snow. The hotel manager declares him to be Orlando Brotherson. Physicians find that Miss Challoner was stabbed and not shot. Gryce, an aged detective, and Sweetwater, a young girl, take up the case. Mr. Challoner tells of a batch of letters found in his daughter's desk, signed "O. B." All are love letters except one, which shows that the writer was displeased.

This letter was signed by Orlando Brotherson. Anderson goes with Sweetwater to identify Brotherson, who is found in a tenement under the name of Dunn. He is an inventor. Brotherson tells the coroner Miss Challoner repulsed him with scorn when he offered her his love. Sweetwater is struck by the mystery of the murder of a washerwoman in which some details were similar to the Challoner affair. Sweetwater gets lodgings in the same building with Brotherson. He borrows in the way to spy on Brotherson. He finds him and sees the inventor in his workshop. A girl sent by Sweetwater with Edith Challoner's letters is ordered out by Brotherson. He declares the letters were not written by him. Sweetwater is unmoved by Brotherson's denial and recognizes him at once. The discovery is made that the letters signed "O. B." were written by two different men. Sweetwater goes to Derby in search of the second "O. B." who is expected to be located there. Doris Scott is mentioned in the letters. She is found acting as nurse for Oswald Brotherson, who is critically sick and calls the name of Edith in his delirium. Sweetwater comes across a peculiar hub in the window. He sees a load of boxes marked "O. Brotherson" come into the hub under the supervision of Doris Scott. Doris tells Challoner of seeing in a dream the face of the man who killed Edith. The door bell rings and is recognized in the visitor, the man of her dream. It is Orlando Brotherson, who requests an interview with his brother. It develops that Orlando is working on a flying machine. Oswald is told of Edith's death. Orlando tells his brother of his desire by Mr. Challoner. Orlando asks his brother to assist in tests of his air car, as he can trust no one else. Oswald refuses owing to his weakened condition. Sweetwater offers his services as an assistant and shows he knows something of Brotherson's idea.

CHAPTER XXXVII.—Continued

Great God! he sees it! They all see it! Plainly against that portion of the disk which still lifted itself above the further wall, a curious moving mass appears, lengthens, takes on shape, then shoots suddenly aloft, clearing the encircling tops of the bending, twisting and tormented trees, straight into the heart of the gale, where for one breathless moment it whirls madly about like a thing distraught, then in slow but triumphant obedience to the master hand that guides it, steadies and mounts majestically upward till it is lost to their view in the depths of impenetrable darkness.

Orlando Brotherson has accomplished his task. He has invented a mechanism which can send an air-car straight up from its mooring place. As the three watchers realize this, Oswald utters a cry of triumph, and Doris throws herself into Mr. Challoner's arms. Then they all stand transfixed again, waiting for a descent which may never come.

But hark! a new sound, mingling its clatter with all the others. It is the rain. Quick, maddening, drenching, it comes; enveloping them in wet in a moment. Can they hold their faces up against it?

And the wind! Surely it must toss that aerial messenger before it and fling it back to earth, a broken and despised toy.

"Orlando?" went up in a shriek. "Orlando?"

Oh, for a ray of light in those far-off heavens! For a lull in the tremendous sounds shivering the heavens and shaking the earth! But the tempest rages on, and they can only wait, five minutes, ten minutes, looking, hoping, fearing, without thought of self and almost without thought of each other, till suddenly as it had come, the rain ceases and the wind, with one final wail of rage and defeat, rushes away into the west, leaving behind it a sudden silence which, to their terrified hearts, seems almost more dreadful to bear than the accumulated noises of the moment just gone.

Orlando was in that shout of natural forces, but he is not in this stillness. They look aloft, but the heavens are void. Emptiness is where life was. Oswald begins to sway, and Doris, remembering him now and him only, has thrown her strong young arm about him, when—what is this sound they hear high up, high up, in the rapidly clearing vault of the heavens? A throb—a steady pant—drawing near and yet nearer—entering the circle of great branches over their heads—descending, slowly descending—till they catch another glimpse of those hazy outlines which had no sooner taken shape than the car disappeared from their sight within the elliptical wall open to receive it.

It had survived the gale! It has re-entered its haven, and that, too, without colliding with aught around or any shock to those within, just as Orlando had promised; and the world was henceforth his! Hail to Orlando Brotherson!

Orlando could hardly restrain his mad joy and enthusiasm. Bounding to the door separating him from this conqueror of almost invincible forces, he pounded it with impatience.

"Let me in!" he cried. "You've

INITIALS ONLY

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"THE FILIGREE BALL" "THE HOUSE OF THE WHISPERS, PINES"
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done the trick, Orlando, you've done the trick."

"Yes, I have satisfied myself," came back in studied self-control from the other side of the door; and with a quick turning of the lock, Orlando stood before them.

They never forgot him as he looked at that moment. He was drenched, battered, palpitating with excitement; but the majesty of success was in his eye and in the bearing of his incomparable figure.

As Oswald bounded towards him, he reached out his hand, but his glance was for Doris.

"Yes," he went on, in tones of suppressed elation, "there's no flaw in my triumph. I have done all that I set out to do. Now—"

Why did he stop and look hurriedly back into the hangar? He had remembered Sweetwater, Sweetwater, who at that moment was stepping carefully from his seat in some remote portion of the car. The triumph was not complete. He had meant—

But there his thought stopped. Nothing of evil, nothing even of regret should mar his great hour. He was a conqueror, and it was for him now to reap the joy of conquest.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Night.

Three days had passed, and Orlando Brotherson sat in his room at the hotel before a table laden with telegrams, letters and marked newspapers. The news of his achievement had gone abroad, and Derby was, for the moment, the center of interest for two continents.

His success was an established fact. The second trial which he had made with his car, this time with the whole town gathered together in the streets as witnesses, had proved not only the reliability of its mechanism, but the great advantages which it possessed for a direct flight to any given point. Already he saw fortune beckoning to him in the shape of an unconditional offer of money from a first-class source; and better still—for he was a man of untiring energy and boundless resource—that opportunity for new and enlarged effort which comes with the recognition of one's exceptional powers.

All this was his and more. A sweet hope, a more enduring joy had followed hard upon gratified ambition. Doris had smiled on him—Doris! She had caught the contagion of the universal enthusiasm and had given him her first ungrudging token of approval. It had altered his whole outlook on life in an instant, for there was an eagerness in this demonstration which proclaimed the relieved heart. She no longer trusted either appearances or her dream. He had succeeded in conquering her doubts by the very force of his personality, and the shadow which had hitherto darkened their intercourse had melted quite away. She was ready to take his word now and Oswald's, after which the rest must follow. Love does not lag far behind an ardent admiration.

Fame! Fortune! Love! What more could a man desire? What could this man, with his strenuous past and an unlimited capacity for an enlarged future, ask from fate than this. Yet, as he bends over his letters, fingering some, but reading none beyond a line or two, he betrays but a passing elation, and hardly lifts his head when a burst of loud acclaim comes ringing up to his window from some ardent passer-by: "Hurrah for Brotherson! He has put our town on the map!"

Why this despondency? Have those two demons seized him again? It would seem so and with new and overwhelming fury. After the hour of triumph comes the hour of reckoning. Orlando Brotherson in his hour of profound attainment stands naked before his own soul's tribunal and the pleader is dumb and the judge inexorable. There is but one witness to such struggles; but one eye to note the waste and desolation of the devastated soul, when the storm is overpast.

Orlando Brotherson has succumbed; the attack was too keen, his forces too shaken. But as the heavy minutes pass, he slowly regathers his strength and rises, in the end, a conqueror. Nevertheless, he knows, even in that moment of regained command, that the peace he had thus bought with strain and stress is but momentary; that the battle is on for life; that the days which to other eyes would carry a sense of brilliancy—days teeming with work and outward satisfaction—would hold within their hidden depths a brooding uncertainty which would rob applause of its music and even overshadow the angel face of Love.

He quailed at the prospect, materialist though he was. The days—the innumerable days! In his unbroken strength and the glare of the noonday sun, he forgot to take account of the nights looming in black and endless procession before him. It was from the day phantom he shrank, and not from the ghoul which works in the

darkness and makes a grave of the heart while happier mortals sleep.

And the former terror seemed formidable enough to him in this his hour of startling realization, even if he had freed himself for the nonce from its controlling power. To escape all further contemplation of it he would work. These letters deserved attention. He would carry them to Oswald, and in their consideration find distraction for the rest of the day, at least. Oswald was a good fellow. If pleasure were to be gotten from these tokens of good-will, he should have his share of it. A gleam of Oswald's old spirit in Oswald's once bright eye, would go far thwarts throttling one of those demons whose talons he had just released from his throat; and if Doris responded too, he would deserve his fate, if he did not succeed in gaining that mastery of himself which would make such hours as these episodes in a life big with interest and potent with great emotions.

Rising with a resolute air, he made a bundle of his papers and, with them in hand, passed out of his room and down the hotel stairs.

A man stood directly in his way, as he made for the front door. It was Mr. Challoner.

Courtesy demanded some show of recognition between them, and Brotherson was passing with his usual cold bow, when a sudden impulse led him to pause and meet the other's eye, with the sarcastic remark:

"You have expressed, or so I have been told, some surprise at my choice of mechanician. A man of varied accomplishments, Mr. Challoner, but one for whom I have no further use. If, therefore, you wish to call off your watch-dog, you are at liberty to do so. I hardly think he can be serviceable to either of us much longer."

The older gentleman hesitated, seeking for possibility for compposure, and when he answered it was not only without irony but with a certain forced respect:

"Mr. Sweetwater has just left for New York, Mr. Brotherson. He will carry with him, no doubt, the full particulars of your great success."

Orlando bowed, this time with distinguished grace. Not a flicker of relief had disturbed the calm serenity of his aspect, yet when a moment later, he stepped among his shouting admirers in the street, his air and glance betrayed a bounding joy for which another source must be found than that of gratified pride. A chain had slipped from his spirit, and though the people shrank a little even while they cheered, it was rather from awe of his bearing and the recognition of the sense of apartness which underlay his smile than from any perception of the man's real nature or of the awesome purpose which at that moment exalted it. But had they known—could they have seen into this tumultuous heart—what a silence would have settled upon these noisy streets; and in what terror and soul-confusion would each man have slunk away from his fellows into the quiet and solitude of his own home.

Brotherson himself was not without a sense of the incongruity underlying this ovation; for, as he slowly worked himself along, the brightness of his look became dimmed with a tinge of sarcasm which in its turn gave way to an expression of extreme melancholy—both quite unbecoming the hero of the hour in the first flush of his new-born glory. Had he seen Doris' youthful figure emerge for a moment from the vine-hung porch he was approaching, bringing with it some doubt of the reception awaiting him? Possibly, for he made a stand before he reached the house, and sent his followers back; after which he advanced with an unHurrying step, so that several minutes elapsed before he finally drew up before Mr. Scott's door and entered through the now empty porch into his brother's sitting-room.

He had meant to see Doris first, but his mind had changed. If all passed off well between himself and Oswald, if he found his brother responsive and wide-awake to the interests and necessities of the hour, he might forego his interview with her till he felt better prepared to meet it. For call it cowardice or simply a reasonable precaution, any delay seemed preferable to him in his present mood of discouragement, to that final casting of the die upon which hung so many and such tremendous issues. It was the first moment of real half in his whole tumultuous life! Never, as darling experimentalist or agitator, had he shrunk from danger seen or unseen or from threat uttered or unuttered, as he shrank from this young girl's no; and something of the dread he had felt lest he should encounter her unaware in the hall and so be led on to speak when his own judgment bade him be silent, darkened his features as he entered his brother's presence.

But Oswald was sunk in a bitter reverie of his own, and took no heed of these signs of depression. In the reaction following these days of great excitement, the past had re-asserted itself, and all was gloom in his once

generous soul. This, Orlando had time to perceive, quick as the change came when his brother really realized who his visitor was. The glad "Orlando!" and the forced smile did not deceive him, and his voice quavered a trifle as he held out his packet with the words:

"I have come to show you what the world says of my invention. We will soon be great men," he emphasized, as Oswald opened the letters. "Money has been offered me and—read! read!" he urged, with an unconscious dictatorialness as Oswald paused in his task. "See what the fates have prepared for us; for you shall share all my honors, as you will from this day share my work and enter into all my experiments. Cannot you enthuse a little bit over it? Doesn't the prospect contain any allurement for you? Would you rather stay locked up in this patty town?"

"Yes; or—die. Don't look like that, Orlando. It was a cowardly speech and I ask your pardon. I'm hardly fit to talk today. Edith."

Orlando frowned.

"Not that name!" he harshly interrupted. "You must not hamper your life with useless memories. That dream of yours may be sacred, but it belongs to the past, and a great reality confronts you. When you have fully recovered your health, your own manhood will rebel at a weakness unworthy one of our name. Rouse yourself, Oswald. Take account of our prospects. Give me your hand and say: 'Life holds something for me yet. I have a brother who needs me if I do not need him. Together, we can prove ourselves invincible and wrench fame and fortune from the world!'"

But the hand he reached for did not rise at his command, though Oswald started erect and faced him with manly earnestness.

"I should have to think long and deeply," he said, "before I took upon myself responsibilities like these. I am broken in mind and heart, Orlando, and must remain so till God mercifully delivers me. I should be a poor assistant to you—a drag, rather than a help. Deeply as I deplore it, that as it may be for one of your temperament to understand so complete an overthrow, I yet must acknowledge my condition and pray you not to count upon me in any plans you may form. I know how this looks—I know that as your brother and truest

admirer, I should respond, and respond strongly, to such overtures as these, but the motive for achievement is gone. She was my all; and while I might work, it would be mechanically. The lift, the elevating thought is gone."

Orlando stood a moment studying his brother's face; then he turned shortly about and walked the length of the room. When he came back, he took up his stand again directly before Oswald, and asked, with a new note in his voice:

"Did you love Edith Challoner so much at that?"

A glance from Oswald's eye, sadder than any tear.

"So that you cannot be reconciled?"

A gesture. Oswald's words were always few.

Orlando's frown deepened.

"Such grief I partly understand," said he. "But time will cure it. Some day another lovely face."

"We'll not talk of that, Orlando."

"No, we'll not talk of that," acquiesced the inventor, walking away again, this time to the window. "For you there's but one woman—and she's a memory."

"Killed!" broke from his brother's lips. "Slain by her own hand under an impulse of wildness and terror! Can I ever forget that? Do not expect it, Orlando."

"Then you do blame me?" Orlando turned and was looking full at Oswald.

"I blame your unreasonableness and your overweening pride."

Orlando stood a moment, then moved towards the door. The heavy

ness of his step smote upon Oswald's ear and caused him to exclaim:

"Forgive me, Orlando." But the other cut him short with an imperative:

"Thanks for your candor! If her spirit is destined to stand like an immovable shadow between you and me, you do right to warn me. But this interview must end all illusion to the subject. I will seek and find another man to share my fortunes! (as he said this he approached suddenly, and took his papers from the other's hand) or—"

Here he hastily retraced his steps to the door which he softly opened.

"Or," he repeated—but though Oswald listened for the rest, it did not come. While he waited, the other had given him one deeply concentrated look and passed out.

No heartfelt understanding was possible between these two men.

Crossing the hall, Orlando knocked at the door of Doris' little sitting-room.

No answer yet she was there. He knew it in every throbbing fiber of his body. She was there and quite aware of his presence; of this he felt sure; yet she did not bid him enter. Should he knock again? Never! but he would not quit the threshold, not if she kept him waiting there for hours. Perhaps she realized this. Perhaps she had meant to open the door to him from the very first, who can tell? What avails is that she did ultimately open it, and he, meeting her soft eye, wished from his very heart that his impulse had led him another way, even if that way had been to the edge of the precipice—and over.

For the face he looked upon was serene, and there was no serenity in him; rather a confusion of unleashed passions fearful of barrier and yearning tumultuously for freedom. But whatever his revolt, the secret revolt which makes no show in look or movement, he kept his ground and forced a smile of greeting. If her face was gone, it was also lovely—too lovely, he felt, for a man to leave it, whatever might come of his lingering.

Nothing in all his life had ever affected him like it. For him there was no other woman in the past, the present or the future, and realizing this—taking in to the full what her affection and her trust might be to him in those fearsome days to come, he so dreaded a rebuff—he, who had been the courted of women and the admired of men ever since he could remember—that he failed to respond to her welcome and the simple congratulations she felt forced to repeat. He could neither speak the commonplace, nor listen to it. This was his crucial hour. He must find support here, or yield hopelessly to the maelstrom in whose whirl he was caught.

She saw his excitement and faltered back a step—a move which she regretted the next minute, for he took advantage of it to enter and close behind him the door which she would never have shut of her own accord. Then he spoke, abruptly, passionately, but in those golden tones which no emotion could render other than alluring:

"I am an unhappy man, Miss Scott. I see that my presence here is not welcome, yet am sure that it would be so if it were not for a prejudice which your generous nature should be the first to cast aside, in face of the outspoken confidence of my brother Oswald. Doris, little Doris, I love you. I have loved you from the moment of our first meeting. Not to many men is it given to find his heart so late, and when he does, it is for his whole life; no second passion can follow it. I know that I am premature in saying this; that you are not prepared to hear such words from me and that it might be wiser for me to withhold them, but I must leave Derby soon, and I cannot go until I know whether this is the least hope that you will yet lend a light to my career or whether that career must burn itself to ashes at your feet. Oswald—nay, hear me out—Oswald lives in his memories; but I must have an active hope—a tangible expectation—if I am to be the man I was meant to be. Will you then, coldly dismiss me, or will you let my whole future life prove to you the innocence of my past? I will not hasten anything; all I ask is some indulgence. Time will do the rest."

"Impossible," she murmured.

But that was a word for which he had no ear. He saw that she was moved, unexpectedly so; that while her eyes wandered restlessly at times towards the door, they ever came back in girlish wonder, if not fascination, to his face, emboldening him so that