

Shifting Sands

by Sara Ware Bassett

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SYNOPSIS

The youthful and comely "Widder" Marcia Howe has as her guest her late husband's niece, Sylvia Hayden. A stranger, on the verge of exhaustion, finds his way to Marcia's home. Secretly, he asks her to hide a package containing jewelry. She does so. Elisha Winslow, town sheriff, brings news of a jewel robbery nearby. The stranger gives his name as Stanley Heath. Sylvia discovers the jewels, and naturally believes Heath is a robber. She realizes that Marcia must have hidden them, and decides to say nothing. Marcia feels she has altogether too deep an interest in her guest, but is powerless to overcome it. Heath wires "Mrs. S. C. Heath," New York, saying he is safe. He also orders a man named Currier to come at once. Sylvia, in her room, bedecks herself with the jewels. At Marcia's approach she hides them there. Heath asks Marcia to bring them to him. They are gone! He kindly makes light of the loss. Sylvia restores the jewels to their original hiding place. Elisha Winslow, visiting Marcia, discovers the gems and has no doubt they are the stolen gems, and that Heath is the thief. Leaving the jewels, he makes plans for arresting Heath.

CHAPTER VII

Dawn was breaking over Wilton when a trim motor car, bearing a New York number plate, slipped quietly into the village and drew up at the town garage.

From it stepped a man, small and somewhat bent. "May I leave my car here?" he inquired of the lad who was sweeping out the building.

"Sure!"

"Fill her up for me, please. And you might clean her a bit."

"Been riding all night?"

The stranger nodded.

"I like traveling at night," he volunteered. "Less traffic. Can you tell me where a Mr. Heath is staying?"

"Heath? The chap who ran aground on the Crocker Cove sand bar? He's over to the Widder's."

"Where's that?"

"The Widder lives out yonder at the Homestead."

"How does one get there?"

"Wal, the only way to reach the house when the tide's full, as 'tis now, is to row."

"Where'll I find a boat?"

"That I couldn't say. The Widder keeps her 'tother side of the channel. Mebbe, though, if you was to go down to the beach some fisherman would give you a lift across. Most any of 'em would admire to if you're a friend of Marcia Howe's."

The stranger bowed but offered no comment. If curiosity stirred within him concerning the information the lad vouchsafed, at least he gave no sign.

"Thank you," he replied briefly. "Will this road take me to the beach?"

"Straight as an arrow."

Without wasting additional words or time, the stranger nodded and started off briskly in the direction indicated. When he reached the beach he halted, scanning eagerly the silvered house beyond the channel. Discovering no one in sight, he dragged from the shore a yellow dory, clambered into it, and catching up the oars began to row toward the dwelling silhouetted against the water and the glory of the morning sky.

In the meantime, both Marcia and Sylvia had wakened early and were astir.

The kitchen fire was already snapping merrily in the stove, however, and the table was spread before the latter made her appearance.

She came in, carrying a thick envelope.

"Why, Sylvia, how you startled me!" Marcia exclaimed. "I did not hear you come down stairs. Why are you up so early?"

"I'm going to town to catch the morning mail. I have to get off this letter."

"Have to?"

"Yes—to Hurtle. You see, if I didn't answer promptly he might think the candy had gone astray," explained the girl.

"Oh, of course, you must thank him for the candy," Marcia agreed. "Still, it is necessary to do so in such a rush—to walk to the village this morning?"

"I mean to row over."

"I'm afraid you can't, dear. I discovered last night the boat was gone. Eleazer Crocker must have appropriated it when he was here yesterday. I shall give him a good lecture when I see him. It is a serious thing to be left out here with no way of getting to land. In fact, here we are with this tremendously important letter that must be posted immediately—willy-nilly."

With eyes brimming with laughter, Marcia shot a mischievous glance at her companion.

"But it is only the last of April, beloved."

"Men need to know such things well in advance. They have to adjust their business."

"I see," smiled Marcia. "Under such

conditions, I suppose the sooner the letter is sent the better."

"It isn't just to thank Hurtle for the candy that I'm writing," that young lady replied sedately. "You see, he asked if he might come to Wilton for his summer vacation. He has to know so he can make his plans."

"The sooner I start, the sooner I shall be back, I suppose," Sylvia answered with feigned reluctance. "Men are so unreasonable. Any errands?"

"Not today, thanks. Just the mail."

"I'll wait for it."

The eagerness betrayed by the reply left not the slightest doubt that Sylvia would wait, and gladly.

As the door closed behind her, Marcia smiled whimsically.

She prepared Heath's breakfast tray, and was about to take it upstairs when there was a gentle knock at the kitchen door.

A stranger stood upon the threshold. "Is Mr. Stanley Heath staying here?" inquired he.

"Yes."

"I am Currier. Mr. Heath sent for me."

"Of course! Come in, won't you? Mr. Heath is expecting you. I'll tell him you are here."

"You needn't do that, madam. If you will just show me where he is—"

"At the head of the stairs."

"Very good. Thank you, madam. I will go up."

Marcia soon heard the invalid's voice, imperative and eager, each sentence ending with an interrogation. The lapses of silence which intervened and which at first she took to be pauses, she presently decided represented the inaudible and subdued replies of Currier.

To judge from the sounds, Heath was pouring out an avalanche of questions. Once he broke into peals of hearty laughter, followed by a paroxysm of coughing.

"He has forgotten all about breakfast," murmured Marcia. "I'll carry it up."

She mounted the stairs softly that her coming might break in as little as possible upon the conversation of her two guests.

"She was alone in the library when I went in," Heath was saying, "and turned so white I feared she might faint or scream. Luckily she did neither."

"You know what I'm after," I said—'the jewels. Come, hand them over.'"

"At that, she began to cry."

"Quickly," I repeated. "Someone may come."

"With that, she produced the jewel case, pouring out a torrent of explanations."

"I stopped no longer than I had to, I assure you. In no time I had made my getaway. Every detail of my plan would have gone smoothly but for the fog. I lost my bearings completely. Imagine my amazement at finding myself here."

Marcia waited to hear no more.

So Heath really had taken the jewels from the resisting woman who owned them—taken them against her will and made off with them!

He owned it!

Nay, more! Far from regretting what he had done, in his tone rang a note of satisfaction in his accomplishment. She had never believed him guilty. Not until she heard the bitter, irrevocable confession from his own lips did she waver, and even then she battled against the truth, refusing to be convinced. There must be some explanation, she told herself. Nevertheless, the shock was overwhelming.

Her head swam. Her heart beat wildly.

"I must not give way!" she reiterated to herself. "I must put on a brave front. He must not suspect I know."

It took a few moments for her to regain her grip on herself, to drag back her ebbing strength.

Then she knocked at the door.

"Here is your coffee, Mr. Heath," she called.

"Come in, Mrs. Howe. I'm afraid we've delayed you. I had entirely forgotten about breakfast and so, I'll be bound, had Currier. You met my right-hand man down stairs, I take it."

"You found the house without trouble?" Marcia inquired, making an effort to address the newcomer in a natural, off-hand manner.

"Yes, Mrs. Howe. A young man at the garage directed me."

As Marcia turned to go, her unfeeling courtesy prompted her to say:

"Mr. Currier is welcome to stay if he wishes to, Mr. Heath. We can put him up perfectly well."

"Oh, no. He is returning directly. Nevertheless, I greatly appreciate your kindness."

"Mrs. Heath is anxious," put in Currier. "She begged me to come home as soon as possible that she might know how Mr. Heath was. Naturally she has been much worried."

"There, there, Currier—that will do," broke in Stanley Heath, fushing. "And now, since Mrs. Howe is here and is in our secret, I may as well tell you that part of the mission on which you came cannot be accomplished. You cannot take the gems back with you to New York. A calamity has befallen them."

"A calamity, sir?"

"Mrs. Howe helped me conceal the jewels downstairs in a hiding place under the kitchen floor," continued Stanley Heath. "When she went to get them they were gone."

"It is all very mysterious," broke in Marcia, taking up the tale. "I cannot in any way account for their disappearance and am much distressed."

"Have you any theory as to who could have taken them?" inquired Currier.

"Absolutely none. I cannot even see how anybody had the chance to take them. No one knew they were there."

"Would you be willing to show me

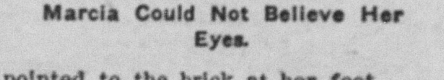
where they were hidden and allow me to investigate?"

"Certainly. I'll take you downstairs now, while we have the opportunity. When do you start back?"

"That is for Mr. Heath to decide."

"Right off. As soon as you can get under way," Stanley Heath said decisively. "Go down now with Mrs. Howe, since she is so gracious, and have your breakfast. Examine, too, the place where we concealed the jewel case. You may discover a clue she has missed."

Preceding Currier into the kitchen, Marcia went straight to the hearth and



Marcia Could Not Believe Her Eyes.

pointed to the brick at her feet.

"It was here we put the jewel case," she said.

"I think, with your permission, I will take up the brick," the little man at her elbow quietly announced.

"Certainly," acquiesced Marcia.

Taking out his knife, Currier knelt and soon had the brick out of its hole.

Beneath it lay the jewel case wrapped as before in Stanley Heath's monogrammed handkerchief.

Marcia could not believe her eyes.

"But—but—it wasn't there when I looked. I could swear it wasn't."

"Who could have taken it out? And if some one did why return anything so valuable?" Currier inquired.

"I don't know. I do not understand it at all," the woman replied. "There is something uncanny about the whole affair."

"Well, at any rate, the gems are here now," said Currier in a matter-of-fact tone. "Mr. Heath will be much relieved. Shall I go up and—"

"I'll go," Marcia cried. "It won't take me a minute. I'll be right back."

"As you prefer, madam."

Off flew Marcia.

Her haste, the radiance of her face must have suggested to the stranger a thought that had not occurred to him before, for after she had gone, he stood immovable in the middle of the floor looking after her.

Then a slow, shadowy smile passed across his features.

"So—ho!" he muttered. "So—ho!"

He was still absorbed in reveries when Marcia, breathless and flushed rejoined him.

"I can think of nothing but the jewels and their recovery. I am so happy I had completely forgotten your breakfast. You might run up to see Mr. Heath while I am getting it ready."

"I will do that. I shall be leaving at once and he may have final orders for me, or perhaps a letter for Mrs. Heath."

"Mrs. Heath!" Marcia repeated, as the name suddenly brought before her consciousness something hitherto forgotten. "Yes, yes! Of course."

Then turning her head aside, she inquired with studied carelessness:

"How long, I wonder, does Mr. Heath plan to remain in Wilton? I think that as soon as he is able to make the journey he would better go home. This climate is—is—damp and he will, perhaps, pick up faster away from the sea. If you have any influence with him, won't you please advise it?"

The man's small, gray eyes narrowed.

"I have no influence with Mr. Heath," replied he. "Mrs. Heath has, however. Shall I tell her?"

"I wish you would."

An hour later My Unknown Lady weighed anchor and disappeared out to sea, carrying with her Currier and the jewels.

Marcia watched until the last snowy ripple foaming in her wake had disappeared, then she sank into a chair and brushed her hand across her eyes.

"And that's the end of that foolishness!" she muttered. "The end!"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

The Rogues' Gallery



With the Spreading Advent of Hoss-racing, These Same Women Are Cheerfully Taking Father's Money Out to the Local Track and Trustfully Trying to Run Two Dollars Up to a Small Fortune.

LADIES AT THE RACE TRACK

By FRANK CONDON

FOR a long, long time, you were forbidden to do almost anything in this precious country of ours, the spirit of reform was in the saddle, the bluesones were at the steering wheel and life was pretty gray for people with liberal views. Now everything is changed and you can do as you please and are the released and furnished citizens having fun! They are indeed. Take horse racing!

Not long ago, horse racing was scowled at and looked upon pretty generally as a cardinal sin. You were forbidden to make wagers on the horses as they loped around the track, but recently the law-givers switched over. State after state has legalized hoss-racing, and what is more important, wagering on the galloping be-zarks.

Instantly new vistas opened up to the long-starved Americans, who love to gamble, the same as the British, the French and the Dutch, and the opening tracks brought forth a brand new class, an unsuspected group of speculators, that you might call the quiet women folk, or the ladies who used to stay at home. It turns out they are hearty gamblers, and nobody knew it.

Now, then, in those days before hoss-racing came back so joyously, the ordinary American housewife didn't do much betting, as there was no place for her to gamble respectably. The big cities had their racing ladies and feminine gamblers, to be sure, but they belonged to a different social layer and the homestayng women used to read of them in amazement. So far as they were concerned themselves, they didn't even know they, too, were gamblers at heart. They thought they were mothers or housewives, or whatever it said in the city directory.

With the spreading advent of hoss-racing, these same women are cheerfully taking father's money out to the local track and trustfully trying to run two dollars up to a small fortune. And it may be a good thing that so many new tracks are flourishing in so many states, for the jaded housewives have at length found a happy and exciting way of spending the afternoon. If examined, it will be seen that there is no sense whatever in the methods or systems by which these inexperienced dames bet on the horses.

They are not the hard-faced veterans of the track. They are not the emotionless Pittsburg Phils of the betting ring. They know nothing at all about records or information sheets, but are rapidly learning. Up to now, they are a pop-eyed crowd of gulleible and enthusiastic imbeciles, betting small sums on the running horses, and astonishing as it may seem, they often win, to their own delight and the boredom of others in the family, who now must listen to the tales of triumph and disaster.

In the old days, it was father and his golf. He came home evenings from the golf course, and even the cook could tell how he had fared in his joustings with the boys by merely looking at him. It was a bit tiresome to mamma and the boys, but those days are ended. Mamma is now speaking at dinner, having either made or lost \$8 at the track that afternoon, while father was winning the daily bread at his office. It is mother who relates with shining eyes how she had \$2 on the nose, the nose belonging to Flying Fishenka, who zalloped in second by a whisker, and if he had only galloped in first, mother would have enriched the family by 22 bucks, gold clause money.

It now takes the old lady about 10 minutes to describe properly the thrilling fiscal items of the afternoon, and every one seems interested, except father.

If those states that have not as yet legalized racing proceed to legalize racing, then we may as well give up the ghost, for the home-staying female population of our sainted land is almost certain to step right into the game. We have always depended upon the sterling character of our woman-folk, but it appears that their weak spot is gambling, and especially on horses running. They are all innate speculators, though millions of them conceal the vice beneath a cloak of sterility, and the less they know about any given racket, the heartier they whirl in and take a crack at it.

Take, for example, the church-mouse home-keeper out here in Los Angeles, who has been recently making small sums of money betting on the ponies at the new Santa Anita track, wagering her money only on rainy days, or with the track heavy. I have met the lady, so I am not making this up. Before hoss-racing, she had never gambled at all, except for a rare fling at the roulette wheel at Acun Caliente, maybe once every two years.

She had never seen a horse race until Santa Anita dawned upon a delighted populace, and then she began operations in a small, modest way, saying nothing to anyone, asking no odds, seeking no special information, working out her own fortunes.

She won, too, not large sums, but sufficient to keep her excited.

New England is historically supposed to be the stern and rock-bound part of the nation, with all the sturdy virtues, tight as the Scotch. Independent, wary about money matters, steady going and thrifty, the residents going in strong for savings banks and the quiet life. Well, they opened up a new track near Boston last summer, and the hard-headed Puritans almost trampled each other to death, trying to get in. The daily attendance looked like the first German army. The daily take was something preposterous and dumb-founded the owners. The daily betting looked like what France owes and won't pay.

Answer? Well, the people of New England haven't had opportunity to bet on anything but crack-splitting for the last 90 years, and the old libido rushed to the surface, causing the money to flow like water. Even grandmother, whose last bet was a box of candy on the Confederate Army, is removing currency from the kitchen jar and hot-footing out to the hangtalls.

There is an ancient race track saying, but the housewives of today never heard of it—"a horse player always dies broke." That is as sound and true a statement as the other wise crack about death and taxes, but it gives no pause in these light-hearted times for here you have a generation that was almost verboten clear off the merry-go-round and can now do anything it pleases, up to standing on the head.

Look at Indiana. There is a spectacle—good, old, Indiana state, where Booth Tarkington and George Ade used to live in an elder day. Just a short time back, Indiana had all the blue-nose laws and you would scarcely dare kiss your wife without a license from the governor. During prohibition, if the sheriff caught you with a black bottle, he hanged you and sent your family to Siberia.

Liquor all over the place, race tracks, dog tracks, deer tracks, bear tracks and I believe they issue you a six months' license to shoot persons you don't approve of. I confidently expect that in the near future, Indiana will be going in brazenly for cock-fighting, bull-fighting, duelling, pelotte, gambado, kantikoy, greasy pole, kiss in the ring, what's my thought, crambo, skittles, halma, nine men's morris and snip-snap-snoren.

To return to hoss-racing and its astounding effect upon our home-loving womenfolk, the ladies have always adored roulette, craps, black-jack and chuck-a-luck, all games wherein the customer has no more chance than butter in the oven. The trouble was, they never had opportunities, for a real lady cannot walk into a mere gambling joint, with rough men everywhere. So the dames were forced to be content with their inhibitions, submerged desires, frozen appetites and such, until hoss-racing loomed, and suddenly became as respectable and widespread as influenza.

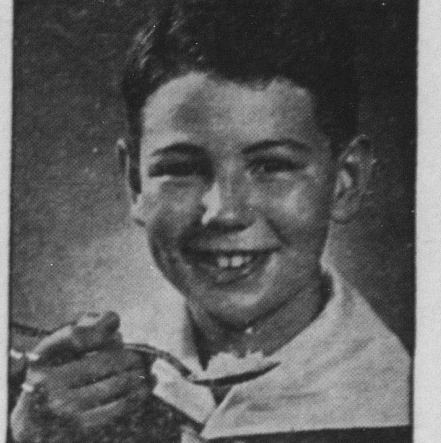
Thus it is that father cannot get hold of the morning paper any more, as mother is engrossed in today's entries, trying to figure out whether Leap-ing Lipstick will have a chance to show in the third race. Downtown in the business offices, the stenographers chip into a pool 25 cents a race. In the suburbs, the bridge-playing dames have set aside their cards and are out at the track, and so there is a genuine problem facing the fathers, bread-winners and heads of families in this broad nation—how far to let the women go with this new freedom—and no doubt the family heads will solve it as skillfully and thoroughly as they have solved all the other serious financial problems of the last six years.

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MEANING OF KIDNAPING
Kidnaping has a broad meaning in criminal law and many who have committed this crime unknowingly have been sent to prison. In most states "intent" is not necessary and, secondly, the offense includes "keeping or detaining" anyone against his will. One odd case on record is that of a man who was convicted of kidnaping his wife because he forced her to accompany him on a journey.—Collier's Weekly.

BOYS! GIRLS!
Read the Grape Nuts ad in another column of this paper and learn how to join the Dizzy Dean Winners and win valuable free prizes.—Adv.

Might Is Right
Often the man with the might is also in the right. Don't think the arrogant are always in the wrong.



EATS OATMEAL TO HELP KEEP FIT

It may be one of Nature's lowest cost foods, but lucky is the boy or girl who gets it for breakfast every morning.

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*When poor condition is due to lack of Vitamin B

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