

HOME

A Story of Today and of All Days

By GEORGE AGNEW CHAMBERLAIN

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SYNOPSIS.

Alan Wayne is sent away from Red Hill, his home, by his uncle, J. Y., as a moral failure. Clem runs after him in a tangle of short skirts to bid him good-by.

CHAPTER II—Continued.

"It doesn't amount to an appointment. Just a job as assistant to Walton, the engineer the contractors are sending out. We're going to put up a bridge somewhere in Africa."

"That's it I knew it," said the captain. "Going away. Want any money?" The question came like solid shot out of a four-pounder. Alan started, colored and smiled, all at the same time.

"No, thank, sir," he replied. "I've got all I need."

The captain hitched his chair forward, placed his hands on his knees, leaned forward and glared out on the avenue. "The Lansings," he began, like a boy reciting a piece, "are devils for drink, the Waynes for women. Don't you ever let 'em worry you about drink. Nowadays the doctors call us nonalcoholic. In my time it was just plain strong heads for wine. I say, don't worry about drink. There's a safety valve in every Wayne's gut."

"But women, Alan?" The captain asked around his bulging eyes. "You look out for them. As your great-grandfather used to say, 'For women, only perishable goods—sweets, flowers and kisses.' And you take it from me, kisses aren't always the cheapest. They say God made everything—down to little apples and Jersey lightning. But when he made women the devil helped." The captain's nervousness dropped from his face as he deliberately drew out his watch and fob. "Good thing he did, too," he added, as a pleasing afterthought. He leaned back in his chair. A complacent look came over his face.

Alan got up to say good-by. The captain arose, too, and clasped the hand Alan held out. "One more thing," he said. "Don't forget there's always a Wayne to back a Wayne for good or bad." There was a suspicion of moisture in his eye as he hurried his guest off.

Back in his room Alan found letters awaiting him. He read them and tore them up—all but one. It was from Clem. She wrote:

Dear Alan: Nance says you are going very far away. I am sorry. It has been raining here very much. In the hollows all the bridges are under water. I have invented a new game. It is called "steambot." I play it on old Dubbs. We go down into the valley and I make him go through the water around the bridges. He puffs just like a steamboat and wind he gets out he smokes all over. He is too fat. I hope you will come back very soon. CLEM.

That evening Clem was thrown into a transport by receiving her first telegram. It read, "You must not play steambot again. It is dangerous, Alan." She tucked it in her bosom and rushed over to the Firs to show it to Gerry.

Gerry and Alan were spending the summer at the Firs, where Mrs. Lansing, Gerry's widowed mother, was still nominally the hostess. They had been married two years, but people still spoke of Alan as Gerry's bride, and in so doing stamped her with her own seal. To strangers they carried the air of a couple about to be married at the rational close of a long engagement. No children or thought of children had come to turn the channel of life for Alan. On Gerry's marriage sat as an added habit. It was beginning to look as though he and Alan drifted together not because they were carried by the same currents but because they were tied.

Where duller minds would have dubbed Gerry the Ox, Alan had named him the Rock, and Alan was right. Gerry had a dignity beyond mere bulk. He had all the powers of resistance, none of articulation. Where a plumpier would start an ox it took an upheaval to move Gerry. An upheaval was on the way, but Gerry did not know it. It was set afar off.

To the Lansings marriage had always been one of the regular functions of a regulated life—part of the general scheme of things. Gerry was slowly realizing that his marriage with Alan was far from a mere function, had little to do with a regular life and was foreign to what he had always considered the general scheme of things. Alan had developed, quite naturally, into a social butterfly. Gerry did not picture her as chain lightning playing on a rock, as Alan would have done, but he did, in a vague way, feel that bits of his impassive self were being chipped away.

Red Hill bored Alan and she showed it. The first summer after the marriage they had spent abroad. Now Alan's thoughts and talk turned constantly toward Europe. She even suggested a flying trip for the fall, but

Gerry refused to be dragged so far from golf and his club. He stuck doggedly to Red Hill till the leaves began to turn, and then consented to move back to town.

On their last night at the Firs Mrs. Lansing, who was complacently Aunt June to Wayne and Eltons, entertained Red Hill as a whole to dinner. With the arrival of dessert, to Alan's surprise, Nance said, "Port all around, please, Aunt June."

Lansings, Waynes and Eltons were heavy drinkers in town, but it was a tradition, as Alan knew, that on Red Hill they dropped it—all but the old captain. It was as though, amid the scenes of their childhood, they became children and just as a Frenchman of the old school will not light a cigarette in the presence of his father, so they would not take a drink for drink's sake on Red Hill.

So Alan looked on interestedly as the old butler set glasses and started the port. When it had gone the round Nance stood up, and with her hands on the table's edge, leaned toward them all. For a Wayne, she was very fair. As they looked at her the color swept over her bare neck. Its wave reached her temples and seemed to stir the clustering tendrils of her hair. Her eyes were grave and bright with moisture. Her lips were tremulous.

"We drink to Alan," she said, "today is Alan's birthday."

She sat down. They all raised their glasses. Little Clem had no wine. She put a thin hand on Gerry's arm.

"Please, Gerry, please!"

Gerry held down his glass. Clem's hand dipped in the tip of her little finger, and as they all drank, gravely carried the drop of wine to her lips.

CHAPTER III

As Judge Healey, gray-haired but erect, walked up the avenue his keen glance fell on Gerry Lansing standing across the street before an art dealer's window. Gerry's eyes were fastened on a picture that he had long had in mind for a certain nook in the library of the town house.

It was the second anniversary of his wedding, and though it was already late in the afternoon Gerry had not yet chosen his gift for Alan. He turned from the picture with a last long look and a shrug and passed on to a palatial jeweler's farther up the street.

For many years Judge Healey had been foster-father to Red Hill in general and to Gerry in particular. With almost womanly intuition he read what was in Gerry's mind before the picture and acting on impulse the judge crossed the street and bought it. While the judge was still in the picture shop Gerry came out of the jeweler's and started briskly for home. He had purchased a pendant of brilliant, extravagant for his purse but yet saved to good taste by a simple originality in design.

He waited until the dinner hour and then slipped his gift into Alan's hand as they walked down the stairs together. She stopped beneath the hall light. "I can't wait, dear, I simply can't." She snapped open the case. "Oh!" she gasped. "How dear! How perfectly dear! You old sweetheart!" She threw her arms around his neck and kissed him twice. Then she flew away to the drawing room in search of Mrs. Lansing and the judge, the sole guests to the little anniversary dinner. Gerry straightened his tie and followed.

Alan's tongue was rippling—her whole body was rippling—with excitement and pleasure. She dangled her treasure before their eyes. She laid it against her warm neck and ran to a mirror. The light in her eyes matched the light in the stones. The judge took the jewel and laid it in the palm of his strong hand. It looked in danger of being crushed. "A beautiful thing, Gerry," he said, "and well chosen. Some poet jeweler dreamed that twining design and set the stones while the dew was still on the grass."

After dinner the four gathered in the library, but they were hardly seated when Alan sprang up. Her glance had followed Gerry's startled gaze. He was staring at the coveted picture he had been looking at in the gallery that afternoon. It hung in the niche in which his thoughts had placed it. Alan took her stand before it. She glanced inquiringly at the others. Mrs. Lansing nodded at the judge. Alan turned back to the picture and gravity stole into her face. Then she faced the judge with a smile.

"We live," she said, "in a Philistine age, don't we? But I've never let any Philistine drive pictures from their right place in the heart. Pictures in art galleries—" she shrugged her prot-

by shoulders—"I have not been trained up to them. To me, they are mounted butterflies in a museum, cut flowers crowded at the florist's. But this picture and that nook—they have waited for each other. You see the picture nesting down for a long rest and it seems a small thing and then it catches your eye and holds it and you see that it is a little door that opens on a wide world. It has slipped into the room and become a part of life."

A strange stillness followed on Alan's words. To the judge and to Gerry it was as though the picture had opened a window to her mind. Then she closed the window. "Come, Gerry," she said, turning. "Make your bow to the judge and bark."

Gerry was excited, though he did not show it. "You have dressed my thoughts in words I can't equal," he said and strolled out on to the little veranda at the back of the house. He wanted to be alone for a moment and think over this flash of light that had followed a dark day. For the first time in a long while Alan had revealed herself. He did not begrudge the judge his triumph. He knew instinctively that coming from him instead of from the judge the picture would not have struck that intimate spark.

The next day Gerry gave his consent to Alan's plan for a flying trip abroad, but with a reservation. The reservation was that she should join some party and leave him behind.

Judge Healey heard of this arrangement only when it was on the point of being put into effect. In fact he was only just in time at the steamer to wave good-by to Alan. Leaning over the rail, with her high color, moist red lips and big excited eyes making play under a golden crown of hair and over a huge armful of roses, Alan presented a picture not easily forgotten.

The judge turned to Gerry. "She ought not to be going without you, my boy."

"Oh, it's all right," said Gerry lightly. "She'll well chaperoned. It's a big party, you know."

But during the weeks that followed the judge saw it was not all right. Gerry had less and less time for golf and more and more for whiskey and sodas. The judge was troubled and felt a sort of relief when from far away Alan Wayne cropped into his affairs and gave him something else to think about.

When Angus McDale of McDale and McDale called without appointment the judge knew at once that he was going to hear something about Alan. "Lucky to find you in," puffed McDale. "It isn't business exactly or I'd have 'phoned. I was just passing by."

"Well, what is it?" asked the judge, offering his visitor a fresh cigar.

"It's this. That boy, Alan Wayne—sort of protégé of yours, isn't he?"

"Yes—in a way—yes," said the judge slowly, frowning. "What has Alan done now?"

"It's like this," said McDale. "Six months ago we sent Mr. Wayne out on contract as assistant to Walton. Walton no sooner got on the ground than he fell sick. He put Wayne in charge and then he died. Now this is the point. Mr. Wayne seems to have promoted himself to Walton's pay. He had the check to draw his own as well. He won't be here for weeks but his accounts came in today. I want to

"Have you a vacancy?" said Alan. They both knew they were embarking upon a dangerous game, but Alan played it often. No pretty woman takes her European degree without ample occasion for practice and Alan had been through the European mill. She threw out her daintily shod feet as she walked. She was full of life. She felt like skipping. The light of battle danced merrily in her eyes. She made no other reply.

"I met lots of people we both know," she said, at last.

"Which one of them passed on the news that I had taken to the ways of a wild beast?"

"Oh, that was the Honorable Percy. I only caught a few words. He was telling about a man known as Ten Percent Wayne and the only time he'd ever seen the shirt-sleeve policy work with natives. When I learned it was Africa, I fluked up with you at once and screamed and he turned to me and said, 'You know Mr. Wayne?' But just then Lady Merle signaled the retreat, and when the men came out somebody else snatched Collingford before I got a chance."

"Oh, Collingford," said Alan. "I remember." He frowned and was silent.

"Alan," said Alan after a moment, "let me warn you. I see a new tendency in you but before it goes any further than a tendency let me tell you that a thoughtful man in a most awful bore. When I caught sight of you I thought, 'What a delightful little party,' but if you're going to be pensive there are others—"

Alan glanced at her. "Alan," he said, mimicking her tone, "I see in you the makings of an altogether charming woman. I'm not speaking of the palatable veneer—I suppose you need that in your walk of life—but what's under it. There may be others, as you say. Pretty women have taken to wearing men for hangers. But don't you make a mistake. I'm not a hanger. I've just come from the unclothed world of real things. To me a man is just a man and, what's more, a woman is just a woman."

"How un-American," said Alan.

"It's more than that," said Alan. "It's pre-American."

Alan was thoughtful in her turn. Alan caught her by the arm and turned her toward the west. A yawl was just

"Yes, it was," said McDale bluntly. "Most satisfactory. But there was a funny thing there too. They wrote that while they did not approve of Mr. Wayne's time-saving methods, the finished work had their absolute acceptance."

The judge was silent for a moment. "You want my advice?"

"Yes, not for our own sake but for Wayne's."

"Well," said the judge, "I'm going to give it to you for your sake. When you stumble across a boy than can cut ten per cent off the working and time estimates of an old hand like Walton, you bind him to you with a long contract at any salary he wants. And just one thing more: when Alan Wayne steals a cent from you or fifty thousand dollars you come to me and I'll pay it."

McDale's eyes narrowed and he puffed nervously at his cigar. He got up to take his leave. "Judge," he said, "your head is on right and your heart's in the right place, as well. I begin to see that widow business. Wayne sized us up for a hard-headed firm when it comes to paying out what we don't have to and we are. It wasn't law, but he was right. Walton's work was done just as if he'd been alive. Even a Scotchman can see that. You needn't worry. A man that you'll back for fifty thousand is good enough for McDale & McDale."

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CHAPTER IV

It was Alan that discovered Alan as the Elefant steamed slowly down the Solent. He was already comfortably established in his chair with a small pile of fiction beside him.

She paused before she approached him. Alan had always interested her. Alan had thought of him heretofore as a modern exquisite subject to stave fits that, in times past, had led him into more than one barbarous escapade. Now in London she had by chance heard things of him that forced her to readjustment of her estimate. In six months Alan had turned himself into a mystery.

"Well," she said, coming up behind him, "how are you?"

Alan turned his head slowly and then threw off his rugs and sprang to his feet.

"The sky is clear," he said, "where did you drop from?" His eyes measured her. She was ravishing in a fur toque and coat which had yet to receive their baptism of import duty.

"Oh," said Alan, "my presence is humdrum. Just the usual returning from six weeks abroad. But you! You come from the haunts of wild beasts and from all accounts you have been one."

"Been one! From all accounts!" exclaimed Alan, a puzzled frown on his face. "Just what do you mean?"

They started walking. "I meant that even in Africa one can't hide from Piccadilly. In Piccadilly you are already known. Not as Mr. Alan Wayne, a New York social satellite, but as a whirlwind in shirt sleeves. Ten Percent Wayne, in short." She looked at him with teasing archness. She could see that he was worried.

"Satellite is rather rough," remarked Alan. "I never was that."

"All bachelors are satellites in the nature of things—satellites to other men's wives."

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Alan was thoughtful in her turn. Alan caught her by the arm and turned her toward the west. A yawl was just

crossing the disk of the disappearing sun. Alan felt a thrill at his touch. "It's a sweet little picture, isn't it?" she said. "But you mustn't touch me, Alan. It can't be good for us."

"So you feel it too," said Alan, and took his hand from her arm.

During the voyage they were much together, not in dark corners but waging their battle in the open—two swimmers that fought each other, forgetting to fight the tide that was bearing them out to sea. Alan was not a philanderer to snatch an unrequited kiss. To him a kiss was the seal on surrender. But to Alan the game was its own goal. As she had always played it, nobody had ever really won anything. However, it did not take her long to appreciate that in Alan she had an opponent who was constantly getting under her guard and making her feel things—things that were alarming in themselves like the jump of one's heart into the throat or the intoxication that goes with hot, racing blood.

Alan's power over women was in voice and words. If he had been hideous it would have been the same. With his tongue he carried Alan away and gave her that sense of isolation which lulls a woman into laxity. One night as they sat side by side, a single great rug across their knees, Alan laid his hand under cover on hers. A quiver went through Alan's body. Her closed hand stirred nervously but she did not really draw it away. "Alan," she said, "I've told you not to! Please don't. It's common—this sort of thing."

Alan tightened his grip. "You say it's common," he said, "because you've never thought it out. Lightning was common till somebody thought it out. I sit beside you without touching you and we are in two worlds. I grip your hand—like this—and the abyss between us is closed. While I hold your hand can come between."

Alan's hand opened and settled into his. For a while they sat silent, then Alan recovered himself. "After all," she said, "we're not on a desert island but on a ship with eyes in every corner."

Alan leaned toward her. "But if we were, Alan! If we were on a desert island—you and I—"

For a moment Alan looked into his burning eyes. She felt that there she could not altogether control. She disengaged herself and sprang up. Alan rose slowly and stood beside her. He did not look at her parted lips and hot cheeks; he had suddenly become his guide. "That's it," he drawled, "eyes in every corner. I wonder how many morals would stand without other people's eyes to prop them up?"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

WISE AND HUMANE PROVISION

Uncle Sam, From This Time On, Will Look After the "Bankers' Hitherto Neglected."

Those who brave the dangers of storm, fog and icebergs of that elevated submarine plateau east of Cape Cod, where the "bankers" seek the cod, are to be looked after by Uncle Sam. The men of the big fishing fleet which puts off from the New England coast from Gloucester, Boston, Newport and Portsmouth lead enterprises which are dangerous to bodily health and even to life itself.

The fishing craft which seek the cod, hake, halibut and other deep-sea ground fish on the Georges have meager facilities for men who become disabled, and the usual program has been that when a man got sick he had to stay sick and take his chances of recovery, being out of reach of physicians, says the New York Press, editorially. In a single season many boats and lives are lost, with numbers more of men injured.

The national government has placed the coast guard cutter Androscoquin at the disposal of fishermen that may become sick or disabled, and the United States public health bureau has fitted out the boat with hospital appliances and fittings. A very thoughtful and attentive looker after the welfare and safety of Americans is Uncle Sam becoming in many different ways and directions.

Burglar Had Paid His Visit.

Some time ago Brown said to Smith, "I envy you. You come in contact with all kinds of men. You actually know and talk to burglars and other criminals. All I know about them is what I read or imagine about them. Now, the next time you meet a good burglar I want you to send him to me. Give him a card to me and tell him I will pay his car fare and expenses. I want to talk to him and see how criminals differ from other men."

Smith promised to send along the next good specimen of a burglar that came his way and forgot all about the matter until some weeks later he received this letter from Brown:

"Your friend came, but I had not expected him professionally. If you will tell him to bring back the family plate and Mrs. Brown's jewels you and I will resume social relations."

Good Game to Play on a Train.

Here is an interesting game to play when we are traveling by train. While the train stops at a station, all the players look about and take as much notice of things as possible. Then, a few minutes after the train has left the station, we take turns at naming objects which we saw there. Of course, at first this is easy, and we can go round and round again, each player naming one object which no other player has mentioned. But as the game goes on it becomes harder and harder to recall something which hasn't already been named. The one who is last able to mention an object wins the game. Besides being good sport, it trains in observation.

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"What Has Alan Done Now?"

know if you see any reason why we shouldn't have that money back, to say the least."

The judge's face cleared. "Didn't he tell you why he drew Walton's pay?"

"Not a word. Said he'd explain accounts when he got here but that sort of thing takes a lot of explaining."

"Well," said the judge, "I can tell you. Walton's pay went to his widow through me. I've been doing some puzzling on this case already. Now will you tell me how Alan got the money without drawing on you?"

"Oh, there was plenty of money lying around. The job cost ten per cent less than Walton's estimate. If he'd come back we'd have handed him over the coals for the blunder. There was the usual reserve for work in inaccessible regions and then the people we did the job for paid ten days bonus for finishing that much ahead of contract time."

The judge mused. "Was the job satisfactory to the people out there?" he asked.