REALLY MARRIED—By Mary Stewart Cutting

Second of a Series of Short Stories on Little Episodes of Married Life by the Best American Fiction Writers

HOW does one solve a problem that can't be solved? Of course, all problems are impossible of solution until you do solve them.

One never knows when the smallest happening may turn out to be a big thing in its effect on the minds of two people who love each other in all the years that may come never to be forgotten.

Sally, the blue-eyed, soft-cheeked wife of Carleton May, whose photograph with its firm lips and steady eyes re-enforced her spirit from the little table beside her—the mother of the two curlyheads and the baby upstairs with Maggie — was busy with her own problem, as she sat in the small firelit room looking out of the window in the fast-darkening winter afternoon at the flooded vacant suburban lots and the leafless bushes that trembled at the fierce slashes of the rain.

She was listening to the footsteps of her father as he paced up and down the narrow hallway. Every now and then he called to her dejectedly:

"It doesn't look much like clearing, Sally," and she replied:

"Oh! I think it does, father," though she didn't think so at all.

How, how, she wondered desperately, could she make her commuting husband appear glad to go back to town this evening, after the half-mile walk home from the station in this icy slush and rain? There never were any taxis in this outlying part of the suburb. How had she failed to remind him in the unclouded morning that this, and not tomorrow, as first intended, was to be the night of father's treat? Ever since luncheon she had tried repeatedly to get Carleton on a phone that had "gone dead." She knew intuitively that, unwarned, his first loudly spoken words in answer to hers would be:

"Go in town tonight? You're crazy."

Oh, no enforced resignation on his part would suffice. There must be a glow of enjoyment to satisfy poor father, who had planned this festivity for his brief trip up from the South, where his health, since the death of his wife, kept him in the lonely winters; the thought of this pleasure given to those he loved would warm his heart for months to come.

He was a tall, soldierly old man, with a square gray beard and piercing eyes under bushy gray eyebrows. His old friends called him major, but he was mostly known here as Sally May's father; absent or present, he was so much a father, always, as far as moderate means could afford, "doing something" for her and hers.

But this theatre party tonight—for which the most expensive last-minute seats had been procured—and the prospective supper, while embracing Sally and Carleton's young visiting cousins, Howard and Ellyn Brown, here on their way to Florida, was really intended as a special treat for his son-in-law. Carleton was going through the struggles of a young man to support his little family buying shoes, perforce, instead of theatre tickets. He had, moreover, a chivalrous kindness

Mary Stewart Cutting

the author of this fascinating tale is well known for her stories of married life which have charmed thousands of readers.

Next Saturday's story in this remarkable series will be written by Joseph Hergesheimer.

for the Major, which the latter deeply appreciated.

He came in now to stand beside his daughter, saying anxiously:

"I'm afraid Carleton won't want to go out in the rain again."

"Oh, he's indoors all day, you know," said Sally brightly. "And Howard and Ellyn are looking forward to it all so much—young people do love a treat."

"Yes, yes, that's true," responded the Major with a pleasant smile.

He turned expectantly as a tall, dark, languid youth of sixteen strolled into the room.

"What is it, Howard?"

"I don't think I'd better go tonight," said Howard, briefly. "I think I ought to stay home, sir; I've got a cold."

"He hasn't at all, mom!" volunteered the wide-eyed eight-year-old Carley, who had followed on his cousin's heels. "He says he's sick of theatres. He wants to stay home and read 'The Hound of the Baskervilles!'"

"If he has a cold——," said the Major, oblivious of his grandson's remarks. Any plea of health was always valid to the Major. "Yes, you had much better stay here, my boy, much better."

"Well, Ellyn will enjoy it, anyway," began Sally comfortingly, as Howard disappeared, and stopped short as a tall, thin, abnormally short-skirted young girl came toward them, with an agitated expression on her small, pale, snub-nosed countenance.

"Is there anything the matter, Ellyn?"

"Oh, nothing, but——" Ellyn was at the age when to make one of a family party of pleasure was nothing short of agony. "I do so hate to tell you and the Major, but one of my neuralgic headaches is coming on and I think—I'm afraid—I ought not to go out in this weather. I know mother wouldn't want me to be exposed."

"No, of course not," said the Major, hastily, in spite of his stricken countenance. "You mustn't be exposed on any account, my dear child. No!"

"I feel dreadfully about it, Major, dear," murmured the girl with a sharp look at Sally, who was fiercely silent. Two tickets cast away, and the Major had paid $7 apiece for them to a speculator.

Little Maisie May, with her outstanding crop of curls, guilessly added her version of the affair as Ellyn ran upstairs.

"She told Howard she didn't want to go because she hadn't any sweetie."

"Oh, if she would like some candy," began the Major with eagerness.

"She doesn't mean candy, she means a young man," said Sally. "Never mind, father dear; we'll get some one else who would be glad to go."

Her heart was hot within her. it was exactly like Carleton's relations, they never put themselves out for anybody!

BUT all the more need for Carleton to stand by now. A saving idea occurred to her, solving the problem at once. Why hadn't she thought of it before? The rain was hurling itself at the window with renewed violence. She must manage to get the Wakefields at the corner and telephone Carleton to have his dinner in town—as they would all have done but for the baby's needs—and meet them there afterward.

As she splashed through puddles in her arctics, the rain rattling down on her umbrella and Carleton's mackintosh, her mind was uncomfortably reverting to the parting from her husband that morning—there had been something lacking. To married lovers each day differeth extremely in glory—there is a deepening of the joy of affection, or an imperceptible lessening of it; there are days that seem to make neither for progression nor retrogression, and yet of which it is dangerous to have too many; non-recognition may slide so far that what should be the thrilling pleasure of recovery turns into an irritation.

Carleton had gone off that morning, after the vaguely unsympathetic conditions of the last week, with an indefinable effect of glad escape from household demands that impressed itself on her even in his kiss of farewell.

Sally was more in love with her husband than when, nine years ago, they had begun life together; she knew that his love for her had grown also. That was what it was to be really married. But she had a sudden consciousness now that she had perhaps been tiresome in asking him to do a great many things lately, from the first moment he entered the house until he left it; she didn't want him to be glad to get away from her!

She had an inspiration when Jimmy, the nineteen-year-old son and heir, came to hear ring at the Wakefields.

"Oh, Jimmy! don't you want to go to the theatre with us tonight? My father has two extra tickets."

Jimmy shook his head. "Thank you, but I've got a date myself. Mother's out."

"I only want to use your phone, if I may," said Sally. "Ours is out of order."

It seemed hours before central got the right number, but at last—

"Oh, Mr. Truefit, is this you? This is Mrs. May speaking. Is Mr. May there?—What?—Went out after lunch and said he wouldn't be back at the office again?—Do you know where I could reach him?—Had a good many places to go to? No, it's nothing important, thank you! Good-by."

Out in the storm all that afternoon! As he himself would have expressed it for her, it was rotten luck.

She called up a couple of friends who might retrieve the party. One was in bed, the other in Philadelphia. She tried vainly to get the promise of a taxi later. She carefully laid the coin for her city call beside the phone before leaving.

A RAINY evening in town has, at least, its cheerful illumination of electric lights and flashing motors; there is a sense of populousness, of action, of speed. But in an outlying suburb a rainy winter night is the blackness of desolation.

The outline of a man bent forward against the storm was the only sign of life as Sally returned home. But her spirit obstinately rose now against failure. She would find some way to save the day yet.

The two children were having their early supper at the little round table under the big clock in the dining room. Carley looked up to ask: "What's the matter with grandpa? He walks up and down all the time and won't smile."

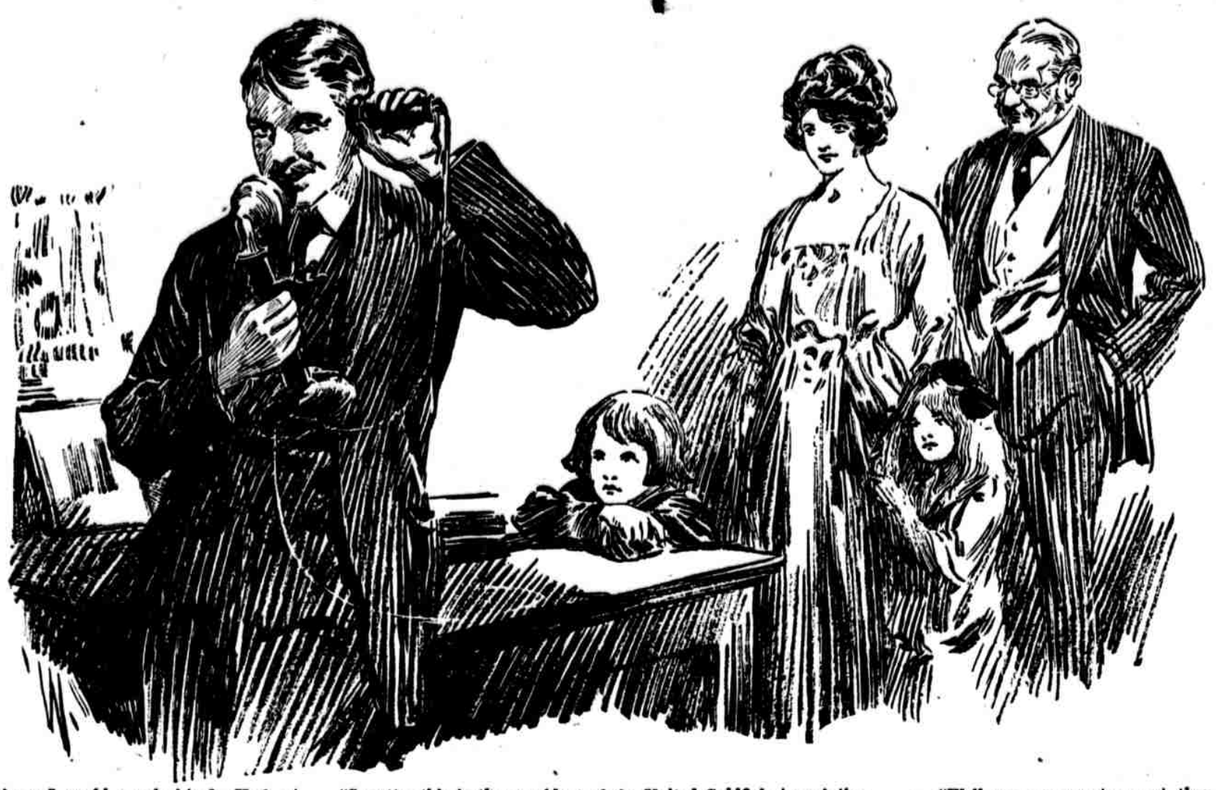
He looked very old and worn as he caught sight of Sally.

"Where have you been?" he asked anxiously.

"Only to the Wakefields for a minute. The rain isn't so bad when you're out in it," she lied.

He visibly brightened. "That's just what I've been thinking. Of course, I don't mind weather, never did!"

Perhaps Carleton might feel that way, too. She had a sudden bouyance of hope as she ran upstairs to change her things. She opened the door of Carleton's closet by mistake, and saw—— The day had a curse on it, that was all there was to it! A glance had shown that his new



"Squatty, this is the president of the United Goldfish Association. Can your car make this house and the 7:30 train? All right, we'll expect you"

shoes were missing—he had worn them into town. The fact covered a tragedy. Carleton was afflicted with a little toe on his left foot that had to be treated with peculiar consideration if a shoe—which, of course, must not be too tight—were the least bit too broad, the toe slipped back under its fellows, to be trodden into agony by them at every step. If Carleton had been out in the rain all the afternoon in those shoes——.

Her loving heart swelled with pity for him. Oh, she couldn't ask him to take another step! She thought swiftly of the time when she had fallen on the ice and hurt her knee and he had carried her all the way home—of all the big crises in which he had so dearly come to her aid. She wouldn't sacrifice him now for any one! If father had to be disappointed, he had to be; she would try to make up to him for it by her companionship.

She dressed hurriedly. There was only one thing left now for her to do; she must manage to speak to Carleton before the Major saw him, to at least fend off the blow of his first inevitable words of horrified surprise and protest.

She hugged the baby to her, a little, fat, warm bundle, as her one comfort in this dreadful, endless day, before putting him to bed.

"Well, you are all dressed, I see," said the Major, sighing. "My, my, it seems to be raining harder than ever! It will be pretty tough on the boy to go out again tonight, and you won't want to go without him. I intended this for a pleasure you know, my dear, but I suppose we'll just have to give it up this time."

"Not a bit of it!" said Sally, with forced cheeriness. "Waste all those lovely tickets? Not much!"

She went to the front door and looked out into the downpour; no signs of her husband! But the Major had followed her.

She got away from him and slipped down the basement stairs to peer out secretly from the lower door.

"Where are you, Sally?" he called. "Come up here, my dear."

There began a wild game of hide and seek, Sally and the Major each on the watch for the first glimpse of the home-comer.

At last, at last, through the darkness of the deluge his figure materialized unexpectedly near, as closing his umbrella he turned toward the upper steps. His arms were full of bundles.

"Oh, Carleton, Carleton! Come this way, down here!"

HER hands groped for him, dragged him to her. The touch of his dear body, even in his wet overcoat, seemed salvation, though he had an effect of resistance, as if the dividing haze of the last few days was still there.

"What's the matter? Let's get inside?"

"No, no, wait a moment! I've got to speak where father can't hear. He is in the hall above waiting for you."

"Say it quick, then! I've been out all the afternoon in these infernal shoes. My toe——"

"Oh, I know it all, dear!" Her whispered words came in a torrent. "I tried to get you on the phone to remind you—this is the night of father's treat, that he's been planning for months—not tomorrow, as you thought."

"Tonight! Holy mackerel!"

He stood staring incredulously at her in the ray of light from the half-closed door behind them.

"Well, you can count me out, then. You don't mean you want me to go back to town now?" His voice was outraged.

"No, no, dear! Don't talk so loud. I wouldn't have you do that for the worlds. I've been so sorry for you! But—but——" Her agonized voice broke. "Please, please, don't speak that way to father. If you can only say something—I don't know what—to sound as if you were disappointed, it might make things easier for him. It's been such a dreadful day! Howard and Ellyn have been acting up, and won't go, and I can't get any one else on those tickets, and father's heartbroken on your account. I can't tell you how he's been watching the weather; it's nearly killed him."

"Let's get inside," said her husband again. He deposited his packages on the floor. "Here are the coffee, and the bacon, and the oranges."

For a moment her world hung in the balance. The small face raised to his was white and drawn, with frightened eyes; so had she looked the night before the baby was born.

"Hel-lo!" he said gently, as he stopped to kiss her. "Why, why, you mustn't get worked up like this over nothing!" He stopped short with his hand on her arm as the Major's voice came from above in tremulous appeal.

"Oh, Carleton, Carleton! Is that you at last?"

At the note of tragedy Carleton registered, as they say, consternation; his jaw dropped; he looked wildly around as if for escape. Then his eyes met Sally's once more. A swift change came over his countenance, he drew his mouth down in a humorous resignation. A generous kindness seemed to emanate from him as enfolding as light, as he murmured.

"Well, what do you know about that!"

Sally caught her breath—always when she needed it, the miracle of his help was made manifest. His arm was around her as they went upstairs to meet the tall, thin old figure at the top.

"Carleton, you poor boy! You won't want to go out again!"

"Who minds a little rain?" said his son-in-law hardily. "Just the night, I'll say, to get off for some fun."

If you had seen father's face then——! Old? Not a bit of it!

"What's this I hear?" Carleton continued. "Two tickets to spare? I'll have to kick off this shoe, it's murdering me. No taxis, of course. I'll settle all this! Don't you worry, Sally, I'm not going to walk, I couldn't."

He paused for breath as Carley and Maisie hurled themselves upon him in welcome.

"Here, children, leave your dad alone. I've got to get to the phone!"

"It isn't working," moaned Sally.

"Yes, it is. Give me Mountain 1670. Hello—hello! Is this Mr. S. W. Watts? Well, Squatty, this is the president of the United Goldfish Creamery Association. Yes, I supposed you'd recognize the voice. The Missus still away? Anything doing tonight with you and your kid brother. I thought not. The question is, can your car make this house and the 7:30 train afterward? Fine! We're off on a theatre bat, the Major's party, two tickets to donate. The Major's some prince, I'd have you know. Yes, it rains; we expect to land on Ararat. Are you and Jim in on this? We're only asking you on account of the car, y'un'erstan'? Sally's horrified. What did you say? Take us all the way into town? Oh, that's too much! All right, we'll expect you."

He turned to his wife to say, "Never mind my dinner; all I want is to change and soak up my feet!"

IT WAS a wonderful party. It wasn't only that the hilarious guests motored them all the way into town, or that the play was "Peg o' My Heart," or that father, dear father, beaming with a touching joy, sat between Carleton and Sally and saw that no one lost a point—there was, besides all this, a deep innerglow of pleasure, an overtone of harmony that made itself felt even to those least aware of its cause.

As for the supper at the Bamboula afterward—but why go into details? The Major never did things by halves. As Jim remarked, "Oh boy! That was some eats." If Sally felt a pang for Ellyn, at a remembrance of the girl's face over the banister as the gay party left the house, she sternly quenched it. Ellyn would have to learn.

It was after their return—singing all the way, father's bass, mind you, joining in—that Sally, getting ready for the night, with her hair unbound, leaned against her husband's shoulder to say:

"I don't know how you manage it—you never fail me!"

"That's the big idea," he announced; the tender pressure of his arms around her voiced the unspoken words: "And I never will!"

NOBODY'S MAN

How a Great Leader, Almost Ruined by a Money Marriage and a Faithless Wife, Regains Success and Happiness Through an Unusual Woman's Love Is Fascinatingly Told in This Story by the Noted Author of "The Great Impersonation" and Other "Best Sellers."

By E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

THIS BEGINS THE STORY

Andrew Tallente, political leader, has married for money. His wife accepted him to forward social ambitions to a title. Losing his seat in Parliament he meets her recriminations with the statement that their marriage has been unsuccessful, owing to her cold and selfish temperament and her interest in his young secretary, Anthony Palliser, who has just disappeared. She has a sudden suspicion that her husband is responsible for the disappearance. Lady Jane Partington, a beautiful and wealthy aristocrat interested in labor problems, is Andrew's neighbor. He tells her "My wife is not coming back."

AND HERE IT CONTINUES

"NOT at all?" she exclaimed.

"To me, never," she answered. "We have separated."

"I am so very sorry," she said, after a moment's startled silence. "I am afraid that I asked a careless question, but how could I know?"

"There was nothing tactless about it," he assured her. "It makes it much easier for me to tell you. I married my wife thirteen years ago because I believed that her wealth would help me in my career. She married me because she was an American with ambitions, anxious to find a definite place in English society. She has been disappointed in me. Other circumstances have now presented themselves. I have discovered that my wife's affections are bestowed elsewhere. To be perfectly honest, the discovery was a relief to me."

"So that is why you are living down here like this?" she murmured.

"Precisely! The one thing for which I am grateful," he went on, "is that I always refused to let my wife take a big country house. I insisted upon an unpretentious place for the times when I could rest. I think that I shall settle down here altogether. I can just afford to live here if I shoot plenty of rabbits, and if Robert's rheumatism is not too bad for him to look after the vegetable garden."

"Of course you are talking nonsense," she pronounced, a little curtly.

"Why nonsense?"

"You must go back to your work," she insisted. "Keep this place for your holiday moments, certainly, but for the rest, to talk of settling down here is simply wicked."

"What is my work?" he asked. "I tell you frankly that I do not know where I belong. A very intelligent constituency, stuffed up to the throat with schoolboard education, has determined that it would prefer a representative who has changed his politics already four times. I seem to be nobody's man. Horlock at heart is frightened of me, because he is convinced that I am not sound, and he has only tried to make use of me as a sop to democracy. The Whigs hate me like poison, hate me even worse than Horlock. If I were in Parliament, I should not know which party to support. I think I shall devote my time to roses."

"And between September and May?"

"I shall hibernate and think about them."

"Of course," she said, with an air of one humoring a child, "you are not in earnest. You have just been through a very painful experience and you are suffering from it. As for the rest, you are talking nonsense."

"Explain, please," he begged.

"You said just now that you did not know where your place was," she continued. "You called yourself nobody's man. Why, the most ignorant person who thinks about things could tell you where you belong. Even I could tell you."

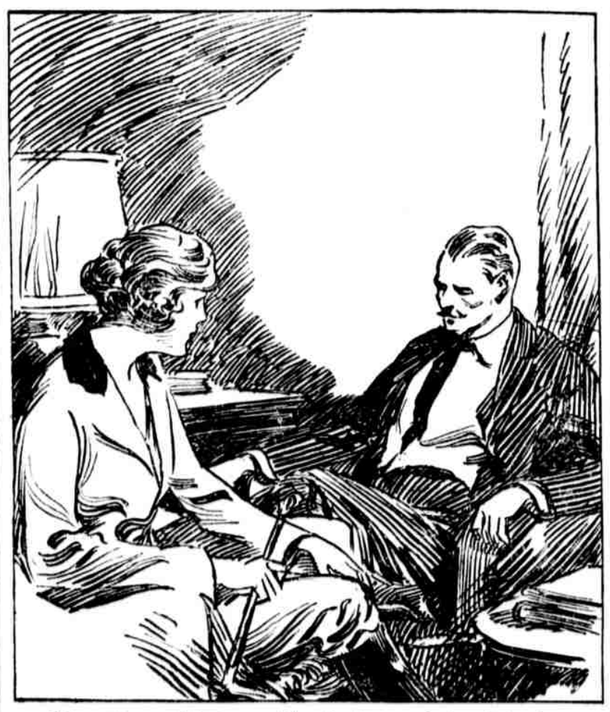
"Please do," he invited.

She rose to her feet.

"Walk around the garden with me," she begged, brushing the cigarette ash from her skirt. "You know what a terrible out-of-door person I am. This room seems to me close. I want to smell the sea from one of those wonderful lookouts of yours."

He walked with her along one of the lower paths, deliberately avoiding the upper lookouts. They came presently to a grass-grown pier. She stood at the end, her firm, capable fingers clenching the stone wall, her eyes looking seaward.

"I will tell you where you belong," she said. "In your heart you must know it, but you are suffering from that reaction which comes from failure to those people who are not used to failure. You belong to the head of things. You should hold up your right hand, and the party you should lead should form itself about you. No, don't interupt me," she went on. "You and all of us know that the country is in a bad way. She is feeling all the evils of a too great prosperity, thrust upon her after a period of suffering. You can see the dangers ahead—I learnt them first from you in the pages of the reviews, when after the war you foretold the exact position in which we find ourselves today. Industrial wealth means the building up of a new democracy. The democracy already exists, but it is unrepresented, because those people who should form its bulwark and



I have discovered that my wife's affections are bestowed elsewhere

its strength are attached to various factions of what is called the Labor Party. They don't know themselves yet. No Rienzi has arisen to hold up the looking-glass. If some one does not teach them to find themselves, there will be trouble. Mind, I am only repeating what you have told others."

"It is all true," he agreed.

"Then can't you see," she continued eagerly, "what party it is to which you ought to attach yourself—the party which has broken up now into half a dozen factions? They are all misnamed, but that is no matter. You should stand for Parliament as a Labor or a Socialist candidate, because you understand what the people want and what they ought to have.

"You should draw up a new and final program."

"You are a wonderful person," he said with conviction, "but like all people who are clear-sighted and who have imagination, you are also a theorist. I believe your idea is the true one, but to stand for Parliament as a Labor member you have to belong to one of the acknowledged factions to be sure of any support at all. An independent member can count his votes by the capful."

"That is the old system," she pointed out firmly. "It is for you to introduce a new one. If necessary, you must stoop to political cunning. You should make use of those very factions until you are strong enough to stand by yourself. Through their enmity among themselves, one of them would come to your side, anyway. But I should like to see you discard all old parliamentary methods. I should like to see you speak to the heart of the man who is going to record his vote."

"It is a slow matter to win votes in units," he reminded her.

"But it is the real way," she insisted. "Voting by party and government by party will soon come to an end. It must. All that it needs is a strong man with a definite program of his own, to attack the whole principle."

He looked away from the sea toward the woman by his side. The wind was blowing on her face, blowing back little strands of her tightly coiled hair, blowing back her coat and skirt, outlining her figure with soft and graceful distinction. She was young, healthy and splendid, full of all the enthusiasm of her age. He sighed a little bitterly.

"All that you say," he reminded her, "should have been said to me by the little brown girl in Paris, years ago. I am too old now for great tasks."

She turned toward him with the pitying yet pleasant air of one who would correct a child.

"You are forty-nine years old and three months," she said.

"How on earth did you know that?" he demanded.

She smiled.

"A valuable little red book called 'Who's Who.' You see, it is no use your trying to pose as a Methuselah. For a politician you are a young man. You have time and strength for the greatest of all tasks. Find some other excuse, sir, if you talk of laying down the sword and picking up the shuttle."

He looked back seaward. His eyes were following the flight of a seagull, wheeling in the sunlight.

"I suppose you are right," he acknowledged. "No man is too old for work."

"I beg your pardon, sir."

They turned abruptly around. They had been so engrossed that they had not noticed the sound of footsteps. Robert, a little out of breath, was standing at attention. There was a disturbed look in his face, a tremor in his voice.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he repeated, "there is—some one here to see you."

"Some one?" Tallente repeated impatiently.

Robert leaned a little forward. The effort of lowering his voice only made his hoarse whisper sound more agitated.

"A police inspector, sir, from Barnstaple, is waiting in the study."

Mr. Inspector Gillian of Barnstaple had no idea of denying his profession. He had traveled over in a specially hired motor-car, and he was wearing his best uniform. He rose to his feet at Tallente's entrance and saluted a little ponderously.

"Mr. Andrew Tallente, sir?" he inquired.

Tallente silently admitted his identity, waved the inspector back to his seat—the one high-backed and uncomfortable chair in the room—and took an easy-chair himself.

"I have come over, sir," the man continued, "according to instructions received by telephone from Scotland Yard. My business is to ask you a few questions concerning the disappearance of the Honorable Anthony Palliser, who was, I am given to understand, your secretary."

"Dear me!" Tallente exclaimed. "I had no idea that the young man's temporary absence from polite society would be turned into a melodramatic disappearance."

The inspector took mental note of the levity in Tallente's tone, and disapproved.

"The Honorable Anthony Palliser disappeared from here, sir, on Tuesday night last, the night of your return from London," he said. "I have come to ask you certain questions with reference to that disappearance."

"Go ahead," Tallente begged. "Care to smoke a cigar?"

"Not while on duty, thank you, sir," was the dignified reply.

"You will forgive my cigarette," Tallente observed, lighting one. "Now you can go ahead as fast as you like."

"Question number one is this, sir. I wish to know whether Mr. Palliser's abrupt departure from the Manor was due to any disagreement with you?"

"In a sense I suppose it was," the other acknowledged. "I turned him out of the house."

The inspector did not attempt to conceal his gratification. He made a voluminous note in his pocketbook.

"Am I to conclude, then, that there was a quarrel?" he inquired.

"I do not quarrel with people to whom I pay a salary," Tallente replied.

"When you say that you turned him out of the house, that rather implies a quarrel, doesn't it? It might even imply—blows."

"You can put your own construction upon it," was the cool reply.

"Had you any idea where the Honorable Anthony Palliser was going to?"

"I suggested the devil," Tallente confided blandly. "I expect he will get there some time. I put up with him because I knew his father, but he is not a young man to make a fuss about."

The inspector was a little staggered.

"I am to conclude, then," he said, "that you were dissatisfied with his work as your secretary?"

"Absolutely," was the firm reply. "You have no idea what a mess he was liable to make of things if he was left alone."

The inspector coughed.

"Mr. Tallente, sir," he said, "my instructions are to ask you to disclose the nature of your displeasure, if any, with the Honorable Mr. Anthony Palliser. In plain words, Scotland Yard desires to know why he was turned away from his place at a moment's notice."

"I suppose it is the duty of Scotland Yard to be inquisitive in cases of this sort," Tallente observed. "You can report to them the whole of the valuable information with which I have already furnished you, and you can add that I absolutely refuse to give any information respecting the—er—difference of opinion between the young man and myself."

The inspector did not conceal his dissatisfaction.

"I shall ask, you, sir," he said with dignity, "to reconsider that decision. Remember that it is the police who ask, and in cases of this sort they have special privileges."

"As soon as any criminal case arises from Anthony Palliser's disappearance," Tallente pointed out, "you will be in a position to ask me questions from a different standpoint. For the present I have given you just as much information as I feel inclined to. Shall we leave it at that?"

The inspector appeared to have become hard of hearing. He did not attempt to rise from his chair.

"Being your private secretary, sir," he said, "the Honorable Anthony Palliser would no doubt have access to your private papers?"

"Naturally," Tallente conceded.

"There might be among them papers of importance, papers whose possession parties in the other camp of politics—"

"Stop!" Tallente interrupted. "Inspector Gillian, you are an astute man. Excuse me."

He crossed the room and, with a key which he took from a chain attached to his trouser button, opened a small but powerful safe fitted into the wall. He opened it confidently enough, gazed inside and remained for a moment transfixed. Then he took up a few little packets of papers, glanced them through and replaced them. He still stood there, dangling the key in his hand. The inspector watched him curiously.

"Anything missing, sir?" he asked.

Tallente swung the door to and came back to his chair.

"Yes!" he admitted.

"Can I make a note of the nature of the loss, sir?" the man asked, moistening his pencil.

"A political paper of some personal consequence," Tallente replied. "Its absence disquiets me. It also confirms my belief that Palliser is lying doggo for a time."

"A hint as to the contents of the missing paper would be very acceptable, sir," Inspector Gillian egged.

Tallente shook his head.

"For the present," he decided, "I can only repeat what I said a few moments ago—I have given you just as much information as I feel inclined to."

The inspector rose to his feet.

"My report will not be wholly satisfactory to Scotland Yard," he declared.

"My experience of the estimable body is that they take a lot of satisfying," Tallente replied. "Will you take anything before you go, inspector?"

"Nothing whatever, thank you, sir. At the risk of annoying you, I am bound to ask this question. Will you tell me whether anything in the nature of blows passed between you and the Honorable Anthony Palliser, previous to his leaving your house?"

"I will not even satisfy your curiosity to that extent," Tallente answered.

"It will be my duty, sir," the inspector said ponderously, "to examine some of your servants."

"Scotland Yard can do that for themselves," Tallente observed. "My wife and the greater part of the domestic staff left here for London a week ago."

The representative of the law sighed solemnly.

"I am sorry that you have not felt inclined to treat me with more confidence in this matter, Mr. Tallente," he said.

He took his leave then. Tallente heard him conversing for some time with Robert and saw him in the garden, interviewing the small boy. Afterward he climbed into his car and drove away. Tallente opened his safe and once more let the little array of folded papers run through his hands. Then he rang the bell for Robert, who presently appeared.

"The inspector has quite finished with you?" his master asked.

To be continued Monday