

"K."

(Continued from page 6, column 4.)

me, Edwardes." "Wait a moment. We had a system in the operating room as perfect as I could devise it. I never finished an operation without having my first assistant verify the clip and sponge count. But that first case died because a sponge had been left in the operating field. You know how those things go; you can't always see them, and one goes by the count, after reasonable caution. Then I almost lost another case in the same way—a free case. "As well as I could tell, the precautions had not been relaxed. I was doing from four to six cases a day. After the second one I almost went crazy. I made up my mind, if there was ever another, I'd give up and go away. "There was another?" "Not for several months. When the last case died, a free case again, I performed my own autopsy. I allowed only my first assistant in the room. He was almost as frenzied as I was. It was the same thing again. When I told him I was going away, he offered to take the blame himself, to say he had closed the incision. He tried to make me think he was responsible. I knew—better. "It's incredible." "Exactly; but it's true. The last patient was a laborer. He left a family. I've sent them money from time to time. I used to sit and think about the children he left, and what would become of them. The ironic part of it was that, for all that had happened, I was busier all the time. Men were sending me cases from all over the country. It was either stay and keep on working, with that chance, or—quit. I quit. "But if you had stayed, and taken extra precautions—" "We'd taken every precaution we knew." Neither of the men spoke for a time. K. stood, his tall figure outlined against the window. "That's the worst, is it? Max Wilson demanded at last. "It's extremely significant. You have an enemy somewhere—on your staff, probably. This profession of ours is a big one, but you know its jealousies. Let a man get his shoulders above the crowd, and the pack is after him." He laughed a little. "Mixed figure, but you know what I mean." K. shook his head. He had had that gift of the big man everywhere, in every profession, of securing the loyalty of his followers. He would have trusted every one of them with his life. "You're going to do it, of course." "Take up your work?" "Yes." He stirred restlessly. To stay on, to be near Sidney, perhaps to stand by as Wilson's best man when she was married—it turned him cold. But he did not give a decided negative. The sick man was flushed and growing fretful; it would not do to irritate him. "Give me another day on it," he said at last. And so the matter stood. Max's injury had been productive of good, in one way. It had brought the two brothers closer together. In the mornings Max was restless until Doctor Ed arrived. When he came, he brought books in the shabby bag—his beloved Burns, although he needed no book for that, the "Pickwick Papers," Renan's "Lives of the Disciples." Very often Max would doze off; but at the cessation of Doctor Ed's sonorous voice the sick man would stir fretfully and demand more. It pleased the older man vastly. It reminded him of Max's boyhood, when he had read to Max at night. For once in the last dozen years, he needed him. "Go on, Ed. What in blazes makes you stop every five minutes?" Max protested, one day. Doctor Ed, who had only stopped to bite off the end of a stogie to hold in his cheek, picked up his book in a hurry, and eyed the invalid over it. "Stop bullying. I'll read when I'm ready. Have you any idea what I'm reading?" "Of course." "Well, I haven't. For ten minutes I've been reading across both pages!" Max laughed, and suddenly put out his hand. Demonstrations of affection were so rare with him that for a moment Doctor Ed was puzzled. Then, rather sheepishly, he took it. "When I get out," Max said, "we'll have to go out to the White Springs again and have supper." That was all; but Ed understood. On the day when K. had told Max his reason for giving up his work, Sidney spent her hour with Max that evening as usual. His big chair had been drawn close to a window, and she found him there, looking out. She kissed him. But instead of letting her draw away, he put out his arms and caught her to him. "Smile at me. You don't smile any more. You ought to smile; your mouth—" "I am almost always tired; that's all, Max." She eyed him gravely. "Aren't you going to let me make love to you at all? You get away beyond my reach." "I was looking for the paper to read to you." A sudden suspicion flamed in his eyes. "Sidney, you don't like me to touch you any more. Come here where I can see you."

The fear of agitating him brought her quickly. For a moment he was appeased. "That's more like it. How lovely you are, Sidney!" He lifted first one hand and then the other to his lips. "Are you ever going to forgive me?" "If you mean about Carlotta, I forgive that long ago." He was almost boyishly relieved. What a wonder she was! So lovely, and so sane. Many a woman would have held that over him for years—not that he had done anything really wrong on that nightmare excursion. But so many women are exigent about promises. "When are you going to marry me?" "We needn't discuss that tonight, Max. Can't we talk things over when you are stronger?" Her tone caught his attention, and turned him a little white. He faced her to the window, so that the light fell on her. "What things? What do you mean?" He had forced her hand. She had meant to wait; but, with his keen eyes on her, she could not dissemble. "I am going to make you very unhappy for a little while." "Well?" "I've had a lot of time to think. It isn't that I am angry. I am not even jealous. I was at first. It isn't that. It's hard to make you understand. I think you care for me—" "But, good heavens, Sidney, you do care for me, don't you?" "I'm afraid I don't, Max; not enough." She tried to explain, rather pitifully. After one look at his face, she spoke to the window. "I'm so wretched about it. I thought I cared. To me you were the best and greatest man that ever lived. I—when I said my prayers, I—but that doesn't matter. You were a sort of god to me." He groaned under his breath. "No man could live up to that, Sidney." "No. I see that now. But that's the way I cared. It's just that I never loved the real you, because I never knew you." When he remained silent, she made an attempt to justify herself. "I'd known very few men," she said. "I came into the hospital, and for a time life seemed very terrible. There were wickednesses I had never heard of, and somebody always paying for them. I was always asking, Why? Why? Then you would come in, and a lot of them you cured and sent out. You gave them their chance, don't you see? Until I knew about Carlotta, you always meant that to me. You were like K.—always helping." The room was very silent. In the nurses' parlor, a few feet down the corridor, the nurses were at prayers. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death—" The man in the chair stirred. He had come through the valley of the shadow, and for what? He was very bitter. He said to himself savagely that they would better have let him die. "You say you never loved me because you never knew me. I'm not a rotter Sidney. Isn't it possible that the man you cared about, who—who did his best by people and all that—is the real me?" She gazed at him thoughtfully. He missed something out of her eyes, the sort of luminous, wistful greatness measured by this new glance, so clear so appraising, he shrank back into his chair. "The man who did his best is quite real. You have always done your best in your work; you always will. But the other is a part of you too, Max. Even if I cared, I would not dare to run the risk." She took a step toward the door, hesitated, came back, and put a light hand on his shoulder. "I'm sorry, dear Max." She had kissed him lightly on the cheek before he knew what she intended to do. So passionless was the little caress that, perhaps more than anything else, it typified the change in their relation. When the door closed behind her, he saw that she had left her ring on the arm of his chair. He picked it up. It was still warm from her finger. He held it to his lips with a quick gesture. In all his successful life he had never before felt the bitterness of failure. The very warmth of the little ring hurt. Why hadn't they let him die? He didn't want to live—he wouldn't live. Nobody cared for him! He would— His eyes, lifted from the ring, fell on the red glow of the roses that had come that morning. Even in the half light,

they glowed with fiery color. The ring was in his right hand. With the left he settled his collar and soft silk tie. K. saw Carlotta that evening for the last time. Katie brought word to him, where he was helping Harriet close her trunk—she was on her way to Europe for the fall styles—that he was wanted in the lower hall. "A lady!" she said, closing the door behind her by way of caution. "And a good thing for her she's not from the alley. The way those people beg off you is a sin and a shame, and it's not at home you're going to be to them from now on." So K. had put on his coat and, without so much as a glance in Harriet's mirror, had gone down the stairs. Carlotta stood under the chandelier, and he saw at once the ravages that trouble had made in her. She was a dead white, and she looked ten years older than her age. "I came, you see, Doctor Edwardes." Evidently she found it hard to speak. "You were to come," K. encouraged her, "to see if we couldn't plan something for you. Now, I think I've got it. You know, of course, that I closed my hospital. They are trying to persuade me to go back, and—I'm trying to persuade myself that I'm fit to go back. You see,—his tone was determinedly cheerful—"my faith in myself has been pretty nearly gone. When one loses that, there isn't much left." "You had been very successful." She did not look up. "Well, I had and I hadn't. I'm not going to worry you about that. My offer is this: We'll just try to forget about—about Schwittzer's and all the rest, and if I go back I'll take you or in the operating room." "You sent me away once!" "Well, I can ask you to come back, can't I?" He smiled at her encouragingly. "Are you sure you understand about Max Wilson and myself?" "Everyone makes mistakes now and then, and loving women have made mistakes since the world began. Most people live in glass houses, Miss Harri-son. And don't make any mistake about this: People can always come back. No depth is too low. All they need is the will power." He smiled down at her. She had come armed with confession. But the offer meant reinstatement, another chance. She would work her fingers off for him. She would make it up to him in other ways. But she could not tell him and lose everything. "Come," he said. "Shall we go back and start over again?" He held out his hand. (Continued next week.) Architect.—Anna W. Keichline, Bellefonte, Pa. 62-4-6m

—Manuel, former King of Portugal, has just been appointed by the British Red Cross Society as head of its section of orthopedics, relating to the treatment of deformities in wounded soldiers. He is now engaged in a tour of inspection, with Col. Robert Jones, inspector-general of orthopedics in the British army, of all the institutions in Great Britain where wounded soldiers are receiving treatment of this character.

—The United States has acquired the following territory: In 1803, the Louisiana purchase, 890,921 square miles; in 1819, Florida, 58,680; in 1845, Texas, 380,616; in 1846, Oregon Territory, 285,123; in 1848, Mex-

ican cession, 526,444; in 1853, Gadsden slice of Mexico, 31,017; in 1867, purchase of Alaska, 590,884; in 1898, by annexation, Hawaii, 6,449; 1899, from Spain, Guam, 201; Philippine Islands, 119,542, and Puerto Rico, 3,435, Samoa, 81.

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MONDAY

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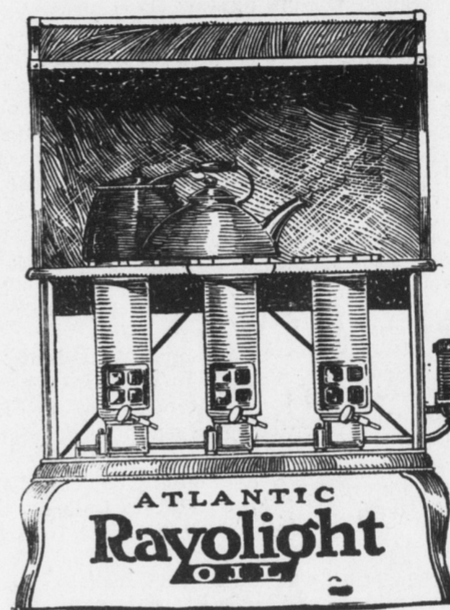
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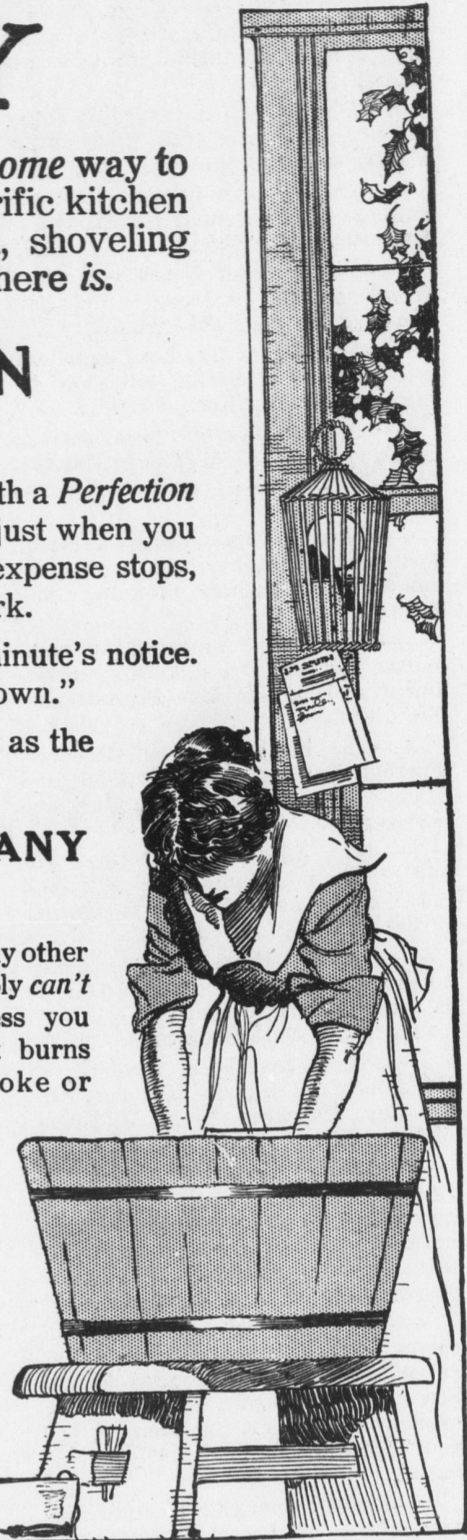
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