



# ELUSIVE ISABEL

by JACQUES FUTRELLE  
ILLUSTRATIONS by M.G. KETNER

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## SYNOPSIS.

Count Rossi, the Italian ambassador, is at dinner with diplomats when a messenger summons him to the embassy, where a beautiful young woman asks for a ticket to the embassy ball. The ticket is made out in the name of Miss Isabel Thorne. Chief Campbell of the secret service, and Mr. Grimm, his head detective, are warned that a plot is brewing in Washington, and Grimm goes to the state ball for information. His attention is called to Miss Isabel Thorne, who with her companion, disappears. A shot is heard and Senor Alvarez of the Mexican legation is wounded. Grimm is assured Miss Thorne did it; he visits her, demanding knowledge of the affair, and arrests Pietro Petrosini. Miss Thorne visits an old bomb-maker, and they discuss a wonderful experiment. Fifty thousand dollars is stolen from the office of Senor Rodriguez, the minister from Venezuela, and while detectives are investigating the robbery Miss Thorne appears as a guest of the legation. Grimm accuses her of the theft; the money is restored, but a new mystery occurs in the disappearance of Monsieur Bolegrass, the French ambassador. Elusive Miss Thorne reappears, bearing a letter which states that the ambassador has been kidnapped and demanding ransom. The ambassador returns and again strangely disappears. Later he is rescued from an old house in the suburbs.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### Letters From Jail.

For two weeks Signor Pietro Petrosini, known to the Secret Service as an unacknowledged agent of the Italian government, and the self-confessed assassin of Senor Alvarez of the Mexican legation, had been taking his ease in a cell. He had been formally arraigned and committed without bail to await the result of the bullet wound which had been inflicted upon the diplomatist from Mexico at the German Embassy Ball, and since then, undisturbed and apparently careless of the outcome, he had spent his time in reading and smoking. He had answered questions with only a curt yes or no when he deigned to answer them at all; and there had been no callers or inquirers for him. He had abruptly declined a suggestion of counsel.

Twice each day, morning and night, he had asked a question of the jailer who brought his meals.

"How is Senor Alvarez?"

"He is still in a critical condition." The answer was always the same.

Whereupon the secret agent would return to his reading with not a shadow of uneasiness or concern on his face.

Occasionally there came a courteous little note from Miss Thorne, which he read without emotion, afterward casting them aside or tearing them up. He never answered them. And then one day there came another note which, for no apparent reason, seemed to stir him from his lethargy. Outwardly it was like all the others, but when Senor Petrosini scanned the sheet his eyes lighted strangely, and he stood staring down at it as though to hide a sudden change of expression in his face. His gaze was concentrated on two small smudges of ink where, it seemed, the pen had scratched as Miss Thorne had signed her name.

The guard stood at the barred door for a moment, then started to turn away. The prisoner stopped him with a quick gesture.

"Oh, Guard, may I have a glass of milk, please?" he asked. "No, ice. I prefer it tepid."

He thrust a small coin between the bars; the guard accepted it and passed on. Then, still standing at the door, the prisoner read the note again:

"My Dear Friend:

"I understand, from an indirect source, that there has been a marked improvement in Senor Alvarez's condition, and I am hastening to send you the good news. There is every hope that within a short while, if he continues to improve, we can arrange a ball bond, and you will be free until the time of trial, anyway."

"Might it not be well for you to consult an attorney at once? Drop me a line to let me know you received this."

Sincerely,  
"ISABEL THORNE."

Finally the prisoner tossed the note on a tiny table in a corner of his cell, and resumed his reading. After a time the guard returned with the milk.

"Would it be against the rules for me to write an answer to this?" queried Signor Petrosini, and he indicated the note.

"Certainly not," was the reply.

"If I might trouble you, then, for pen and ink and paper?" suggested the signor and he smiled a little. "Believe me, I would prefer to get them for myself."

"I guess that's right," the guard grinned good-naturedly.

Again he went away and the prisoner sat thoughtfully sipping the milk. He took half of it, then lighted a cigarette, puffed it once or twice and permitted the light to die. After a little there came again the clatter of the guard's feet on the cement pavement, and the writing materials were thrust through the bars.

"Thank you," said the prisoner.

months, and meeting to sign treaty alliance would be dangerously delayed."

Signor Petrosini permitted the sputtering flame to ignite the paper, and thoughtfully watched the blaze destroy it. The last tiny scrap dropped on the floor, burned out, and he crushed the ashes under his heel. Then he began to write:

"My Dear Miss Thorne:

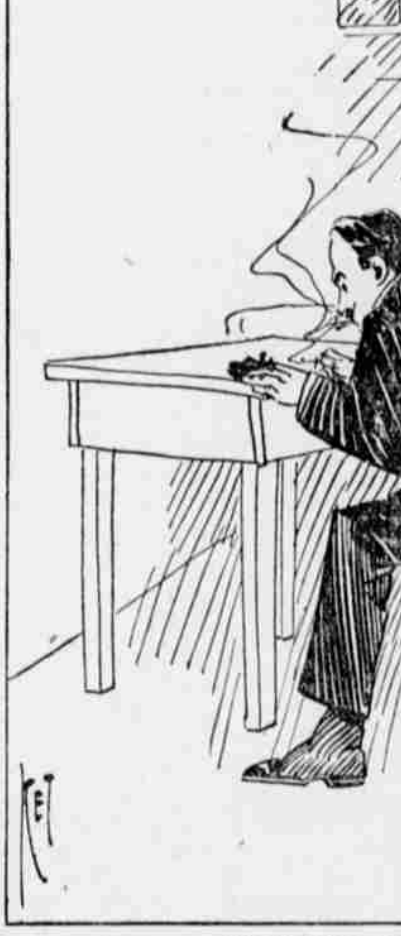
"Many thanks for your courteous little note. I am delighted to know of the improvement in Senor Alvarez's condition. I had hoped that my impulsive act in shooting him would not end in a tragedy. Please keep me informed of any further change in his condition. As yet I do not see the necessity of consulting an attorney, but later I may be compelled to do so."

"Respectfully,  
"PIETRO PETROSINI."

This done the secret agent carefully cleaned the ink from the pen, wiping it dry with his handkerchief, then thrust it into the half empty glass of milk. The fluid clung to the steel nib thinly; he went on writing with it, between the lines of ink:

"I am in no danger. I hold credentials to United States, which, when presented, will make me responsible only to the Italian government as special envoy, according to international law. Arrange escape for one week from tonight; use any money necessary. Make careful arrangements for the test and signing of compact for two nights after."

Again the prisoner cleaned the steel nib, after which he put it back in the bottle of ink, leaving it there. He waved the sheet of paper back and forth to dry it, and at last scrutinized it minutely, standing under the light



The Prisoner Read It Greedily.

from the high-up window of his cell. Letter by letter the milk evaporated, leaving the sheet perfectly clean and white except for the ink-written message. This sheet he folded, placed in an envelope, and addressed.

Later the guard passed along the corridor, and Signor Petrosini thrust the letter out to him.

"Be good enough to post that, please," he requested. "It isn't sealed. I don't know if your prison rules require you to read the letters that go out. If so, read it, or have it read, then seal it."

For answer the guard dampened the flap of the envelope, sealed it, thrust it into his pocket and passed on. The secret agent sat down again, and slipped his milk meditatively.

One hour later Mr. Grimm, accompanied by Johnson, came out of a photographer's dark room in Pennsylvania Avenue with a developed negative which he sat on a rack to dry. At the end of another hour he was sitting at his desk studying under a magnifying glass, a finished print of the negative. Word by word he was writing on a slip of paper what his magnifying glass gave him and so, curiously enough, it came to pass that Miss Thorne and Chief Campbell of the Secret Service were reading the hidden, milk-written message at almost the identical moment.

"Johnson got Petrosini's letter from the postman," Mr. Grimm was explaining. "I opened it, photographed it, sealed it again and remailed it. There was not more than half an hour's delay; and Miss Thorne can not possibly know of it." He paused a moment. "It's an odd thing that writing such as that is absolutely invisible to the naked eye, and yet when photographed becomes decipherable in the negative."

"What do you make of it?" Mr. Campbell asked. The guileless blue eyes were alive with eagerness.

"Well, he's right, of course, about not being in danger," said Mr. Grimm. "If he came with credentials as special envoy this government must respect them, even if Senor Alvarez dies, and leave it to his own government to punish him. If we were officially aware that he has such credentials I doubt if we would have the right to keep him confined; we would merely have to hand him over to the

Italian embassy and demand his punishment. And, of course, all that makes him more dangerous than ever."

"Yes, I know that," said the chief a little impatiently. "But who is this man?"

"Who is this man?" Mr. Grimm repeated as if surprised at the question. "I was looking for Prince Benedetto d'Aruzzi of Italy. I have found him."

Mr. Campbell's clock-like brain ticked over the situation in detail.

"It's like this," Mr. Grimm elucidated. "He has credentials which he knows will free him if he is forced to present them, but I imagine they were given him more for protection in an emergency like this than for introducing him to our government. As the matter stands he can't afford to discover himself by using those credentials, and yet, if the Latin compact is signed, he must be free. Remember, too, that he is accredited from three countries—Italy, France and Spain." He was silent for a moment. "Naturally his escape from prison would preserve his incognito, and at the same time permit him to sign the compact."

There was silence for a long time. "I believe the situation is without precedent," said Mr. Campbell slowly. "The special envoy of three great powers held for attempted—"

"Officially we are not aware of his purpose, or his identity," Mr. Grimm reminded him. "If he escaped it would clarify the situation tremendously."

"If he escaped!" repeated Mr. Campbell mutely.

"But, of course, the compact would not be signed, at least in this country," Mr. Grimm went on tentatively. Mr. Campbell gazed straight into the flat eyes of the young man for a minute or more and gradually full understanding came home to him. Finally he nodded his head.

"Use your own judgment, Mr. Grimm," he directed.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### A Call on the Warden.

The restless silence of night lay over the great prison. Here and there in the grim corridors a guard dozed in the glare of an electric light; and in the office, too, a desk light glimmered where the warden sat at his desk,

poring over a report. Once he glanced up at the clock—it was five minutes of eleven—and then he went on with his reading.

After a little the silence was broken by the whir of the clock and the first sharp stroke of the hour; and at just that moment the door from the street opened and a man entered. He was rather tall and slender, and a sinister black mask hid his face from the quickly raised eyes of the warden. For a bare fraction of a second the two men stared at each other, then, instinctively, the warden's right hand moved toward the open drawer of his desk where a revolver lay, and his left toward several electrically connected levers. The intruder noted both gestures, and, unarmed himself, stood silent. The warden was first to speak.

"Well, what is it?"

"You have a prisoner here, Pietro Petrosini," was the reply, in a pleasant voice. "I have come to demand his release."

The warden's right hand was raised above the desk top, and the revolver in it clicked warningly.

"You have come to demand his release, eh?" he queried. He still sat motionless, with his eyes fixed on the black mask. "How did you pass the outside guard?"

"(TO BE CONTINUED.)

### Birds' Nest Soup.

Old books of travel represent the Asiatics as putting the nests into soups and stews. This is entirely erroneous. The birds which make these nests use, among other materials, long strands of tough, whitish seaweed, the strands forming the outer shell or basket of the nest, and by their stickiness assist in securing it to the rock.

By the time the birds have emigrated, these bits of seaweed are washed clean by rains and are dried in the sun. Then is when they are extracted by Chinese gatherers and made into parcels for sale.

They form strips about eight inches long, somewhat of the appearance of Iceland moss, light, shiny, translucent and of no positive taste.

### Peace of Mind.

A tranquil heart is the life of the flesh, but envy is the rottenness of the bones.—Proverbs of Solomon xlv: 30.

# For the Hostess

## Below Zero Luncheon.

The hostess issued her invitations on blue-white cards, the letters outlined with diamond dust. She did this with writing with a heavy pen in gilt ink, then went over the letters with liquid glue, then dipped the card in the diamond dust and the sparkle adhered to the glue. A polar register "10 below" was in the corner of the card. "Please wear a white frock" was in the lower left-hand corner.

On arriving iced grape juice with a dash of lemon was served. In a few moments the dining room doors were opened, revealing the coolest place imaginable. The chairs were covered with white cotton cloth, the curtains were white and the floor had been covered with sheets tightly stretched and fastened down with large tacks.

A huge cake of ice was the centerpiece, surrounded by a group of toy polar bears. Ferns and vines were massed about the base. Two small globes of goldfish were on either side. The candles were white, also the shades. Diamond dust glistened on the tablecloth and glass icicles hung from the chandeliers, while the dearest of tiny dolls drew sleds inscribed with the name of each guest, forming the place cards.

A delicious white menu was served—first iced bouillon in glasses, cold breast of chicken, Saratoga chips, baking powder biscuit, pear and pineapple salad with whipped cream dressing, iced tea and cantaloupe, filled with vanilla cream completed this feast, with the usual accessories of nuts, white French bonbons and individual cases, and the most delicious watermelon preserves. The guests were asked to relate the coldest experience they had ever had. There were large thermometers around the room with the mercury down below zero.

## Novel Potato Party.

The hostess passed to each lady a well-washed potato of rather long slender shape. Then each one was given four small wire hairpins, four small black tacks, two fancy paper napkins with gayly colored borders, and a supply of pins.

The potatoes were placed on a platter, diluted or mixed with another ingredient, whitens and softens the skin, and it also closes the pores. It is a good plan to use a little of this mixture in the water just after the face has been given a good steaming.

## For the Bride.

Many years ago this sentiment appeared in a household magazine and a woman confesses that from reading it she formulated a rule she adopted early in her married life.

"Money means also a full life. We can gratify our cravings, whether they be for beer or art, for Paris gowns or Wagner music. With money we have a chance to grow; without it we are stunted."

"Money, therefore, is simply concentrated—we might say canned—human value."

It naturally follows that it is good or bad, never of itself, but only as giving opportunity to its possessor. Here, then, we have the moral gist of the whole matter; money is simply—opportunity.

It unlocks the door and bids the cramped and chafing passion go and do its will. It liberates desire. Hence it simply emphasizes a man. If he is good he can now be better, having more scope; if bad he can, and probably will, be worse. If idle and useless, he becomes a living fountain of idleness and uselessness, poisoning others.

So, money is like any other gift; as beauty, which adds power to the person; or genius, which multiplies the efficiency of the mind and hand; or position, for kinship magnifies a common man to heroic proportions, in his influence on other men.

Now, the sole relation of morals to power of any kind is this: that the moral sense adds to power—responsibility.

The root of any genuine moral feeling is altruism. Given any desire, it becomes moral as it takes a direction toward the welfare of other people; it is immoral exactly in proportion as it disregards others and looks only to self.

Wicked people, therefore, are those who live, think, and do for self alone; and that whether poor or rich. Whoever says, "I would like to be rich, for I could do so much good with my money," should examine himself and ask what good he is doing with the little he has. It's all a matter of relation. If one is not helpful and liberal on \$40 a month, he would not be so on \$4,000 a month.

In the ultimate realm of morals there are no commandments; there is only one test—do I live for myself or for others; am I altruistic or egocentric.

The dawdling smart set, flitting from bridge to matinee, from theater to bedizened restaurant, from the club to the horse race, are wicked; but no wickeder than the better poor who want to lead such a life, and who curse their lot because their selfishness is bound and chained.

To the real man, therefore, riches means nothing at all, as to his character, it simply means an opening to give-vent to his character. And a clear-eyed soul, that sees and realizes what responsibility means, is never eager for power and opportunity. It is easier to be good in moderate means than in riches for the principal reason that it is easier to bear a small than a great load of responsibility. "It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven," just because a rich man to be moral must be great. And, unfortunately, great souls are scarce among great fortunes.

The greatness of Jesus was not in his wisdom, magnetism, nor ethical perception, but in the fact that he was utterly altruistic; that is, he used all his powers not to advance himself but to help others. His tormentors unwittingly told the truth, and stated unknowingly his very secret, when, as he hung on the cross, they wagged their heads at him and cried:

"He saved others; himself he can not save!"

Forgiveness.

"There is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared."—Psa. 130:4. "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."—Heb. 10:17.

The book is full of the doctrine of forgiveness. As for God, "He delighteth in mercy."—Mich. 7:18. In order to develop in man hope and help and health God floods the sacred book with promises of pardon. As a man reviews his life or any part of it he is filled with regret and anxiety which sometimes and often turn into despair. But a golden word in God's Word arrests his attention and shines like a brilliant star in the midst of his darkness; Forgiveness. Turning page after page of the Divine revelation he finds it in the foregleams of ritual, in the radiance of prophecy, in the face and smiles of the Divine Master—Jesus our Saviour. Even his cross is changed into a star like the "star of Bethlehem." And as we gaze upon it, lo, it becomes a "Sun of Righteousness." In that divine light we who follow Christ may walk day after day, our lives filled with earnestness, fidelity, humility, gentleness, Christian courtesy, sweetness and light.

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# Money

By Dr. Frank Crane

Since the dawn of preaching we preachers have been threatening rich men with our right fist—and extending to them our left palm. It is hard to be wondered at that we find difficulty in being taken seriously.

And our advice has been so confusing that we have not had much effect. For now we exhort the youth to all the virtues, giving as an inducement the assurance that thus they will be enabled to get on; and now again we turn to those that have gotten on and warn them of the danger of riches. It might as well be asked, if riches be dangerous, why acquire them; and if virtues lead to riches, are they really worth cultivating?

It may be well, therefore, to set down a few common sense facts in riches and the relation of the same to the moral values.

In the first place, money is simply the token or sign of our common human wants. It means power, power over others, power to make our personality felt. No wonder we want it.

Again it means liberty. Poverty is a curse. It ties the hands. It binds the mind. It narrows the soul. One who has to sweat ten hours a day for bread has no time nor strength left to develop the higher part of himself.

Money means also a full life. We can gratify our cravings, whether they be for beer or art, for Paris gowns or Wagner music. With money we have a chance to grow; without it we are stunted.

Money, therefore, is simply concentrated—we might say canned—human value.

It naturally follows that it is good or bad, never of itself, but only as giving opportunity to its possessor. Here, then, we have the moral gist of the whole matter; money is simply—opportunity.

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