

A PAIR OF RUBBERS.

By GEORGE ELMER COBB.

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Irrationally jealous, piqued, angry at pretty innocent Doris Blake, mad at himself and feeling resentful toward the world at large, Cyril Vance lifted his hat resentfully as he passed the name of Miss Ophelia Billin.

It was also the home of that lady's adopted niece, Doris, and there the cankered anxiety rested. She and Vance had been something more than friends for over a year. He had been pretty exclusively in her company, and he had fired up very forcibly when a close friend remarked to him:

"I see that Rutgers fellow has broken into the good graces of the Blakes."

"That Rutgers fellow" was a dashing young man who had come to the town a week previous. He was looking for a factory site, he gave it out, and had plenty of money, good clothes.

"All dash and glitter" was the way Vance set him down, and the next day when Rutgers dashed by in an automobile in company with Miss Ophelia and her pretty niece, there could be but one conclusion to the presentation.

Doris was, of course, the attraction, for Miss Blake was a confirmed old maid. Vance paid no attention to a casual suggestion he overheard that as Miss Blake owned considerable property about town the alleged factory representative might be negotiating with her for a building site.

And now, as Vance observed the lady in question seated on the porch with Rutgers and her niece, he paid no attention to a pleading, inviting expression upon the face of Doris.

"I'll drop her if she is encouraging that braggart fop!" soliloquized Vance hotly, but at dusk the ensuing evening strolled past the Blake home, secretly hoping that Doris would appear.

Victor, his faithful dog, ran up on the porch as if reminding the young man of his many past visits, but Vance kept on. Beside the door was a pair of rubbers, man's size, and within the lighted room Vance caught sight of his fancied rival.

He whistled to the dog and strode on, never noticing that the animal carried something between his teeth until they came under a lamp post.

"Here, what have you got?" challenged Vance, and as Victor laid a rubber at his feet Vance plucked it up. At once he comprehended that it was one of those he had noticed on the Blake porch. As he turned it over he observed causally a deep brownish stain where the instep curved. He was debating if he should repass the house and restore the rubber to its companion when he was conscious that a keen-eyed man was at his side interestedly regarding the fished rubber.

"Yours?" he inquired.

"No," reported Vance curtly. "My dog took it from a porch down the street."

"Where—where porch?" pursued the stranger.

"Second house back. Why do you ask?" demanded Vance suspiciously. The man mumbled something about being an inquisitive sort of a fellow and as Vance turned around and retraced his steps flung the rubber over the fence of the Blake home. The stranger watched Vance closely and then disappeared in the darkness. Later, through a cautious detour, he reached the Blake home, glided up to the porch and carried away both rubbers and chuckled in a pleased though sinister way.

The town had been greatly stirred up two days previous by the announcement that the great tannery at the edge of the town had been visited the night previous, its office broken into and a small fortune in cash and Liberty bonds secured from its safe. Officers from the county seat had been sent for and Vance, thinking later of the inquisitive stranger, wondered if he was not some detective attempting to ferret out the perpetrators of the burglary.

It was the next morning that Vance came face to face with Doris turning a corner. He flushed with some embarrassment and paled as though under a sudden, some trepid emotion.

"You ... you ... been in the house lately, I ... I ... been in the ... I ... I ... half expected you to be."

"You seem to have plenty of company," retorted Vance and then was ashamed of himself, for the quick tears came into those gentle eyes.

"You mean this Bryce Rutgers," said Doris. "It is of him I have wished to speak to you all along. Oh, Cyril, he has made an impression on Aunt Ophelia and I am nearly distressed. I know he is after the property and that he is not the kind of a man who means what he says. Can you not do something to save poor sentimental Aunt Ophelia?"

At that moment the mysterious man of the evening previous came into sight. He looked invitingly at Vance and then beckoned to him.

"Those robbers belonged to that Rutgers fellow," he said. "I owe a successful case to you. The minute I saw the red marks of the hemlock pit at the tannery I knew the fellow was the man I was after. I nabbed him and most of the plunder. I have sent him to the county seat to have him tried."

Aunt Ophelia took the dissolute son of her fond single-life romance rather hard, but only for a time. Then she settled down to making the reunited lovers happy.

THE STRAIGHT PATH.

By WALTER DELANEY.

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Wade Denham was in bad company and was ashamed of it. When he looked back upon the time when he was the trusted employee of a large grain firm, socially recognized and with apparently promising prospects, and contrasted that condition with the present he drooped his head humiliated and disheartened.

The more so because the little home-like cottage at the door of which Ben Devins, bold and aggressive, had asked for something to eat had for its mistress a refined, white-haired old lady who scolded Ben in a shrinking, fearsome way, but plain pity came into her face as her eyes rested upon his younger companion, and she murmured something about "better days." Then she called:

"Myra, dear, come here."

Then had appeared a young girl of perhaps twenty, fair of form and feature. Her eyes, too, pierced the mask of unkemptness of the young fellow whose rags and unshaven face showed that he was not in his right element.

The young lady made no comment but went back into the house and reappeared with some cold meat, bread and butter and a pitcher of milk. Ben proceeded to dispatch two-thirds of the lunch and then strolled carelessly about the yard. Denham was finishing a last crust of bread when the young lady reappeared, a child of about seven, apparently her sister, holding a plate containing a piece of pie.

"Nellie insists on your having this," spoke Myra Ward gently.

"Oh, yes, the poor man looks so hungry!" prattled the little one.

"Wait," added the young lady, setting the plate upon the porch, and hastened back into the house and brought a silver fork.

There could be no more delicate compliment or recognition. Denham lowered his eyes, for the quick tears came. The young lady, a letter in her hand, went around to the front of the house as if to place it beside the letter box for the mail carrier to take up, returned, and a minute later Ben beckoned urgently.

"We'd better make tracks," he said, and Denham could not understand his haste. "This is no good town if the village constable spies us."

"I want to reach Southport before dark," Ben apprized him. "We've been living on handouts for a week. I want something better."

For only a few days Denham had tramped it with Ben. When the firm he had worked for so long failed he had been unable to get on his feet again. Then came a spell of sickness, no work later and then absolute poverty.

"It can't be that Mr. Pierce is in love with me," she reasoned finally. "It is ridiculous to suppose so. If he was he had time to say so. No, no, I won't believe it. It must be concerning something else he wishes to speak to me about. I'll wear the ring just for the novelty of the thing, and I will meet him as he wishes just because I am curious and interested. Maybe he is in some trouble and needs a counsellor, a consoler," and gentle, innocent Myra tried to feel quite sisterly and compassionate.

Her sister Vivian noticed the golden circlet as they were in their room that night. It had been placed on the engagement finger and Vivian's eyes expressed decided interest.

"Five hundred!" he gloated. "My luck at cards held firm. Now then, partner, while I'm in funds I'm going to get back to friends. I'm no piker, so I'm going to stake you to go where you please. Here, I'll stow two twenties in my old wallet. Take it, nothing but a new fancy pocketbook will do me just now."

Denham could scarcely believe his good fortune as he started for his home town the next morning.

But a vast surprise greeted him. An uncle had died leaving him a small fortune and lawyers had been seeking for him everywhere. The transition from poverty to wealth dazed him. Then a strange discovery started him on a singular quest.

In the old wallet he had found a letter. It was all crumpled up and was directed to "Edwin Ward." It told of an inclosure of fifty dollars and implored "dear brother" not to lose heart, that small as was the amount, and spared with difficulty, it must be made to serve its recipient to carry out his plans.

The letter was dated at the town where the young lady had given Denham and Ben that free meal. At once Denham surmised the truth. Ben must have overheard the girl and her mother discussing the contents of the letter, had wickedly stolen it from the letter box and had appropriated the inclosure.

Wade Denham could not rest until he had located Edwin Ward, to find him striving to make his way in the literary field. Just in time he reached the discouraged one to save him from abandoning all his cherished ambitions.

To the brother Denham told all, insisting that he allow him to help him with his uncle's means. Six months later, the invited guest of his new friend, Denham found himself once more at Rose cottage, but under what strangely contrasting circumstances!

Myra Ward knew him at a glance. She was apprized of the truth and all the truth. The real soul of him who had once been a penniless wanderer shone forth too clearly to have her refrain from sympathy for one she had first met amid misfortune, and his love became the one romance of her life.

THE PROMISE RING.

By VICTOR REDCLIFFE.

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"Don't say a word, please. Just listen to me for a moment before the others come around. I've wanted to speak to you all this afternoon, but did not have the chance. Miss Clare, I shall be back in town next week. Then you must find time to listen to me about a matter that lies directly next to my heart."

Pretty Myrtle Clare looked surprised, confused, almost frightened. It was at a town party and all the afternoon she had noticed Walter Pierceidgetting about in her vicinity. He was a quiet, bashful sort of a young man, and while he now spoke the strain of some deep emotion was evident.

"I—I don't understand, Mr. Pierce," said Myrtle, half surmising that in a preliminary way he was making love to her.

Pierce was hurried, almost incoherent, for at any moment others might intrude upon the bush-shielded spot where they were. He pressed close to Myrtle in his agitation even seizing her hand and speaking in low but vehement accents.

"My happiness, my future depends upon my telling you all," he whispered. "If you fail me I shall be wretched. It will be next Thursday. At the little park spot where the junction roads meet. Oh, say that you will be there at two in the afternoon."

"But—why—I cannot comprehend."

"But you will come?" implored Pierce. "Oh, say so! Really, you must! You are a good, kind-hearted girl. Everybody says so. Promise! Ah, some one is coming. Here. Take this. It is a pledge. It will be your promise ring. Next Thursday at two o'clock."

"But—why—I cannot comprehend."

"But you will come?" implored Pierce. "Oh, say so! Really, you must! You are a good, kind-hearted girl. Everybody says so. Promise! Ah, some one is coming. Here. Take this. It is a pledge. It will be your promise ring. Next Thursday at two o'clock."

With that Pierce vanished as merry voices told of others approaching. They passed by Myrtle without noticing her. She stood rooted to the spot, lost in a variety of emotions she could not subdue. She looked down at the golden circlet with eyes wondering and distended. A promise ring generally covered an arrangement where an engagement in time was to follow.

Had she pledged herself to Walter Pierce through her silence and bewilderment? All in a rush Pierce had fairly carried her off her feet. She did not dislike him, but love!

Myrtle flushed and pulsated as she thought of Elwyn Brooks, who of all her young male acquaintances was most close to her as a dear, dear friend—and something more.

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"A new ring?" she suggested interrogatively.

"Why, yes; to Walter Pierce."

A half suppressed gasp issued from the lips of Vivian. She paled. Then, like one turned to marble, she pretended to busy herself, putting away the jewelry she wore and spoke not another word. The mother of the girls entered the room at that moment and the full effect of the extraordinary demeanor of her sister was lost on Myrtle.

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"Oh! I must see this Walter Pierce and give him back the ring, and tell him I do not care for him and get this troubling matter straightened out," determined Myrtle, and at two o'clock Thursday afternoon she was at the rendezvous of the appointment.

"I am so glad you have come," spoke Pierce at once. "I felt from the first that your kind heart would be inclined to calm the fears and aid the hopes of a man deeply in love, and so impressed with the superiority and rare character of your sister that you would try and help me to win her affection."

"Then it's Vivian," began Myrtle, and paused, dizzied, enlightened by the revelation.

And the skies cleared before sunset, for Vivian was glad to receive the addresses of a true and worthy man, and Elwyn Brooks, apprized of the real facts of the case, impulsively submitted an engagement ring for the one that had caused so much disturbance.

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CALLS FOR WAR ON RATS.

United States Department of Agriculture Gives Figures of Depredations That Are Astonishing.

The rat is the worst animal pest in the world.

From its home among filth it visits dwellings and store rooms to pollute and destroy human food.

It carries bubonic plague and many other diseases fatal to man and has been responsible for more untimely deaths among human beings than all the wars of history.

In the United States rats and mice each year destroy crops and other property valued at over \$200,000,000.

This destruction is equivalent to the gross earnings of an army of over 200,000 men.

On many a farm, if the grain eaten and wasted by rats and mice could be sold, the proceeds would more than pay all the farmer's taxes.

The common brown rat breeds six to ten times a year and produces an average of ten young at a litter. Young females breed when only three or four months old.

At this rate a pair of rats, breeding uninterruptedly and without deaths, would at the end of three years (18 generations) be increased to 350,709,482 individuals.

For centuries the world has been fighting rats without organization and at the same time has been feeding them and building for them fortresses for concealment.

If we are to fight them on equal terms, say specialists of the biological survey of the United States department of agriculture, we must deny them food and hiding places and must organize to rid communities of them. The department has devoted a great deal of study to the problem and is anxious to help in rat extermination, not only by supplying bulletins and other printed matter, but by supplying the advice of specialists in specific cases.

Built an Insulated House.

With a house built on the principle of a refrigerator, its walls insulated to keep the cold out, a new idea in construction of residences is being tested in the cold country in Canada, the Ohio State Journal remarks. The residence has been used for a year, being occupied by the designer and his family. It was tested severely during the past winter, when temperatures ran to 40 below zero, but it stood the test and was heated throughout with electric heat during the hardest winter. The walls were designed to keep the cold out and appear to have done so.

The walls are hollow, the outer walls being cement plaster on metal lath, with top coat of stucco. Back plaster is placed between the metal lath and the studding. The outer wall is a sheet of concrete one and one-half inches thick. The inner wall is of two layers of asphalt paper with wood lath and plaster on top. The airtight space in the wall is filled with insulating material, granulated cork with a mixture of planer shavings. The theory on which it is built is to prevent the movement of warmed air toward a cold surface.

The cost of construction was given as 10 per cent above ordinary methods.

Britain's Oldest Possessions.

The Channel Islands (Jersey, Guernsey, Alderney and Sark are the chief) are the oldest possessions of Great Britain. They were formerly an appanage of the duchy of Normandy and were united to the English crown after the Norman conquest of England by William of Normandy, in 1066. The inhabitants of the Channel Islands preferred to remain subjects of King John at the period of the conquest of Normandy by Philip Augustus, 1189-1223. To King John it has been used to ascribe a document at one time referred to by the Channel Island people as their Magna Charta; but modern critics have