

THE MASTER KEY

By John Fleming Wilson

By special arrangement for this paper a photo-drama corresponding to the installments of "The Master Key" may now be seen at the leading moving picture theaters. By arrangement made with the Universal Film Manufacturing company it is not only possible to read "The Master Key" in this paper, but also afterward to see moving pictures of our story.

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"A good cook always has grub for people that drop in unexpected like." was the grim response. "Just take a peek down there now."

Through the window John saw that the camp was quietly but surely dividing into two parties. The elder miners were gathered about the cook shanty. Around the office stood a dozen or so malcontents half drunk, under the leadership of Tubbs, who



The Old Cook Offered to Fight Him on Any Terms.

was wholly drunk, and on the porch talking to Wilkerson were a couple of Mexicans.

"It looks as if they meant to rush the camp," Dorr said thoughtfully. He proceeded to arm himself, and Everett quietly followed suit.

"Tim going to talk to the boys first," said Dorr. He left the bungalow and strode off down the hill, followed by the cook. A gun was fired up by the mine tunnel mouth.

"That's a signal that the Mexicans are making trouble!" Kane shouted. "Look out for dynamite in the shaft, John!"

Without a word further Dorr leaped down from the porch of the cook shanty and started up the hill, followed by a dozen faithful supporters. Other shots were fired. Wilkerson appeared at the tunnel mouth and then vanished inside. John sprang upon the trestle and rushed after him.

Instantly a band of Mexicans materialized halfway down the hill, fired a few shots and retreated. John paid no attention to them, but kept on.

Once within the tunnel he saw a faint gleam of light ahead of him. He understood that Kane was right. Wilkerson was playing a desperate game in blowing up the shaft and then in the ensuing confusion allowing the bandits to loot undisturbed.

A few yards farther on John stopped. A dark figure rushed by him toward the open air. But the little glow of light remained. For a moment Dorr hesitated; then he leaped forward and began trying to extinguish a lighted fuse.

He had almost succeeded when a bullet whizzed by him; then a second splattered on the rock overhead. He turned and fired blindly in the direction of the shots and resumed his task. The fuse was short, but he succeeded in extinguishing it and started back. He met a fusillade of bullets. He dashed on toward the mouth of the tunnel and suddenly emerged on Wilkerson, who, not being able to see into the mark of the shaft, was firing blindly into the opening.

With a shout John leaped for the man whom he now knew to be seeking his life. Before Wilkerson could fire another shot he was caught in a mighty embrace and then began a short sharp struggle high in the air.

John Dorr for the first time in his life knew the absolute and terrific thirst for killing that sometimes comes to a man. It was either his life or Wilkerson's. And no one should interfere with his revenge. He threw himself on the man with but one object in view—to slay him bare handed.

Wilkerson fought tigerishly, and for the moment had the advantage. The lofty trestle was an ill place for a heavy man like Dorr to fight on, and the other's agility and lithe quickness seemed about to win when John by a sudden unexpected and desperate maneuver caught him and threw him clear into the air, breaking his clutch with a terrific blow. Then he jerked him to the edge of the trestle and flung him over.

Standing erect, John drew the air into his tortured lungs and let out a tremendous yell of triumph.

Ruth Gallon heard that barbaric yell and shuddered. Tom Kane stared upward at the figure on the trestle, and his open mouth seemed lifeless, for he, too, shared in the moment's blood just.

And on the rocks below Wilkerson's figure sprawled grotesquely. Its white and darkling face turned sightlessly to the sky.

CHAPTER XIX.

A Message From the Grave.

Wilkerson's fall from the trestle had not been unnoticed by his outlaws, and before any one in the camp could make sure that the man was

dead a couple of the Mexicans had quickly slipped down the hill to him. They found him still alive. Without paying any attention to John Dorr's men, who were still doubtful of the outcome of the battle, they dragged their fallen leader away and up into their own temporary camp.

It was not long before Wilkerson revived. He was terribly bruised and almost insane from physical pain and wild rage at his defeat. It was with difficulty that the unsmiling outlaws restrained him. Their chief took upon himself the task of making it plain to Wilkerson that this was no time for rash and unorganized attack.

"They have beaten us so far, senior," he said quietly, "and you are very sick. Tomorrow we shall see."

The next morning's sun had scarcely touched the peaks of the mountains when Wilkerson stretched his stiff, sore limbs and began a fresh campaign. He made it clear to the leader of the Mexican outlaws that they must work swiftly.

"It won't be long before the news of this fighting gets out and the authorities take a hand," he said. "But if we can just get this mine into our possession in the next three days I can hire you and your men as peaceable workmen and swear that Dorr and his gang are trying to take our property away by force. I guess my word will be as good as his."

"Very well," agreed the Mexican after thoughtfully considering the matter. "We can get back into Mexico in twenty-four hours from here. So long as you pay us and let us—what do you call it—loot, my men are with you."

Wilkerson covertly studied the desperado's impassive visage. Jose Vigos bore a renowned name on the border for daring, shrewdness and wickedness. He was known as "The Merciless." For five years he had had a price set on his head, yet because of the loyalty of his adherents and his own fearlessness he had escaped.

No man better fitted for a sinister purpose could have been found. Yet mingled with Wilkerson's satisfaction at having such a tool to his hand was a dread of the man himself, and his calm insistence on the privilege of looting the camp when it was captured gave him a sense of nausea.

After all, they were Americans down there in the "Master Key" camp. Through his binoculars he could see Ruth on the porch of the bungalow. Vigos, too, saw her. He took no pains to conceal the cruel interest in his eyes. The next few days resulted in little advantage to either side. John Dorr could not reopen the mine nor even send in for much needed supplies because of the constant menace of the outlaws, who occasionally fired scattering shots down into the gulch as a warning that they were vigilant.

On the other hand, Wilkerson found it impossible to seize the camp without precipitating a battle, from which he shrank. Deeply involved as he already was in crime, he dreaded to cross the border line which would forever place him beyond the pale and make him an outlaw.

Instead, he used every method to put himself outwardly in the right. He sent plea after plea to the sheriff of the county to come and restore order, asserting that he had been driven from his rightful property by violence and that the situation was such that, with-



Ruth on the Porch of the Bungalow.

out interference from the authorities, there would be serious trouble and very likely bloodshed.

These pleas availed only partially. The sheriff made a trip into the mine, talked with John Dorr and Tom Kane and then sought out Wilkerson.

"It looks to me as if this was a case for the courts," he said slowly when he had examined Wilkerson's forged deeds. "I know old Gallon pretty well, and he thought a sight of that Ruth girl. Fact is, he told me he intended her to have the mine and left it to her in his will. Now you toddle along with these papers and want to take it away from her?"

To Be Continued Wednesday

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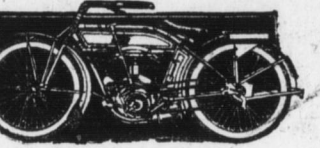
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Women and Their Interests

What Is a Good Woman

There are good women; there are better women; there are best women. There are comparatively good women, positively good women and superlatively good women; and all these definitions are modified by time, place, climate and temperament. Good women appear in public places and before men here in America with uncovered faces and shoulders; but in Turkey no good woman could do this, because it is not the custom, and would offend. The good woman does not offend purposely or wantonly. She submits to the inconveniences and discomforts of tradition until she can see some reasonable prospect of bettering the race by defying the conventions. The comparatively good woman lives a harmless life, avoids wounding any one, and submits to all manner of injustice at the hands of society because she dislikes to make a fuss or attract attention or disturb existing orders. The positively good woman lives an actively good life, under the same conditions putting herself to great trouble to help others and trying to overcome the results of injustice, endeavoring to remove the cause. Superlatively Good Woman is One Who Attends to Nearest Duty First. The superlatively good woman does all this and more. She attends to the nearest duty first—relieves distress and bestows sympathy; but she is brave enough to attempt an attack on established traditions when they stand in the way of the progress of the human race, even though the attacks bring suffering and pain upon herself. Mary Livermore, Julia Ward Howe, Victoria Woodhull, Lucretia Mott, Susan E. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton were all superlatively good women. Refined, sensitive and beautiful souls, they suffered from the brutality and ignorance of the world when they gave their lives to the destruction of moss-grown traditions which had become breeders of pestilence, and undertook the construction of the great, broad edifice where woman dwells to-day. The merely good woman does no evil. She keeps the Commandments, and is happy in being harmless. The better woman does no evil and strives also to do good where it comes in her way. The best woman does no evil, does much good and goes out of her way to inspire and encourage those who have been doing wrong to new aspirations and endeavors. Any woman who lives up to her highest understanding of duty is a

good woman, no matter how others may differ in their ideas of what constitutes duty.

The girl who gives up her ambition for an education in order to remain at home and care for aging parents is a good girl, but another may prove a better girl who pushes ahead and secures her education in order that she may give her parents a more desirable home eventually.

The highest unselfishness sometimes suffers from the misconception of the world, which regards it as selfishness.

We are all a little better or a little worse than we were last year this time; a little stronger or a little weaker; a little wiser or a little duller.

There is no such thing as remaining stationary. The world turns on its axis—the sun, stars, planets, all revolve. Even the rocks are composed of millions of ever-moving atoms. So the mind of the mortal is always doing its work and making or unmaking the character.

It is for you to decide as you analyze your own life whether you are a good woman or not; whether you are as good as you know how to be, and whether you are better this year than you were last.

Miss Fairfax Answers Queries

ASK FOR AN EXPLANATION DEAR MISS FAIRFAX: When a man writes to a girl a couple of times that he is coming to see her and she is not home at the time fixed do you think it is right for him to continue keeping company with her? I like the girl very much, but I don't know if she cares for me. I know her about seven weeks; she is eighteen years old, I am twenty-three; have a good trade, also a good bank account. I neither smoke nor drink. EMILY.

Inquire into the reason for the girl's conduct. Possibly she does not care for you and takes this rude means of showing you so; possibly it was an unavoidable occurrence. Try to find out, and if you see your company is unwelcome try to get over your infatuation.

DON'T INTERFERE

DEAR MISS FAIRFAX: I am a girl seventeen. My brother is engaged to a young lady who does a good deal of flirting. Do you think it is proper for me to tell my brother? I do not like to do that yet I think it would be a warning. ANXIOUS.

Don't interfere in your brother's love affairs. You would probably succeed merely in making him unhappy and suspicious and in estranging some of his affection from you. Even if she does not act as you think she should,

her conduct may be perfectly satisfactory to your brother. The only thing you can do is tell her you have heard a rumor about her flirtations and that you hope for your brother's sake she is more loyal than gossip indicates.

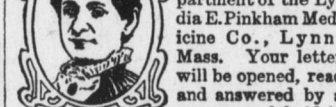
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