

THE FACE OF ROSENTEL

CHARLES HOWARD MONTAGUE

CHAPTER III

Ballooning place is a very quiet street at all times. On a still day footstep...

working a miracle in this poor girl's brain. And by the way, Maxey, how does your part of the case stand?

"Sit down," said Maxey. "Do. You can spare a minute, I know, and of course you must be interested. We all are. True, I haven't much to tell you.

An exceedingly sensitive and emotional creature was this Miss Maxey, and in a matter such as this, where her whole nature was aroused, she was a powerful friend and a most dangerous adversary.

"These are the facts," continued Maxey, tracing them all out on the top of the center table with a paper cutter as he talked.

"You don't mean to tell me you are beginning to look upon this as a hopeless case?" Maxey exclaimed in consternation.

"Without dissenting that my dear Miss Maxey," replied the physician, smiling. "I need hardly remind you that there are other and much more obvious ways of accomplishing that end than by

"You exaggerate, Julian. Because this case seems all important to you and your sister—and to me, perhaps, and because a few policemen and reporters call, and the rabble who read the newspapers flock to your door when the opportunity is given them, you immediately think that the whole world has become excited over this curious affair.

"Well, what then?" "What then? Well, if you don't watch her, she will be in the fire or lying at the foot of the stairs with her neck broken."

"Very well, suppose this: Suppose that she has always been an idiot just as we see her now; but that her friends had taken care of her, but that she had become a burden upon them; that in a moment of neglect she escaped and wandered over the edge of the bluff; that they knew it when it was too late, but forbore to interfere after the mischief was done, well knowing that it would make no difference to her and not wishing to be bothered longer with her support.

"That would be hardly probable. Your sister stated it fairly. Idiots don't dress up in street costume, in garments tastefully made to fit them."

"Possibly," he commented, "rather than a physician. Levity aside, neither Dr. Beutly nor myself thought the blow on the head sufficient by itself to have produced this result. My idea of it is that there was some structural or functional trouble in the brain prior to the accident.

"What you are saying is heartless, cruel, unmanly! You made me a promise, Julian Maxey. Do you think I have forgotten it? Do you think I will allow this helpless, innocent creature of whom one of these days you would blush to speak with the slightest disrespect—do you think I would allow her to go, after what has been, believing, as I firmly do, that a hospital would be the death of her? Oh, it does seem as if all the world were determined to turn its back on this poor, defenseless girl! I understand the reason of those Somerset people to keep her in their house any longer when they knew it would be dangerous to move her utterly barbarous."

"I believe it did annoy her," said Dr. Lamar. "At any rate, it did her no good."

the envelope this letter was contained in I'll make him a handsome present. We'll be at the bottom of this affair yet or my name's not Maxey. An unexpected good fortune, Lamar, don't you think, and one that will throw much light on this obscure matter?"

Lamar frowned and replied cautiously: "I am not a detective, and I have not studied the letter, but it strikes me the wording is peculiar and the signature extraordinary. The name is explicit enough in all conscience. A woman writing a confidential letter like that to a friend does not often take so much pains to get in her full name, as if he were signing a will. Take care that some crafty fellow hasn't thrown this letter in your way for the purpose of putting you on the wrong track."

Maxey looked a little bewildered, but he seized his hat and coat, without making a reply, and darted down the stairs.

"What very excitable people these Maxey's are!" thought the philosophic doctor as he went away. "And what a deal of interest they do take in this case! I wonder where Miss Ellen went to? How pretty she looked when her blood was up! There would be some satisfaction in crossing such a woman just for the picture one would get. But, bah, what am I thinking about? What is this to me?"

Nevertheless he sighed as he went back half heartedly to his work again. Till very recently this work had been his pride and his life. Now as he took it up it seemed like a task, almost a burden. There was a woman's face—a handsome but not a welcome face—before his eyes night and day. Something was wrong with Dr. Lamar, something seriously wrong with him, something from which even his science might not save him.

"I don't understand you," said Dr. Lamar. "But you will before very long, for, mark my word, Maxey, the patient will make you trouble."

"I mean," said the physician, "simply that. You don't imagine she will

There always as now? You must know that she has a body that has no disease as well as a brain that has. Suppose she should be able to sit up and go about?"

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Maxey set his glass down with a force that splashed the contents.

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