



LITTLE MISS SNOW, SPINSTER.

Little Miss Snow is on the trot From end to end of the village street.

A beaded bag dangles down beside The trim little figure trotting along.

Every door is open to her, She with her step so short and quick.

Under her little gray cloak is hid A heart that's tender and good and true.

The tap of her fingers is soft and low When she comes to the door where sick folks are.

Many a day and many a year Out of the shadow she comes to delight.

Little Miss Snow, our spinster sweet, Tender and good and true—and sweet!

Scoundrels & Co. By COULSON KERNAHAN Author of "Captain Shannon," "A Book of Strange Stories," "A Dead Man's Diary," etc.

CHAPTER XXIII.—CONTINUED.

When it was all over, there was a deadly silence for half a minute, and then we knew that the game was up.

"Did you hear that, Stocker?" said a voice in the room below.

Stocker's mumbled reply was not audible, so we were not enlightened respecting his views.

"Quite so," went on the voice. "It didn't sound human, did it? And if I'd heard it at night, I should have said that this house was haunted, that's what I should have said.

"Is there any woman there?" inquired the intelligent Stocker, with more interest than he had previously manifested.

"No, that's what I can't make out," replied his chief. "There ain't no women, but there soon will be, you mark my words.

"Then you are a stranger in this neighborhood?" he asked.

"I'm a stranger to you," I said, curtly, resenting his inquisitiveness.

"I see. Then when you said just now that you couldn't tell me my way to Heath cottage, you meant that you didn't want to?"

"If you like," I answered. "Take it either way. It's none of your business."

"Oh, yes, it is," was his off-hand reply. "I happen to be a police officer, you see, and I shall have to trouble you to return with me as far as Tarborough."

"Then he burst into a laugh. 'Don't upset yourself, Number Seven. I only wanted to satisfy myself that the disguise was all right, and it certainly seems to be so, since you didn't recognize your chief and late host.'

"You took me by surprise," I said, feeling and looking rather foolish.

"Curiosity getting the better of discretion, I very guardedly inclined my head outward an inch or two beyond the projecting rim of the table, and twisting my neck round, looked up."

"The sergeant, hanging on to the rope, had just got clear of the hole in the roof, and was preparing to lower himself down hand-over-hand. Through the opening over his head, the red and bovine face of Stocker was staring.

"By extracting a tile, our friend doesn't mean annexing somebody else's hat," explained Number Two good-humoredly; "all the same, I think he's right. They couldn't see us under the table, and if they come to the conclusion that the room's empty, they may decide to sheer off altogether, or to leave one on guard here, while the other goes on to Tarborough to report progress to the superintendent.

"The situation is not very serious at the worst, for it would be the easiest thing in the world for us to overpower the two hobbles, and either silence them altogether or leave them here gagged and tied up, while we make off."

"I don't know that the former course wouldn't be the kindest, for the room might never be discovered, and unless they could manage to make themselves heard, they'd stand a good chance of dying by slow starvation. But if we can work things to get clear away without coming to blows with the bobbies, I'd rather that it were so. They may think this is only an ordinary billiard room that I've contrived up

here for a fad, and that they couldn't find the entrance to, and that as Hubbock and I seemed away, there's nothing to be done but wait until we come back to arrest our friend here. Apparently it's he they want, not me, whom they still appear to look upon as a reputable member of society. I think our friends outside are propping the ladder against the wall, in which case it will be time to adjourn to under the table."

Before very long we heard the sound of some one clambering from a ladder to the roof, and cautiously picking his way, apparently on hands and knees, towards the top. By-and-by the sound of a moving body ceased, and then we heard the working and wrenching, which told us that the newcomer was engaged in removing some tiles. Meanwhile we "lay low," encased ignominiously, as Hubbock phrased it, well out of sight under the billiard table. The position was so cramped that I was, if anything, relieved to know, by an exclamation of astonishment from the "extractor of tiles" overhead, that the secret chamber of Heath cottage was a secret no longer.

"Hi! Stocker! are you there?" called an excited voice which I recognized as the sergeant's.

"I'm here, sir," came the reply from below.

"I always did think that Hall was a bad lot, for all his seeming so quiet and respectable," said the sergeant.

"It's always the quietest ones as is the worst. What d'ye think he's got up here?"

"Fowls?" suggested Stocker lamely. He was not a man of many ideas, and, having lately covered himself with glory by the brilliant arrest and conviction of two small boys who were robbing a hen-roost—the prevention of poultry pilfering filled a very important place in his conception of the duties of a constable. "Yes, fowls, I expect," he added more confidently; "leastway, stolen ones that he's kept up there to be out of the way. It sounded like fowls when we heard that noise just now."

"Fowls!" retorted his superior officer contemptuously; "fowls, you fool! You've got fowls on the brain since you got those boys convicted. No, it's something worse than fowls, I can tell you. I always did think that Hall wasn't all he should be. And him so quiet too! Well! well! there's no knowing what any one's character is till he's found out. It's a harem, that's what it is. I've seen a picture of one in the Windsor Magazine, and recognize it easy. There's hanging lamps that don't look as if they were meant to burn respectable oil in decent houses. And there's couches without any legs, like a bed made up on the floor—divans, don't they call 'em?—all in stripes and gaudy colors, and heaped up with soft pillows. Down-right heathenish, I call it. There's a big table in the middle that's got a big white cloth hung over it as if there was something on it that was too wicked even for Hall to look at long. We shall find something pretty there. I'll promise you, when we get down. Well, well, it's a wicked world we live in."

"Is there any woman there?" inquired the intelligent Stocker, with more interest than he had previously manifested. "A harem's a place where they keep a lot of lovely women, ain't it? I've seen one at the Aquarium when I went to London. They had golden hair, and wore trousseaus made of gold and stuff, and lay about on couches and looked cross."

"No, that's what I can't make out," replied his chief. "There ain't no women, but there soon will be, you mark my words. Hall and Hubbock have gone to fetch 'em now they have got it all ready. That's why there's no one at home to-day. A pretty pair of rascals they are, a bringing their Roman Catholic ways into a Christian country. You go and see if you can find me a bit of rope so as I can fasten it to the chimney stack and let myself down into the room. I'm going to see what's on that table, harem or no harem."

The search for a rope was apparently successful, and as the sergeant had in the meanwhile been working hard to make the hole in the roof large enough to admit his body, he bade Stocker come up and hold on to the end which was hitched to the chimney stack, while he lowered himself into the room.

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wise, from floor to ceiling with some Indian fabrics. The room, being directly under the roof, was always hot, and this fabric had evidently become as dry and inflammable as tinder.

CHAPTER XXIV. "FIRE!"

There was, as I have twice already mentioned, a strong wind blowing outside, and this doubtless played no little part in bringing about what followed.

I remember that as the lamp fell, a licking tongue of fire ran—like a monkey running up a rope—along the drapery, and that before I had time to get out from under the table, almost before the gaping face of Stocker had disappeared from the hole overhead, the entire roof was one sheet of flame.

I learnt afterwards from Number Two that he had the house retitled before he and Hubbock had set about constructing the secret chamber. The intelligent British workman to whom the task was entrusted had made a heavy additional charge in the bill for what he called "weather-proofing" the roof, by a method of his own inventing, upon which he greatly plumed himself.

In the matter of keeping rain out, this system of weather-proofing gave Hall every satisfaction, but, viewed from another standpoint, it caused him considerable uneasiness, for he had recently discovered that the material used for wadding the interstices between the tiles, was a kind of skein oakum, which, being saturated with tar, was highly inflammable. Like every wise man, Number Two had a horror of fire, and he at once decided to substitute an asbestos preparation for the oakum. The asbestos had been procured, and the work of substitution commenced, when the unexpected advent of the conspirators, and their installment at Heath cottage, put a stop to a work which the fates had decreed should never be finished, for within three minutes from the falling of the lamp, the upper part of Heath cottage was a royal roaring furnace.

"Warm work, that!" gasped Number Two, breathlessly, when he, Hubbock, the silent councillor, Number Six, and myself—coughing and choking and not all untinged—found ourselves outside.

"Warm for the bobbies, too, poor devils. The man on the roof was in the thick of the fire, and must be a cinder by now. I think the other chap hurt himself when he fell; anyhow, he hasn't got out, and never will now. We'd better be off, and by separate ways. The neighbors will be here in no time. But we must settle some place of meeting first. Where shall it be, and when? To-morrow morning at 12, by the bookstall at St. Pancras station. I'll secure a carriage to ourselves by the Southend train, and we can talk things over going down. No one will notice us there, and if they do, they'll only think we are going to a bean-feast party. So we are, for we're going to give some of them 'beans' before we've done with them—aren't we? Now I'm off, and you'd better do the same."

As the other four struck across the field I made for the high road. I had snatched up my hat when leaving the cottage, and as there was nothing in my dress to attract attention, and I had no reason to believe that I was known personally to, or wanted by, the police, I thought my safest plan would be to go boldly ahead.

After I had walked a mile or so, I met a black-bearded man dressed as if for bicycling and wearing a cloth cap.

"Can you tell me," he said, politely, "which is the shortest way to a house called Heath cottage, in the occupation of a Mr. Hall?"

"No," I replied. "I can't."

"Then you are a stranger in this neighborhood?" he asked.

"I'm a stranger to you," I said, curtly, resenting his inquisitiveness.

"I see. Then when you said just now that you couldn't tell me my way to Heath cottage, you meant that you didn't want to?"

"If you like," I answered. "Take it either way. It's none of your business."

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"Then he burst into a laugh. 'Don't upset yourself, Number Seven. I only wanted to satisfy myself that the disguise was all right, and it certainly seems to be so, since you didn't recognize your chief and late host.'

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simply deadheads. Perhaps it's my fault. I begin to realize that I was mistaken in thinking I could handle the team as Number One did. That man was a positive genius. His organizing power was marvelous. The six of us worked together under him like oarsmen in a boat. There was no waste effort. He used the whole of us, and put out his men when he had any little scheme on, like a captain placing his team in the cricket field. Now everything's changed. One or two of us bring the brains and do the work, and the rest just look on, and take no risk nor part in the business except sharing the profits. It's not like the same thing it used to be. You weren't a member of the syndicate in those days. Then it was a power in the world. Then things were planned and carried out on a big scale. Number One was a genius and worked the six of us, for what we were worth, so that we were all like so many wheels in one big perfectly acting machine. Now we are just a gang of vulgar criminals, with nothing in common between us either in mind or methods except that we share the plunder alike. The syndicate has gone to pieces since the chief's death. I thought I could step into his shoes, and take it up and carry it on from the point he left it at; but I've found out my mistake by now, and I can see no good and a precious lot of danger in our hanging together any longer.

"But I'm going to make just one more attempt to carry a big scheme through, upon the lines the chief used to go upon, so that each member of the council bears his part. If it fails, I shall chuck it, and retire from the syndicate altogether. You and I and Hubbock could run the show better without the other two men than with them, and there'd be only three instead of five to share the profits. I fancy you'll see your way to join us, and to throw those two fools over. That's all I have to say to you, and I'm going now. But think it over, and if you feel inclined to stand in with us, put a flower of some sort in your button-hole to-morrow."

[To Be Continued.]

Her Heart is Musical. Prof. Reitter of Vienna, recently astonished the medical society of that city by saying that one of his patients had a musical heart. She is a woman, and ever since her fourth year she has suffered from palpitations. While still very young she noticed that a harmonious and thrilling sound came from her chest whenever she breathed, and a year or two later this music became so distinct that any one who was in the same room with her could hear it. As she grew older it became more shrill and closely resembled a human voice. At present this curious music consists of only two notes, which are described as being very sweet and clear. Prof. Reitter and the other members of the medical society are now studying this singular phenomenon, and the result of their investigations is awaited with interest by physicians throughout Europe.—Stray Stories.

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The agonizing itching and burning of the skin, as in eczema; the frightful scaling, as in psoriasis; the loss of hair and crusting of the scalp, as in scalded head; the facial disfigurement, as in pimples and ringworm; the awful suffering of infants and the anxiety of worn-out parents, as in milk crust, tetter and salt rheum—all demand a remedy of almost superhuman virtues to successfully cope with them. That Cuticura Soap, Ointment and Pills are such stands proven beyond all doubt. No statement is made regarding them that is not justified by the strongest evidence.

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Both Got Pretty Hot.

John Smith, an independent-minded farmer in Perthshire, was at work one day in his field when the factor came to see him. They talked about the renewal of the lease, but, as often happens in such circumstances, they could not see eye to eye. They both got pretty hot. At last the factor went away in a passion, saying: "I wish never to see your face again!" The farmer thought this was going rather far, but, putting his hand to his mouth in trumpet form, he cried after him: "An' I'dinna want t' see yours till the last day, an' then pretty well over t' the afterno."—Scottish American.

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A Wonderful Discovery.

Broadland, S. Dak., March 28.—Quite a sensation has been created here by the publication of the story of G. W. Gray, who after a special treatment for three months was prostrate and helpless and given up to die with Bright's Disease. Bright's Disease has always been considered incurable, but evidently from the story told by Mr. Gray, there is a remedy which will cure it, even in the most advanced stages. This is what he says: "I was helpless as a little babe, my wife and I searched everything and read everything we could find about Bright's Disease, hoping that I would be able to find a remedy. After many failures my wife insisted that I should try Dodd's Kidney Pills. I praise God for the day when I decided to do so, for this remedy met every phase of my case and in a short time I was able to get out of bed, and after a few weeks' treatment I was a strong, well man. Dodd's Kidney Pills saved my life."

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