

THE CLAUSONS: One of the Evening Public Ledger's New Short Stories in the Series of Unpublished Fiction by the Best American Writers of the Day

By Zona Gale

CLAUSON stepped from his roadster and held out his hand to Miss Rickson. But with a hand on either side of the opening she swung herself down, landed softly, gave him a warm, hard little fist and a thank you almost gruff, and was up the steps of her boarding house. The house itself looked as if it had measles and Clauson drove on thinking what a frightful life Miss Rickson lived; his stenographer by day and a tenant of a scarred-looking boarding house by night. And what a brick she was—brown, fussy, businesslike little brick. A woman, too. Eyes that were deep with what could be tenderness.



Zona Gale is one of the most "understanding" women in America. She writes nearly always of the small town and small town people, their ways and their life, but she writes with the same quality, but into her writing she pours a wealth of the splendid, kindly things which make America what it is today.

now, carried off when he was too tired to mean it. "Hello, darling," she said. He had a swift look at the picture which had greeted him so many nights. The brownish room, the heaped-up table—everything Jep did seemed to take so much cloth or wool or whatever it was—and of Jep herself in a street dress busy at Lord knew what.

They went down the passage. He slipped his arm about her. She had his hand under hers. And when they sat at table Clauson looked at her across the soup and asked: "Did I have my arm around you—just now, when we came down the passage?"

From time to time, at dinner, he looked at her steadily. Fifteen years they had lived together. There were no children. Suppose there should be twenty-five, thirty-five years more. And they loved each other. But heavens above them both, how dull they were.

They considered the theatre and gave up going. They considered telephoning for somebody to come in and make up a table and gave that up, too. Clauson built a fire and smoked and Jep read aloud. Then they sat talking. Once they disagreed on the ethics of a lot of goods and had a spirited ten minutes.



was responsive, she had humor, she could be amusing. But he was so used to her. Her hands, that gesture to her hair, her absent look, her little crooked yawns. Not a surprise, not even a variation. She was Jep forever.

He thought of the sacrifice of using holy words in that unthinking fashion. He thought of the absurdity of essential like a sheep to something which he knew nothing whatever about.

thought about the fireplace which drew so well and the old brown tile and the bookshelves near enough to reach from his chair. But it wasn't these things which held him. It was their glorious accustomedness.

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"I am not, thank you," came back at him crisply. "Won't this wait until morning? I'll be down at work then."

"I can't get you out of my mind," Clauson began abruptly. "Look here, I want to help you."

"I wish you wouldn't call me 'darling' when you don't mean it"

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She was so utterly different when, now, she wheeled toward him. "Look here, Mr. Clauson," she said briskly, "Why did you come to see me tonight?"

ON a spontaneous word from him about a raise, they parted. Under the eye of the accused dog he took her hand in a friendly, though formal, leaving-taking.

She was not asleep. She came flying to meet him, her face radiant, and he saw that something had happened; something that she liked; that they would like.

He had no idea how to voice what he was feeling. So he got up and wound the clock.

JACK O' JUDGMENT An Unusual Story of a Blackmailing Gang and a Mysterious Avenger, by the Author of "Green Rust," "The Daffodil Murder," "Clue of the Twisted Candle" By Edgar Wallace

THE STORY SO FAR Colonel White, a man of about forty, with a face that looked as if it had been through a mill, was sitting in a chair in a room that was as dark as a black hole.

police? Can I go to them with clean hands? "Well, that's a question I've often asked myself," said the colonel. "I've often said—"



"You'll speak—or you don't pass," said Jack of Judgment. "Where are you going? Won't you tell Jack something, give him a bit of news? Poor old Jack hears nothing these days."

He looked up at the building, but it was in darkness. Apparently it was empty. But he knew enough of the colonel's methods to be sure that Boundary would not advertise the presence of the girl to the outside world.

scrambled his allencer and slipped his automatic into the wet pocket of his mackintosh.

Quick!" said the voice, "march! Halt!" Raoul stopped. If he could only get his hands down and duck, one lightning dive—

His captor evidently read his thoughts, for he felt a hand slip into his mackintosh pocket and he was relieved of the weight of his automatic.

THE colonel pushed his chair back from the table and looked up with a puzzled smile. "Now you're not going to take it hard, Solomon," he said. "We had to leave you back and that was the only scheme we could think of. You see, there are lots of little bits of business that have to be cleared up, business in which you had a hand the same as my other business associates."

But White was gone. He pushed past the sergeant, one of the readiest and most dangerous of the colonel's instruments, and into the half-dark corridor. There was a light on the landing below, and as he ran down the stairs he thought he saw something white standing there. It looked like a woman, till the figure turned, and then Solomon White stood stock-still. It was the first time he had seen Jack of Judgment. The shimmer of the black silk coat, the effusive suggestion of pallor which the white mask conveyed, the slouch hat, throwing a black bar of shadow diagonally across the face, lent the figure a peculiarly sinister aspect.

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