

The vengeance of Henry Jarroman

By ROY VICKERS

LADY DOUCESTER watched Nell... her suitors disappear round a... of the house before she answered: "You mean, why did I ask her... that only an hour ago, I had two... I gave her one, the one that... I will give you the... for it happens because I wanted to... myself that the ten thousand... had not been handed to her."

"Checkmate!" she said the word aloud through clenched teeth, and sat for a moment, her brain working feverishly. There was no other telephone in Doucester House; the nearest telephone box was fully ten minutes' walk. Her neighbors, the Claverings, had a telephone, of course, but by the time she could get to it—still, Nadia might be out.

She rang and ordered her car composedly. Theed, of course, would have taken a taxi, but Nadia was at home; he would be talking to her by now. If she were not, the telephone would be useless in any case. Five minutes later Lady Doucester, immaculate, untroubled as to coiffure and veil, was being driven toward Crescent street.

As the car turned the corner, Lady Doucester bent forward and scrutinized the side of the street on which the house stood. Nothing—no one! Ah, wait a moment! As her car slowed, the door on No. 7 opened and the obese and unmistakable form of Theed began to descend the steps. As he went, a fire on his gloves with the air of a man who has brought a delicate task to an eminently satisfactory conclusion.

Lady Doucester's hand shot out to the speaking tube.

"Brunt, don't stop at Mrs. Stranach's," she changed my mind. I want to go to Cornish Terrace, No. 3. Be quick as you possibly can."

She drew back in her corner, but the precaution was an unnecessary one. Theed was intent on the second button of his left hand glove. Lady Doucester looked at him almost affectionately. "A great man," she thought.

It seemed to her but a few seconds later that she had stopped. She looked out. Cornish Terrace gave her her longnet and studied the front of Claudine Crayne's house; it looked, she considered, far more respectable than Doucester House. She was conscious of a slight disillusionment as she descended from the car and approached the front door.

The appearance of the liveried footman, however, sent her spirits up decidedly, and the interior decorations of the staircase up which she was led made her eyes dance in anticipation of the monument in store. By the time she was admitted to Claudine's amazing boudoir she was thoroughly enjoying herself.

Claudine drew her sunset colored draperies forward for the prescribed inch or two, and then fell to studying Lady Doucester's car with the so many intricate details of the machine first.

"Oh yes, you know perfectly well who I am," she said briskly, "you've been blackmailing me for years."

"I—well, really, I don't smoke. It's a question of convention, and a convention that is entirely on your side."

"Theed has double-crossed you!" Claudine leaned negligently against the much-photographed mantelpiece.

"I'm afraid I don't follow in the least," she murmured.

"Women like me always expect women like you to loil on divans all day, smoking, or else trail about in—well, in the kind of thing you've got on. Do you ever go to the cinema? All this—Lady Doucester waved her cigarette at the orientalist round her—"is just the sort of scene they use for in her luxurious apartment, the smasher of the dreamer of new triumphs. But, of course, we never really expect you to be like that. I don't believe it yet. Now you, on the other hand, have settled once and for all that I spend my days knitting counterpanes and taking family prayers and disapproving of the bare back vogue, and not allowing tobacco smoke in the drawing-room. It's an easy idea, so you cling to it. That's convention. I wish you'd sit down. I like to look at people I am talking to, and you are so tall. Teller even than your daughter, I think."

Claudine did not start, but she ground her cigarette into the ash tray and, after a second's hesitation, dropped on to some cushions opposite Lady Doucester's couch.

"Your daughter is one of the people I have come to speak to you about, Mrs. Jarroman."

"Who are the others?"

Lady Doucester nodded her admiration of the parry.

"Your husband," she returned, "yourself, and our mutual friend, Augustus Theed."

Claudine waited. Lady Doucester waited longer.

"How did you come across my daughter?"

"One of those abominable detective agencies found her for me. They watched Theed's office until she came to it. Theed is really careless in some ways, you know. But then so are you—to work with Theed."

Claudine stared.

"I must be quick," said Lady Doucester, glancing at her wrist watch. "He will probably be here in a few minutes."

"He will not be shown up here until we have finished our talk," said Claudine. Lady Doucester settled back against her cushions.

"Good," she said, reaching for another cigarette, "but let us discuss him first, all the same and get him out of the way. Mrs. Jarroman, you are far from being a fool. At least, you blackmail beautifully. But you are letting yourself be made a fool of by Theed. He is—he is—"

Lady Doucester closed her eyes and held her cigarette suspended while she groped for the word that she had so often seen flashed on to the darkened screen of her favorite picture palace. At last she found, "He has done a double-crossed you," she declared, triumphantly.

"I believe you mean it, too," muttered Claudine, still staring, "though why it would matter to you I can't imagine."

"This is where the long story comes in," said Lady Doucester. "You want to hear it?" Claudine hesitated.

"Oh, yes," she answered, but her shrug was not so casual as it might have been.

It was indeed a long story. Lady Doucester told it well, too, as a connected chain of events; she linked what she had guessed to what she had been told, and what she deduced to what she had herself seen and heard. Claudine smoked fast and furiously, her strange eyes changing in color, her hand tearing at the gauzes of her gown.

"I am a busy woman," she said, and also got himself to his feet. "I had my time, equally, has a certain... he crosses... if a thousand... cannot prolong our... little swordplay, but, alas... it, then, that I may rely upon... support in putting my proposi... on the contrary," said Lady Dou... steadily. "I shall do all in my... to win my daughter-in-law... you and your other penny... Jean's fortune coming into... hands."

"Dear Lady Doucester," Theed pro... sadly. It seems that, after all... do not see quite as I thought... I should have made it plain... Mr. Jarroman is now almost re... I—ah—feel sure that any...—anchurated action on your part... would coincide with his sudden release... his—er—couch of pain; and once... had the dear fellow in our midst... I should be forced to carry out... orders which I should not like... he had that dreadful stroke. You... know what they were. I was required... start an immediate prosecution of... Mrs. Stranach for obtaining property... fraudulent impersonation—proceed... which were to involve an action... against yourself and your husband... to recover a certain large sum—"

"Quite so," interrupted Lady Dou... "He set the wheels working... meant to, and then he had what you... call that dreadful stroke. What brought... on?"

"Once Theed was taken sick... Probably you forget," remarked... Lady Doucester pleasantly. She paused... the fraction of a second, and then... the training of the card in a thousand... her rescue. She flung down her card.

Warning Delayed

"He received some information from... Mr. Segrove, the detective—information... which was of vital importance. It cut... the ground from under his feet! It... the training of the card in a thousand... I took every physical power from... him for the time."

"Really," Lady Doucester, you... Mr. Segrove told him that John... Camden was innocent of the murder of... Charles Eddie."

"I still do not see," began Theed, ... that there was something, in his voice... that told Lady Doucester that her... guess had proved itself the truth... more."

"No, I darsay you genuinely don't... see," she conceded. "It needs the... negative instinct to understand Jarro... man. It doesn't matter. All you need... know is summed up in a few words... These instructions he gave you were... the expression of a stanic hate. He... hated Nadia. He hated her because... he discovered—it doesn't matter when...—that she was the daughter of the man... who, he believed, had murdered Eddie... John Camden was dead, out of reach;... but John Camden's daughter, and her... husband and her husband's people... were all still alive, and he determined... that they should pay the penalty in... instead. If Jarroman had been a China... man he would have worked in terms of... red-hot pinners and boiling oil; being an... Englishman, he had to take the long... arm of law. And if it hadn't been for... that most opportune stroke," concluded... Lady Doucester reflectively, "the long... arm of the law would really have done... quite as well."

"Am I to understand," began Theed, ... his smile fixed, "that your—creative... instinct gives you confidence in the... Jarroman's willingness to let bygones... be bygones?"

"It does," assented Lady Dou... ceister. "If you want the thing staped... build, here it is; you locked Jarroman... up somewhere for your own reasons, ... and it suited me that you should do... Now, however, it suits me equally... well that you should let him out again... And that is that."

There was an electric silence. Theed's... heavy gaze was bent full upon Lady... Doucester, his stiffly smiling lips had... left his teeth; his hands twitched. ... "Can he gain anything by killing me?"... the question shot through Lady... Doucester's brain and left her tingling... with a cold yet electric excitement. ... "I wonder if you would allow me to... use your telephone, Lady Doucester?"... asked Theed, a mastery unconcern in... his voice. "I have never heard of this... Mr. Segrove, if I should like if I may... make an appointment with him in... order to discuss his amazing discovery... with him."

Lady Doucester stifled a hysterical... inclination to laugh; the anticlimax... was so totally unexpected. As she led... way to the library, she tried to make... herself realize that Theed had caved in... that she had won that Nadia and... Theed and she herself were safe, and that... everything had come right, and that... she would ever know how clever... she had been.

In that moment of triumph she was... her guard.

Theed picked up the telephone book, ... stared at it, then glanced helplessly... at the carefully shaded windows. Lady... Doucester moved to the nearer one and... drew up the sun blind.

In that moment Theed picked up the... book of the telephone, stepped back... a couple of paces, and abruptly jerked... the long flex from its attachment in... the wall. Then, while Lady Doucester... stared out into her garden, he went... through the front door, and, through... the exchange, getting Segrove's number... and going home. He replaced the receiver... with an appointment with him, and... returned to Lady Doucester.

Theed turns a Trick

"In my early days," he remarked, ... in sorrow than in anger. "The... business hours of a young and enter...-prising detective would most certainly... have ended before six. Ten to six... is an exceptional case, perhaps 10.30 to... But always to 6. Always."

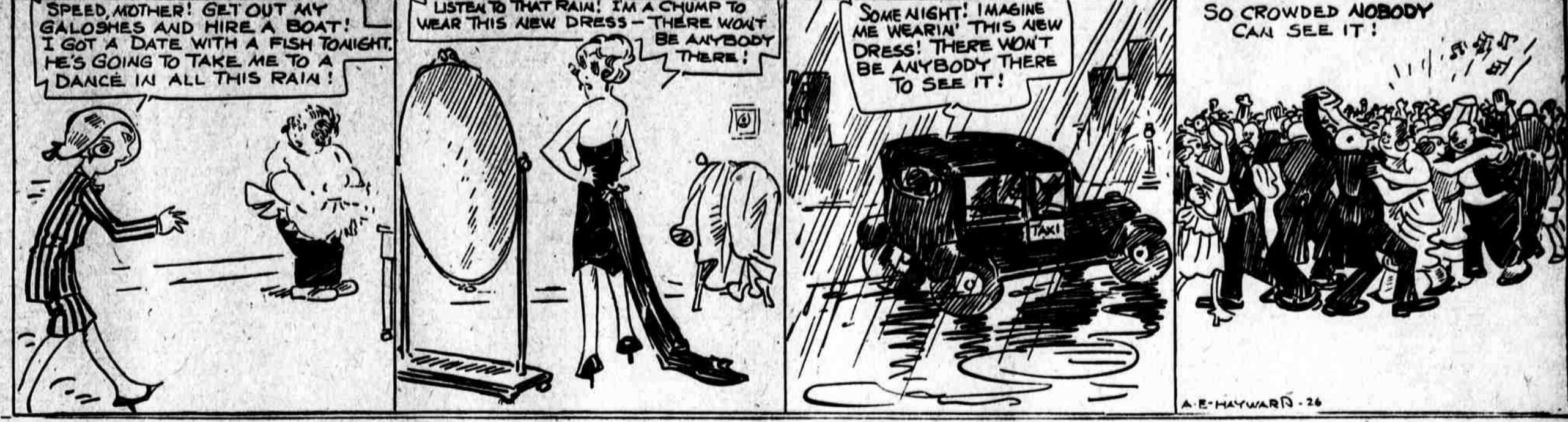
He shook his head, bowed to Lady... Doucester, shook his head again, and... went.

As she heard the front door close... behind him, Lady Doucester dropped... into a chair. Her first action was to... turn the chair so that it faced a con...-spicuous mirror, and, grimaced at her... reflection, then examined it critically... came to the conclusion that Red...-head would have a good/hour's work... massaging away the effects of this... afternoon. A nuisance—an hour... wasted when there was so much to do... she thought led to another. She must... warn Nadia at once. She went to the... telephone.

It was quite three minutes before... Lady Doucester discovered that the in...-strument was out of order; another two... she had finally placed together... that Theed played her.



SOMEBODY'S STENOGRAPHER—Same Result



The Young Lady Across the Way



PATHETIC FIGURES



SCHOOL DAYS



PETEY—A Serious Loss



GASOLINE ALLEY—By Wrong Number

