

MONTÉ CRISPEN

(The Sequel)

A Remarkable Story of the Millionaire-Hero's Adventures in Kensington



Monte Crispén, upon the death of his uncle, James Montgomery, inherited a vast estate, comprised chiefly of steel and textile mills in the vicinity of Philadelphia. A proviso in the will made it necessary for Monte not to go more than 50 miles from Philadelphia during the first year after his uncle's death in order to gain clear title to the millions.

During the course of the preceding story a part of the Crispén Steel Mills is blown up by the agents of Baron Hochmeister, because war orders for the Allies are being filled. The next day a cryptic cross warns Monte that a similar attempt will be made to cripple the textile mills in Kensington. Strikes are planned, and if these fail dynamite will be resorted to.

The sequel begins at the point where Monte, traveling incognito, arrives in Kensington to learn conditions at his mills.

By **ARNOLD GARRY COLM**
CHAPTER I
Among the Workers

TRULY it seemed like the end of the world to Monte Crispén when he got to Kensington with a single piece of luggage and no body servant. The fixed habits of the past, relics of his former life of plush-lined ease, rose like mocking spectres and smote hard against his grim determination to stick out at all costs any discomforts incidental to new standards of living. There was the sting of the cactus under every step he took in the mill district. At first the irritants were many, and his aroused nerves refused pointblank at times to take orders from his brain.

He kept saying over to himself "How can I see if I keep myself blind?" until gradually the wigwagging of the banished comforts became fainter and fainter. The facts which towered so high in the fogs of yesterday—an always-ready bath, variety of wearing apparel, exactly two-minute eggs, etc.—strangely changed their proportions. He saw their limitations and he felt the joy of standing alone, superior to their absence, unfamiliar in the presence of an existence shorn of them.

A mechanic who becomes a capitalist has no novelties to offer. He draws toward him the warming-pan, the manure and the tailor. But the capitalist who becomes a mechanic, let it be for a single day—ah! there we have a real somebody, a genuine centre of interest. Did not John D. Rockefeller, Jr., enhance his standing with the American public when he went to Colorado to study for himself the problems underlying the industrial disturbances there? In the language of the merchant, the middlemen had "oversold" young Mr. Rockefeller and he broke away from tradition; he wanted facts guaranteed fresh from the labor reservoir, so he took a train for the West.

But we cannot tarry long with these reflections; this is a story and not an essay. And our virile hero is signaling.

It was after 6 of a late November afternoon, bleak and chill. It was already dusk in McPherson Park, and street lights were beginning to twinkle in the little narrow corridors of homes that ran hither and thither back from the open square. One of these was Halsey street, and up and down its sidewalks came the pattering of eager footfalls, tired home-comers. There were stalwart mechanics and little girl millhands from the nearby factories; clerks from the downtown wholesale and retail houses soon to feel the benefits of rapid transit. As each reached a particular door, made known by habit, he or she would suddenly disappear from sight.

The wonderful economy practiced in many sections of our great industrial city is the nightly finding of one's own home in the rows and rows of "just alike," one and two story dwelling houses. True enough, there are the private marks known alone to each set of occupants, such as a familiar door scratch, a chipped step, a mended window blind or a distinguishing arrangement of curtains. But to a stranger watching the piquancy of this pageant of daily life in Philadelphia the picking out of the right portal is a profound achievement.

Yet we think nothing of it. Through rain or snow, sunshine or darkness, we and our neighbors actually sense our way home. Unconsciously we turn familiar corners, treading our way through the labyrinth of similarities; encircle a pool of water in the crossing or a bit of rough going in the sidewalk until we suddenly emerge almost miraculously at the portal of portals—our home. What were the forest-piercing talents of the American Indian compared to the home-finding genius of the true Philadelphian? As nothing.

For half an hour Monte Crispén, indulging in such reflections, had been watching with fascinated eyes the practiced arrivals at the two-story brick fronts in Halsey street. Bundled up in a warm coat, Monte quite filled the cold steps of No. 29, his presence blocking the entrance of the dwelling where Craig Andrews, the lawyer, had secured him a rear parlor with breakfasts at 13 a week. He was known only as "Mr. Tallier," and with a pair of heavy-rimmed glasses, a rapidly sprouting "third eyebrow" on his upper lip and the most ordinary of ready-made clothing, there was very little in evidence of the dandy of the Belleaire-Biltz Hotel and foreign watering places.

"Mr. Tallier will pardon me," Monte turned, a bit startled, and faced a girl about to enter, who looked straight into his eyes with a frank and pleasant curiosity.

He recovered his poise: "Ah! I see I am in the way. Miss Marley, I believe."

He lifted his hat politely, and made space for a free passage into the house.

"You are mother's new roomer?" she said timidly.

"Yes."

"I leave so early for the mill that I have missed you up to now."

Monte saw that her features were delicate, and her mouth was shapely and sensitive. Her brownish hair, which showed an inclination to wave, was blowing about her head under a jaunty tam-o'-shanter. She was small but well formed, and as a trained athlete. Monte looked down at her from his six feet two with undiluted admiration.

"The mill," he repeated vacantly after the girl, her ruddy young face and laughing hazel eyes seeming out of association with any suggestion of looms, knitting machines and other mechanical accessories of Spindleland.

"Oh! I forgot for the moment," she volunteered in explanation. "You are a stranger in the Kensington district. We are all workers up here—my mill is one of the Crispén group."

Monte winced. He managed to keep his voice steady and his face straight as he asked:

"Let me see, Miss Marley; you have a new boss, young Crispén, back from abroad for his inheritance?"

"Precious little we have seen of him, or expect to; and it's too bad, for he ought to know the way things are going."

"Going?" he repeated after her.

She cited an instance: "Other mills in the neighborhood have put in safety devices. We haven't."

"How about your not expecting to see the new heir?" he asked whimsically.

"From what I hear at the mill, Mr. Crispén is not the sort of an employer to get wild about. They say he is a 'do-nothing.' I guess you know the sort of man I mean—there, I should not have spoken so frankly, Mr. Tallier. Still, you are a worker and understand. I have my own opinion of idlers."

"Exactly," he answered, with a slight choking sensation that was completely hidden.

And then, as if to give especial emphasis to her opinion of nonactives, she bounced into the house with this parting shot at herself: "Which reminds me, Mr. Tallier, that there is work for me inside."

Monte, left alone, mused on. He had learned first-hand what Andrews had intimated; that an absentee ownership begets wholesome disrespect. He was not quite sure that he liked the wasp that dominated the girl's contempt of this unknown Monte Crispén. He recalled she qualified her opinion with "they say," and there was comfort in that. He chuckled audibly at the thought of her some day learning his identity. He was surprised at finding himself altogether more pleased than annoyed; there were fine depths in this young man.

Already you are saying of young Crispén in Kensington: What a silly ass thing for him to do. Emancipation from luxury, indeed! He still had his home in Walnut street, only 50 minutes' trolley ride from McPherson Park. Is this chronicle of industrial life in Philadelphia going to degenerate into another one of those social- uplift, humanity-saying sermons in dreary dialogue and torpid action? As a man on Chestnut street well put it: "I got all those books at home." He meant Tolstoy, Thoreau and the other famous renunciationists.

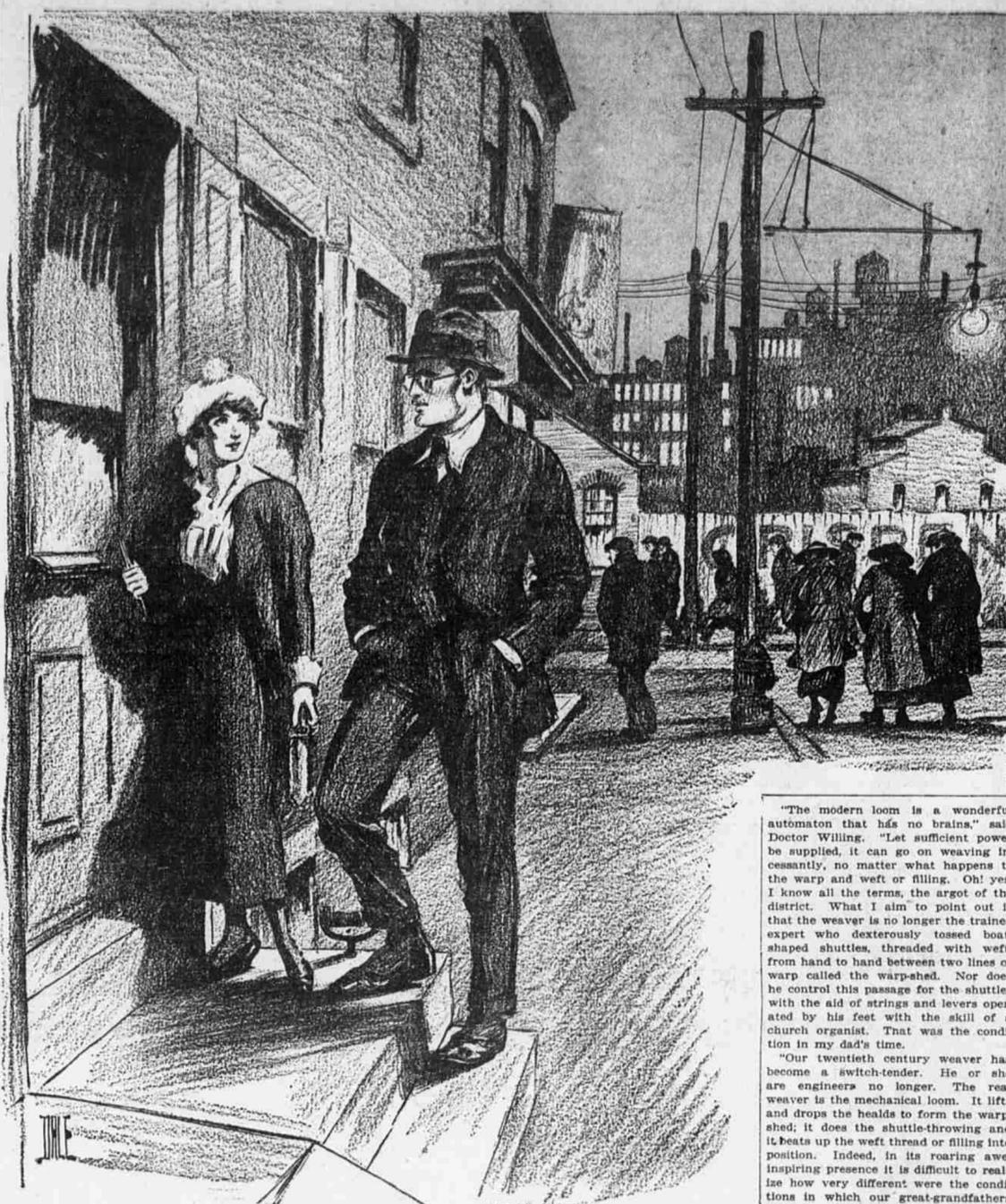
Right here the teller begs one tiny paragraph on the difference between idealism and realism. Tolstoy and Thoreau typify the idealist. They were great mental physicians; words and example were their cure-all. Alas! For the example part, the Russian social reformer, for all his fine renunciations and the peasant work he did in the fields, slept and ate in his well-appointed house, later run in his wife's name; and Thoreau, the American recluse, used to steal away regularly from his near-nature hut on Walden pond for the good home cooking in a nearby farmhouse. These men went into sackcloth and ashes for "copy," material to put into writings.

Monte Crispén's bold fling of self into the mill district was wholly practical; pure realism. He was "north of Market street" to post up; a belated apprentice in the human elements of manufacture. He was in daily touch with his lawyer and ready for emergencies; Monte kept the blue limousine at a garage in Jasper street, near Franklin Cemetery, with Lars, the faithful chauffeur, rooming within sound of the car's siren horn. Many young men of today dodge their responsibilities more through a realization of their incapacities than a wilful intent to be idlers. There is nothing mawkish about a man who wants to "see it tick," and has the will power to lay aside the frock coat and silk hat for the time being and get into overalls. Having put ourselves right, we shall now proceed with events.

For every vanishing home-comer from the sidewalk Monte surmised a warm welcome waited within. He saw in each street door the drop curtain of somebody's haven, a sheltered place where worries and vexations of the outside struggle went tumbling into vapor under the soothing spell of the evening meal, soft slippers, relaxation and that creased application always found among one's own. He realized how vital to these many homes it was for those at the helm of industrial affairs to keep the spindles turning, looms creaking and knitting machines clicking.

When it seemed that the street's last breadwinner had been nested, and the sidewalks were again fairly empty, Monte decided to intrude at No. 29; something within him hungered for a portion, ever so small, of the evening welcome spirit that appeared to ooze from the chimney pots and other pores of the dwellings and fill the night air.

"My eating arrangement was for breakfast only," he apologized to Mrs. Marley, very dignified and gentle, with



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black hair turning gray and lots of lines on her forehead and round her eyes, whom he met in the narrow hall.

"I hope you are quite satisfied," she replied, an anxious look crossing her face. Roomers are kings with struggling widows.

"Perfectly," said the young man. "Only now and then I might like a dinner. Tonight, for instance. Is it possible?"

Believed, Mrs. Marley answered: "Why, yes. Our food is plain, most simple. Perhaps I had best speak with my daughter. She gets our dinners."

Instead of entering his own room, the aforesaid back parlor, Monte divested himself of coat and hat, utilizing the battered rack in the front hall, and followed his landlady into the dining room. Everything was spotlessly clean and cheerful, with a live-coal grate fire, and through the open door into the kitchen he could see the light of another fire and hear the contented humming of the millgirl as she prepared the evening meal.

"Unity, dear, Mr. Tallier will have dinner with us," he heard Mrs. Marley say.

The humming stopped short, and a sweet young voice said: "But, mother, we have only lamb chops and potatoes; no other vegetables. There is apple pie in the leecob for dessert. You startle me, mother."

Monte stretched his ears and heard Mrs. Marley say in that soft, faded sort of voice: "Mr. Tallier is a real gentleman; he won't mind, I am certain."

Monte instantly voted himself an inconsiderate brute for intruding into this restful family circle. He thought of escape, yet never moved from his chair under the motto, "God Bless Our Home." Then came the dinner, served by the same gifted hands that prepared it. He soon found himself chatting easily with the Marleys, drawing to the surface their sorrows and their hopes, the latter chiefly centering around an absent brother, Strong, who was a weaver on a night shift, who went to work for an 18-hour stretch with a double-portion lunchbox.

"Fear of unemployment and part-time employment hangs a permanent pall over Kensington," said Miss Unity. "So when there is extra time to be had like now, Strong makes the most of it. He sleeps five hours out of the 24, and he is glad of the chance to make the overtime."

Miss Unity said little of herself. Her

laughter at Monte's friendly sallies and anecdotes of travel was infectious. It was a natural ripple of musical sound, most melodious, and indicated the hidden presence of a rich, untrained singing voice. It made him vibrate at each unexpected drop and rich coloring in her bell-like notes of mirth.

His rich young researcher felt vaguely sorry to find such a fine specimen of the feminine sex in her lowly position. He was to learn that our mill-girls in the gross are lively, happy and capable, not at all the drab creatures fancy and fiction has pictured them. He might have chattered longer, but there came a ring at the doorbell, which Unity answered. She came back into the room completely changed as to manner and mood.

She looked at her mother, her eyes distended by fear, and she trembled convulsively.

"What is it?" asked Mrs. Marley, frightened but calm.

"It was Jennie Reed's mother. Jennie is worse again. The doctor says she may die before morning. Jennie wants me. I must go there right away."

And she was gone in an instant, a shawl over her head.

"Is Jennie a millgirl?" asked Monte for the want of something to say.

"Yes, poor child, she was on the next loom to Unity, right across the 'alley' at the Crispén mills," replied Mrs. Marley, with a sad, weary expression. "Jennie is a victim of 'The Kiss of Death.'"

Almost mechanically, Monte repeated, "The Kiss of Death?"

"Yes," droned the elderly woman. "Other mills have self-threading shuttles. Night and day I worry over Unity. She is in constant danger as long as the Crispén Mills use the old-fashioned shuttles."

"In danger of what?" said Monte, very much puzzled.

"Go over to the Reeds' and see Jennie's doctor. We don't like to talk of it in Kensington. The doctor will explain it all. I cannot."

Whereupon the good woman burst into tears. Monte rushed from the room, and, seizing his hat from the rack, literally flew across the street to No. 26, where the Reed family lived.

CHAPTER II

The Kiss of Death

TIME and maximum production is the hydra-headed tyrant of the present-day weaver room, for as long as weavers are paid at a fixed rate per yard—by

piecework—with tempting bonuses riding upon earnings above a certain amount, there will probably be Jennie Reeds in the Kensington district. Monte Crispén was young, inexperienced and emotional, else he would have accepted existing conditions instead of flaring up at Mrs. Marley's exposition of "The Kiss of Death."

"It's over," the doctor was saying very solemnly to a circle of neighbors in the parlor of the Reed dwelling when Monte entered.

"Jennie's gone; oh, dear me! There will be no one left soon," said an elderly woman, who took each loss in a younger generation as evidence of a rapidly decreasing population.

Monte quietly asked for particulars when the doctor looked in his direction. "Quick consumption," said the physician in a low voice. "Help me clear out this room." They soon had the ground floor liberated of all save immediate members of the family and Miss Marley. The incredible swiftness of the calamity had plunged the mill girl's family into a dumb grief. Unity was busy comforting Jennie's mother and two younger sisters, while a practical-minded brother had taken up mortuary arrangements.

"I tell you that Miss Marley is a cool hand for every fevered brow," commented the physician to Monte, admiringly, as he prepared to leave, adding: "And who are you? I thought I knew everybody in this neighborhood."

"My name is Tallier; I am a newcomer hereabouts," replied Monte. "Recently took up the study of some problems affecting the Crispén mills. I confess I am interested, and want to know all about 'The Kiss of Death.'"

"Come along with me and we can talk uninterrupted," said the physician. "I am Doctor Willing ten years in the mill district; my father, also a physician, was before me here for half a century. Good night, Miss Marley."

"Which way?" asked Monte.

"Hurry! It is cold. Let me fetch my coat."

"If you don't mind a good, stiff walk, I am bound for The Beacon, on West Lehigh avenue, where I have two convalescing grip patients."

"The modern loom is a wonderful automaton that has no brains," said Doctor Willing. "Let sufficient power be supplied, it can go on weaving incessantly, no matter what happens to the warp and weft or filling. Oh, yes; I know all the terms, the argot of the district. What I aim to point out is that the weaver is no longer the trained expert who dexterously tossed boat-shaped shuttles, threaded with weft, from hand to hand between two lines of warp called the warp-ends. Now does he control this passage for the shuttles with the aid of strings and levers operated by his feet with the skill of a church organist. That was the condition in my dad's time."

"Our twentieth century weaver has become a switch-tender. He or she are engineers no longer. The real weaver is the mechanical loom. It lifts and drops the healds to form the warp-ends; it does the shuttle-throwing and it beats up the weft thread or filling into position. Indeed, in its roaring awe-inspiring presence it is difficult to realize how very different were the conditions in which our great-grandfathers and even our grandfathers lived and worked."

They had passed Somerset street and were under the Reading grade crossing. Monte paused to drop a dime into the hand of a cripple who was seated on the sidewalk, his back against the stone wall. The shout of the man brought them both back to him.

"I am no beggar," said he. "Here are your newspapers and change, sir. Good evening, doctor; I did not see you at first."

Monte looked so crestfallen when they had resumed their walk that Doctor Willing explained: "That cripple was once a mill operative. He was laid off during the panic of 1907 and got a temporary job in a railroad freight yard, where he lost his legs. He took to selling newspapers for a living. He is proud and he won't accept charity. But as I was saying, the demands upon the weaver of today are different from those of ancient times."

"Go ahead; I am keenly interested," assented Monte, as they turned west on Lehigh avenue.

"He or she must needs have a quick eye, vitality, alertness, ambition, system and the right temperament to keep pace with the needs of the great mechanical loom," said the doctor. "Each loom in the eyes of an employer is so many yards in so many hours. To get the maximum production from the loom there must be as few and short stoppages as possible. Premiums are paid on earnings above a certain amount to spur weavers to supreme efforts. I know of a girl weaver who wove 108 yards in 34 hours, while another weaver on the identical machine wove only 90 yards in the same time."

"Where does 'The Kiss of Death' come in?" asked Monte persistently.

"Patience," laughed the doctor. "I have first outlined all the primary conditions surrounding the work of a weaver to show you that he or she is about in the position of a horse tied in the rear of a racing automobile. Employment is contingent upon his or her ability to get a maximum production out of the loom. This ability includes promptness in starting and stopping the loom, seeing that broken warp ends are quickly repaired and inserting full bobbins or spools with new weft thread the moment the last prick—a prick is a single strand of weft reaching once across a piece of cloth—is thrown across from an empty hobbins. A few weavers can change hobbins without stopping the loom. Lastly, weavers must attend that the metal shuttles which travel across the width of the loom with the speed of express trains are promptly rethreaded."

"Now I grasp where lies the menace to the operatives' health," exclaimed Monte. "It is this rethreading of the shuttles, their drawing of the thread or yarn through the eye of the shuttle by means of the suction of the breath."

"Precisely, Mr. Tallier," said the physician. "Weavers themselves often object to a shuttle which requires a hook to thread it. Mr. Tallier, it is quicker to suck a shuttle than to use the hook. But tuberculosis and other infections are transmitted to a worker to worker, Glassblowers use the same blowpipe in the same manner. It is this contact with the means of disease that caused the work of Mr. Crispén the process of shuttle-feeding 'The Kiss of Death'?"

"What is the percentage of tuberculosis among weavers?"

"An insurance company took a sample five-year period and found that between 25 and 45 years of age tuberculosis claimed 46 per cent. of ordinary weavers who died and 70 per cent. of lace weavers."

"A real menace?"

"Well, rather," growled the doctor. "You have all the facts and you will have to place the blame. No mill owner I know would willingly cause the death of an operative. Many have installed kissless shuttles."

"Can they be had?"

"Yes. There are many sanitary, non-suction shuttle appliances on the market. The nearest approach to a perfect shuttle, I should say, would be one with a porcelain eye and metal carriage with no split to weaken it; one that can be threaded quickly by hand, as in the old way. But more is needed than a proper sanitary shuttle."

"What?"

Doctor Willing and Monte had reached a comparatively new building at Waterloo street and Lehigh avenue, lighted from ground to roof. It was "The Beacon," known to every worker in the mill district, a social headquarters for wage-earners, founded and run on nonsectarian lines by a remarkable man and his equally remarkable wife.

"What is needed are more mill owners with wide visions," replied the physician. "There is something in this industrial world above financial gain. What if weavers do prefer to take chances with the old shuttles rather than lose the time attending threading sanitary ones by hand! The mill owner is the guardian of the health and physical welfare of his employes. It is up to him to provide a wage scale that does not drive his workers to risk their lives. You can tell the crowd running the Crispén Mills my views. Thank God, all mill owners are not alike. Good night, Tallier. Come and see me and don't get too lonesome. We are on Allegheny avenue near Broad street."

It all seemed unaccountable to Monte Crispén. As he walked back to Halsey street his face hardened at the thought of an employer who would not do his utmost to lessen the weight of the burden upon a woman worker's back. Suddenly it dawned upon him that he was drifting into just that sort of an employer. How glad he was to have had this glimpse of truth. It had been denied his uncle, John Montgomery, who belonged to the old school.

Then Monte thought of the white-browed, musical voiced Marley girl, whose lips on the morrow might touch the self-same poison-coated shuttle which Doctor Willing insisted had flooded the body of Jennie Reed with the germs of a fatal malady. He felt himself at close grips with a personal responsibility for Unity's future well-being. Why should he despair? His was the power to roll away the stone from her tomb, and this fanciful thought flooded light like a sunburst to show him the open road.

Impulse can always outrun smug propriety. There were many drug stores along Kensington avenue, yet Monte walked several blocks before he found one with booth telephones. On one thing he was firmly resolved; he was going to have things changed at the Crispén Mills and at once. He remembered that sanitation had become a live tendency of the age; to wit, the disappearance of the common drinking cup from railroad trains and public places under health regulations.

In his present state of mind he wanted action on the shuttle question, and a most stimulating sensation filled his veins when he finally cork-screwed his long body into the right telephone booth. He asked for "Fibber 9900." He popped a nickel into the coin box and said: "Is this the Independence Club; Get Mr. Craig Andrews, please. Blast the rules! Never mind who wants him. Find him quick and put him on the wire. He will know who is calling. Hurry!"

Andrews was a bachelor and he lived at the Independence Club. He left a game of solitaire and hurried to the telephone.

"Yes, this is Andrews," he said.

"Hello!"

"I know you, my boy. What's up?"

"There has got to be something done right away or I don't sleep tonight."

"Go ahead."

"It's 'The Kiss of Death' the thing has got on my nerves."

"Rubbish! Blanchard, our mill boss, says the phrase was probably coined in some muck-raking magazine. Our shirts are clear, he says."

"Andrews, I mean business," replied Monte.

There was the determined ring of old John Montgomery in his voice and the lawyer saw that his young multi-millionaire client was thoroughly roused. Monte continued: "If you insist upon chaffing me I will get aboard the blue limousine and come into town red-eyed."

(CONTINUED IN MONDAY'S EVENING LEDGER)