

THE BROAD HIGHWAY

A Tale of 19th Century England, Full of the Thrills of Adventure and Spirit of Romance

By JEFFERY FARNOL

AGAIN I stared before me with unseeing eyes, but my hands no longer trembled, nor did I fear any more; the assassin had received his sentence, and the assassin was at an end.

I sat all at once, I laughed, and tore the paper across, and laughed and laughed, till George and the Ancient came to stare at me.

"Don't 'ee!" cried the old man; "don't 'ee, Peter—you be like a corp' laughin' 'bout 'ee!" But the laugh still shook me while I tore and tore at the paper, and let the pieces drop and flutter from my fingers.

"There!" said I, "there goes a fool's dream! See how it scatters—a little here, a little there; but, so long as this world lasts, these pieces shall never come together again." So saying, I set off along the road, looking neither to right nor to left.

But, when I had gone some distance, and he was very silent as he walked, and I saw the trouble was back in his eyes again.

"George," said I, stopping, "why do you follow me?"

"I don't follow 'ee, Peter," he answered; "I be only wishful to walk w' you a ways."

"I'm in no mood for company, George."

"Well, I be n't company, Peter—your friend, I be," he said doggedly, and without looking at me.

"Yes," said I, "yes, my good and trusty friend."

"Peter," he cried suddenly, laying his hand upon my shoulder, "don't go back to that theer ghastly 'Oler tonight—'tis the only place in the world for no-tonight, George." And so we went

her heart would have him be; the dream becomes pure gold, and she believes and believes—until one day her heart breaks.

"Charmian—what do you mean?"

"Oh, are you still so blind? Must I tell you?" she cried, lifting her head proudly. "Why did I live beside you here in the wilderness? Why did I work for you—contrive for you—and seek to make this desolation a home for you? Often my heart cried out its secret to you—but you never heard; often it trembled in my voice, looked at you from my eyes—but you never guessed—Oh, blind, blind! And you drove me from you with shameful words—but—oh—I came back to you. And now—I know you for but common clay, after all, and—even yet—she stopped suddenly and once more hid her face from me in her hands.

"And—even yet, Charmian?" I whispered.

Very still she stood, with her face bowed upon her hands, but she could not hide from me the swift rise and fall of her bosom.

"Speak—oh, Charmian, speak!"

"I'm so weak—so weak!" she whispered; "I hate myself."

"Charmian!" I cried—"oh, Charmian!" and seized her hands, and despite her resistance, drew her into my arms, and clamping her close, forced her to look at me. "And even yet—what more—what more—tell me." But, lying back across my arm, she held me off with both hands.

"Don't!" she cried; "don't—you shame me—let me go."

"God knows, I am all unworthy, Charmian, and so low in my abasement that to touch you is presumption, but—oh,

submitting to your whims and fancies—but, through it all, I knew, and in your woman's heart—you knew, that you must yield at last—that she chase most end-some day; well—let it be tonight—my choice is waiting—"

"When I ran away from you, in the storm, Sir Maurice, I told you, once and for all, that I hated you. Have you forgotten?—hated you!—always and ever! and tried to—kill you—"

"Oh, Charmian! I have known such hate transfigured into love, before now—such love as is only worth the winning. And you are mine—you always were—from the first moment that our eyes met. Come, my choice is waiting; in a few hours we can be in London, or Dover—"

"No—never!"

"Never is a long time, Charmian—but I am at your service—what is your will?"

"I shall remain—here."

"Here? In the wilderness?"

"With my—husband."

"Your—husband?"

"I am going to marry your cousin—Peter Vibart."

The pipe slipped from my fingers and shivered to pieces on the floor, and in that same fraction of time Sir Maurice had turned and leaped toward me; but as he came I struck him twice, with left and right, and he staggered backward to the wall. He stood for a moment, with his head stooped upon his hands. When he looked up his face was dead white, and with a smear of blood upon it that seemed to accentuate its pallor; but his voice came smooth and untrifled as ever.

"The Mind Feminine is given to change," said he softly; "and—I shall return—yes, I shall come back. Smile,



I struck him twice, with left and right, and he staggered backward to the wall.

Again, side by side, through the evening, and spoke no more until we had come to the parting of the ways.

Down in the hollow the shadows lay black and heavy, and I saw George shiver as he looked at me.

"Good-by!" said I, clasping his hand; "good-by, George!"

"Why do 'ee say good-by?"

"Because I am going away."

"Go in' away, Peter—but where?"

"God knows," I answered. "But, wherever it be, I shall carry with me the memory of your kind, true heart—and you, I think, will remember me. It is a blessed thing, George, to know that, how far we go, a friend's kind thoughts journey on with us, untiring to the end."

"Oh, Peter, man! don't go for to leave me!"

"To part is our human lot, George, and we'll now as later—good-by!"

"No, no!" he cried, throwing his arm about me, "not down there—it be so lonely, an' lonely down there in the darkness. Come back w' me—just for tonight."

But I broke from his detaining hand, and stepped on down into the shadows. And, presently, turning my head, I saw him yet standing where I had left him, looming gigantic upon the sky behind, and with his head sunk upon his breast.

Being come at last to the cottage, I passed and from that place of shadows lifted my gaze to the luminous heavens, where were a myriad eyes that seemed to watch me with a new meaning tonight; therefore I entered the cottage hastily and, closing the door, barred it behind me.

Then I turned to peer up at that which shined above the door—the rusty staple upon which a man had hooked his life some sixty and six years ago. And I began, very slowly, to loosen the belcher neckerchief about my throat.

"Peter!" cried a voice—"Peter!" and a hand was beating upon the door.

CHAPTER XXXV.

HE came in swiftly, closing the door behind him, found and lighted a candle, and, setting it upon the table between us, put back the hood of her cloak, and looked at me, while I stood mute before her, abashed by the accusation of her eyes.

"Forward!" she said, and, with the word, she reached the neckerchief from my grasp, and, casting it upon the floor, set her foot upon it. "Coward!" said she again.

"Yes," I muttered; "yes, I was lost—lost in great darkness, and full of a horror of coming night and day, and so—I would have run away from it all-like a coward."

"Oh, hateful—hateful!" she cried, and covered her face as from some horror.

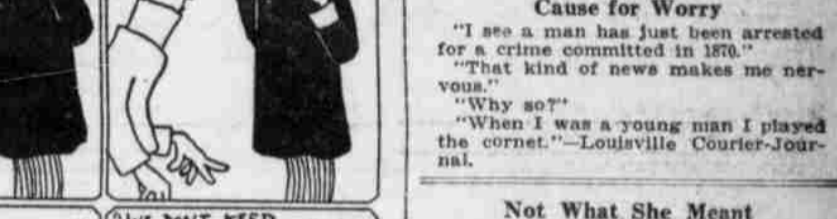
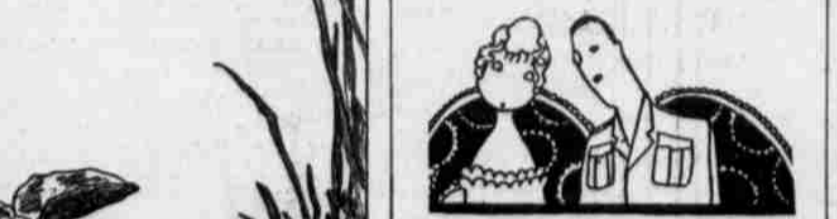
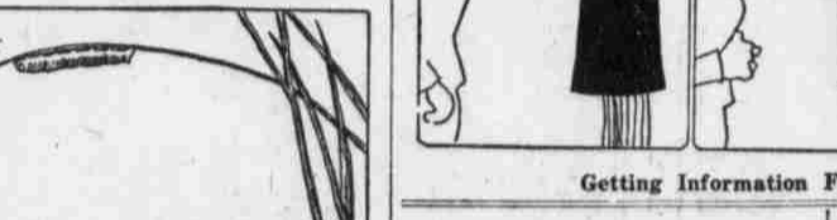
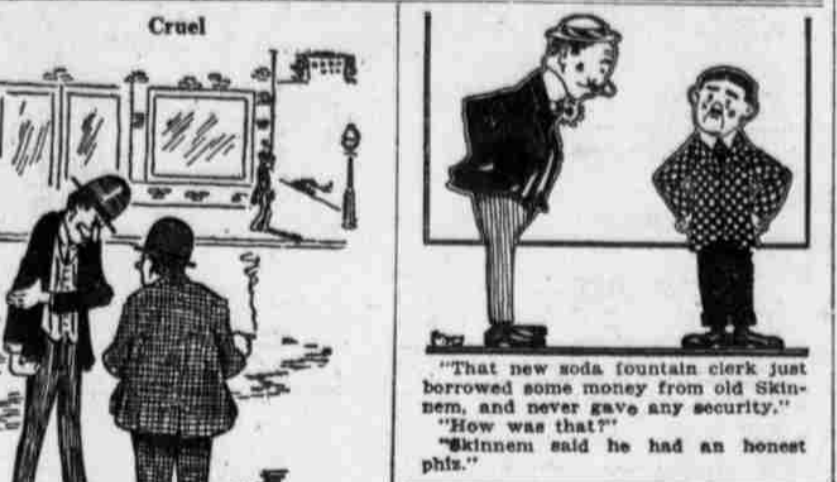
"Indeed, you cannot despise me more than I do myself," said I, "now, or ever; and I fall to all things, except, perhaps, the making of horse-shoes—and this world has no place for failure—and as for horse-shoes—"

"Oh, fool that you are!" she whispered, "oh, fool that you are!"

"Indeed, as when? Oh, coward that you are!" she said, and, with a look that was so gloriously young and untrifled—that it should end here—that it should come to this. And, though she was looking at my face, I knew that she was looking at my heart.

"Woman's love transforms the man who sees him, not as he is, but as

SCRAPPLE



Black—There's old man Smith, he wouldn't harm a thing in the world.

Blue—Oh, I don't know. I saw him stuffing a yawn the other day.

She—Do you believe in church lotteries?

He—Well, I was married in church.—Clarksburg Telegram.

John—You telles me where railroad depot?

Cop—What's matter, John? Lost?

John—No. Me here. Depot lost.

There's something in this world besides money.

Yep," said the cynic, "there's the poorhouse."—Detroit Free Press.

Mr. Bettle—Lizzie, come quick! Here's a Zeppelin!

How old is Spike Anderson, the famous movie star?

His reel age is said to be 30, but really I do not know.

"I once proposed to a girl in a c... seratory."

"With what result?"

"A lot of expensive plants were nipped by frost."

Cause for Worry

"I see a man has just been arrested for a crime committed in 1870."

"That kind of news makes me nervous."

"Why so?"

"When I was a young man I played the cornet."—Louisville Courier-Journal.

Not What She Meant

Heleen—Oh, Mr. Nocoyn, how lovely of you to bring me those beautiful flowers! How sweet and fresh they are! I do believe there is a little dew on them yet!

Nocoyn—Well, yes, there is; but I'll pay it tomorrow.

CONTINUED TOMORROW.