

His Magnum Opus.

By LULU JOHNSON.

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Poindexter pulled the sheet of paper from the typewriter carriage and added it to the pile in the wire basket beside him. He caught up the last few pages and reread them with a glow of pride, for he knew that at last he had written a story of flash and blood instead of the mildly innocuous romances that had added to his bank account, but not to his fame.

Ever since that night six months before, when he had come back to his darkened home to find the note on the dresser of his room notifying him that Agnes had gone away with the man he had considered his best friend, he



AT LAST ONLY THE BLACKENED SHEETS REMAINED.

had worked with feverish energy upon the novel.

He had taken little Elsie and had crossed the continent with her that she should be far removed from all who might allude to her mother.

As they sat in the car, the child lost in wonder at the constantly shifting scene, he had planned the story, and once he had made his new home he had set to work.

All the bitterness of his heart he had written into the book. It was the plain tale of his own experience, told with the simple directness of one who feels deeply, except that into the last chapter he had written an ending such as he wished that she might suffer. Almost glancingly he drew the picture of remorse and shame that followed the desertion, and now reading it over he shuddered at the evil picture his own fierce desire had conjured up.

For years he had sought a theme that should lend him to his great accomplishment. Agnes, too, had sought to help him, but their lines had fallen in the pleasant places, and he wrote things that were snail-like, but not great. Then she had left him for Tredgar, a man who had done things, and his inspiration had come. He knew that he had done well, that this book would bring him fame and opportunity, and he smiled as he gathered the sheets together and prepared them for mailing. He had kept in touch with his eastern connections, and Blauvelt, the publisher, had asked for the first reading.

He was bent over the desk writing the address when there came the patter of bare feet across the uncarpeted floor, and he looked up from his work.

"What is it, daughter?" he asked as he took the little nightgown figure in his lap.

"I was lonesome," explained Elsie. "You didn't come to kiss me good night like you said you would, daddy. I waited and waited and waited. Then I just had to come. Is you most done, daddy?"

"All done, dear," he said, with an affectionate pat on the package at his elbow. "I was so interested that I even forgot my little Elsie."

"And it's going to make you a great big man?" she demanded. "It's going to make you famous and happy, daddy?"

"Famous and happy," he repeated. "It's my great work, dear."

"I'm so glad," she whispered contentedly, patting the pale cheek, wasted to thinness by his sorrow and absorption in his work. "Some day when I get a big girl, a great big girl, I'll tell it and tell all the other girls that my daddy wrote that great book, and they'll all be mad because their papas can't write books like my papa can."

Poindexter shivered and drew the little form closer to him. Not once in all these months had he thought of that result. He had worked steadily with one purpose—of holding this woman who had been his wife up to shame. He had given no thought to the child. Not once had he realized that there would come a day when she would read with understanding the story of her mother's disgrace.

He had let her think that Agnes was dead. Simple statement sufficed the childish mind, but the day would come when perhaps the curtain might be drawn aside. Some old friend from the east might seek him out and unwittingly betray his secret to the girl, and she would read with horror the story of her mother's fall painted in words of bitterness such as only wounded pride and dead love can conjure. She would see her mother's soul in all its nakedness, and his would be the hand that had thrown aside the garments of time and charity.

"Are you sleepy, daddy?" Poindexter roused himself.

"Not a bit," he declared. "What makes you think that, daughter?"

"You are so still," she explained, "and you don't talk."

"Daddy's little tired," he explained.

"Yes, you a good night story?"

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...the but a fertile fancy, and these good night stories were glorious moments in the child's life. There were times when she stole softly about the house lest she interrupt his writing, but when he felt that she was creeping up to his lap while his rich tales of giants and fairies and dragons she had him for her very own and was content with the sacrifice.

As they neared the climax his voice grew soft, and when at last the end came he waited for the usual applause of "That was lovely, daddy." Instead, soft lips brushed his cheek and the tired child sank off to sleep.

Tenderly he bore her to her bed and tucked her in as gently as a woman might have done. Reverently he pressed his lips against the rosy mouth and tiptoed from the room.

The library seemed cold and cheerless when he returned. The child's visit had but emphasized his loneliness, and he sat blankly at the table on which lay the package with its address but half completed.

He swung his chair about that he might not see it, but though he had turned his back upon it, the script still danced before his mental vision. He could still see the uncompleted tail of the "y" he had been writing when Elsie had come in and the ink blotch in the corner where the pen had half turned to complete the address, and as often there came to his memory the words of his daughter.

Some day she would read the book with a clear vision, and perhaps she would understand. There is always some one to disillusion with awkward speech. Perhaps she might never know how true to life the story was. Then again some chance remark might bear in upon her the truth.

Agnes by her action had forfeited all right to his forbearance, but there was still his duty toward his child. It seemed like murder to destroy this masterpiece, and yet—

He went over every incident of his life since his marriage. She had married him, ambitions for his future, and he utterly content had been happy in his moderate success save for those moments when her virgins spurred his ambition. One purpose in writing this very book was to show her, when it was too late, that he could accomplish those successes for which she had longed; that he could write as brilliantly as the man for whom she had left him.

The east glowed with the first blush of the dawn when at last he rose from the chair and threw aside the curtains to let in the morning light and the fresh air.

Slowly he crossed the room to the empty fireplace and laid the package in the grate. A tiny tongue of flame crept along the wrapper, biting deeper as it grew. At last only the blackened sheets remained, and he turned away.

"For Elsie's sake," he whispered and added, with a sigh, "and for Agnes' too. God pity her." His magnum opus was found not in accomplishment, but in renunciation.

THE WEASEL.

His Ferocity Unbounded and His Courage Invincible.

The weasel is the most bloodthirsty of all our native carnivores. His ferocity is unbounded, his courage invincible. He is one of the few British wild animals from whom man has to fear attack.

If you meet a group of weasels you will do well not to interfere with them, for those who have done so have occasionally suffered for their temerity. His dwarfish size rather accentuates than diminishes the detestation in which he is held, for there is something uncanny in the idea of so much relentless and cruelty being compressed into so small a frame.

The rabbit, who will fight a fierce and bitter battle with one of his own kind, is paralyzed with fear at the mere sight of this puny foe, whom he could probably pulverize could he brace his heart to the attempt. Squealing with fear, he hops stupidly about until the little vampire springs upon his neck and buries his fangs in an artery.

Then the victim either sinks to the ground and submits to his fate or, suddenly acquiring the use of his muscles, he speeds aimlessly along, the weasel clinging to his neck till his work is done. There are few more pitiful sounds in nature than the piteous stricken cry of a rabbit when he finds that he is being stalked by a weasel.—London Answers.

Aviary on an Ocean Liner.

To have an aviary in the home is the latest fad of the leaders of fashion, says the New York Press. Those women who are especially fond of canaries may be pleased to know that 3,000 of these pretty birds have lately been shipped to the United States from England. A special apartment has been built for them close to the engine room on one of the big liners, and they are under the care of an experienced attendant. Between now and the end of the year no fewer than 25,000 birds will be brought to New York. Many women in Washington have introduced aviaries in their homes since that of Baroness Hengelbauer became popular, and these owners may capture some of those chirping birds and make them "at home" in diplomatic circles.

Prize Chestnuts For White House. C. K. Sober of Levensburg, Pa., who has a celebrated paragon chestnut grove near Shamokin, Pa., recently sent a complimentary case of chestnuts to President Roosevelt, says the Philadelphia Press. Sober planted a lot of young trees along a mountain side several years ago as an experiment. Many thousands of trees are bearing chestnuts this year, and he expects to gather a crop of 2,000 bushels.

One Comfort. They were weeping for the head of the house, whose automobile had gone over the bank.

"Anyway," said the widow, drying her tears for the moment, "his death was in the height of fashion."—St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

Her Little Pleasures.

Husband—I wish you would stop this everlasting picking flaws in my neighbors. Wife—That's just like you! You never want me to have the least pleasure!—Liverpool Mercury.

The Miracle of the Pelargonium.

By INA WRIGHT HANSON.

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We were at the Big Tree grove, little eastern bred Muriel, with pelargoniums at her slender waist, and I, a western writer. We had wandered through the inner grove, where the most mighty monarchs are—the Giant, General Sherman, Jumbo, the Sisters and others. We had revelled at the contrasts between trees 300 feet high and the cream cups and other sweet spring flowers nestling at their feet. Then we had gone through the gates into the outer forest and were sitting at the river's edge at the end of the

shrub as the other.

So Muriel went back to the east with her schemes of philanthropy, and I stayed in my west to dream and then to write, but I found that dreaming had grown to be a weary task when the most luxurious one of them all was a forbidden one, for I had lost faith in my own brave avowal of love's omnipotence.

Nearly a year had gone before I visited the Big Tree grove again. I went alone and took my solitary way to the river where I had said goodby to my dream of dreams. A furious storm had wrought some havoc there. Two or three of the lesser trees had fallen, and the swinging bridge had been twisted and broken and thrown into the bank while the swollen river raged angrily by it.

At last I turned away from my sad retrospection. My eyes caught a glimpse of blue in the distance, and somehow I thought of Muriel's dress as it looked on that other day when she had not been kind. But just then I was joined by the guide, who was quite a friend of mine. He had discovered a new plant and was naturally quite enthusiastic over it, so I went into the inner grove to view the discovery. After I had left him I still had a half hour before train time, so I went back to the broken bridge.

Again were my eyes caught by the glimpse of blue, and I saw that a woman was kneeling before one of the little big trees.

"Each to her oak the bashful dryads shrink," I murmured. "If oaks could have dryads, why not redwoods?" I asked myself. But when she turned her head and looked at me I started toward her.

"Muriel!" I cried, yet still half believing that it was a beautiful vision. But she sprang to her feet, her white face going pink and her tear wet eyes holding a sweetness I had never seen there before. She pointed toward the hollow of the tree.

"Look, Armand, the miracle of the pelargonium!"

There, in the little sifting of dirt, grew the Lady Washington, not very sturdily, but still it had rooted and was alive. Her words came back to me.

"I might leave this flower here and, coming again, find that it had taken root. So might I become your wife. The one is as possible as the other?"

I held out my arms. She hesitated, and her color deepened.

"Don't think me bold, Armand. I didn't come seeking you. My mother is not well, and I came with her. I came!"

"You came because the love god sent you, sweetheart," I finished for her. "Now, come the rest of the way to the arms which may never let you go again."

Shy in her love, pulsing with life, glowing with happiness, she came to me. My dream came true.

"The east and the west are met together," I said. "Now I think I can write the book which will make the world better."

"Don't begin it just yet," she whispered, with her soft cheek against mine. "Let the world wait till you have loved me awhile."

TYBURN TREE.

Lord Ferrers' Tragical Journey to the Famous Old Gallows.

Park lane was Tyburn lane, and it seems as if the gallows—described in an old document as morable—at one time stood at its east corner. It was there the ferocious Lord Ferrers was hung in 1760 for murdering his servant, Horace Walpole's words paint the picture well: "He shamed heroes, he bore the solemnity of a pompous and tedious procession of above two hours from the Tower to Tyburn with as much tranquillity as if he were only going to his own burial, not to his own execution." And when one of the dragons of the procession was thrown from his horse—Lord Ferrers expressed much concern and said, "I hope there will be no death today but mine."

On went the procession, with a mot about it sufficient to make its progress slow and laborious. Small wonder that the age of Thackeray, with Thackeray's help, set up his scaffolds within four high walls. Asking for drink, Lord Ferrers was refused, for, said the sheriff, late regulations enjoined him not to let prisoners drink while passing from the place of imprisonment to that of execution, great indecencies having been committed by the drunk excess of the criminals in the hour of execution. "And though," said he, "my lord, I might think myself excusable in overlooking this order out of regard to your lordship's rank, yet there is another reason, which, I am sure, will weigh with you—your lordship is sensible of the greatness of the crowd; we must draw up at some tavern; the confusion would be so great that it would delay the expedition which your lordship seems so much to desire." But decency—so often paraded by those who outrage it—ended with the murderer's death. "The executioners fought for the rope, and the one who lost it cried—the greatest tragedy, to his thinking, of the day!"—London Sketch.

Cut Off With a Shilling. "Here," said a lawyer, taking down a calf bound book, "is the will from which originated the famous phrase, 'Cut off with a shilling.'"

"It is the will of Stephen Godfrey. He died in Lambeth in 1796. Now, I'll read you the paragraph in Godfrey's will that gave the word the phrase. A nasty paragraph it is too."

"Whereas, it was my misfortune to be made very uneasy by Elizabeth Godfrey, my wife, for many years, from our marriage, by her turbulent behavior, for she was not content with despising my admonitions, but she contrived every method to make me unhappy; she was so perverse in her nature that she would not be reclaimed, but seemed only to be born to be a plague to me. The strength of Samson, the knowledge of Homer, the prudence of Augustus, the cunning of Pyrrhus, the patience of Job, the subtlety of Hannibal and the watchfulness of Homogenes could not have been sufficient to subdue her, for no skill or force in the world could make her good, and as we have lived separate and apart from each other eight years, and she having perverted her son to leave and totally abandon me—therefore I give her one shilling only."

"One thing remember, dear child," I said gravely, "and that is that love blazes its own paths and cuts its own channels. If it be written that you are for me you will marry me in good time. Love brooks no interference in his realm."

Her cheeks stormed into color as I helped her to her feet.

"Do you see this Lady Washington?" she demanded, holding the pelargonium before me. "See I lay it in the hollow of this little big tree. There is dirt in the hollow, and the pelargonium may grow. Coming again, I may find that it has taken root. So may I

Locating Mrs. Porter.

By CARL WILLIAMS.

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"Do you know," said Porter, with the air of a person who makes a great discovery, "I think I ought to get married."

For a moment Eda Kirby's heart stopped beating, but Porter continued in his easy, placid tones:

"You see, I am pretty comfortably fixed now. It is high time I looked about me. I think I shall take a vacation and go to the mountains. I ought to find some one up there who should suit me well enough to be Mrs. Porter. And so I won't be around again. I leave tomorrow night."

He rose heavily to his feet, and Eda sprang to get his hat, forcing to her lips the smile that masked but poorly the quivering of her mouth. For three years she had loved John Porter. For nearly that length of time she had thought also that he loved her.

"Goodby and good luck," she said as he passed through the door. "You will let me know when your quest has succeeded, won't you?"

"To be sure," he agreed. "Take care of yourself and don't get sick."

He patting the slender hand that still lay within his own and turned to the stairs. Eda watched him past the next landing and then stepped into the apartment that had been her home ever since she had been forced to become a wage earner.

It was a tiny enough place, four small rooms opening off a hall the size of a soap box, but it was neat and homelike, and Porter loved to spend the hours of the day there.

"You are a home of your own like it," she corrected.

"That's it," he explained. "A home of my own like it instead of my bachelor apartments. Then all of a sudden I realized a great truth, and I found out what I wanted."

He waited for her query, but Eda was looking out across the green of the back yards, gleaming with a touch of silver in the moonlight. She did not turn her head as he rose and came toward her chair.

"I realized that it was you I had wanted all along," he said. "None of them was like you, and no one suited. We had been friends for so long that I did not realize how I loved you until I got away from you and missed you."

"I'm only a stupid, blundering man, Eda. I am more stupid even than most men. I have no right to expect that after all these years you will forgive my deuseness, but don't you think that you can learn to love me, dear?"

"I knew that it was right to give that boy the money," she murmured. Porter puzzled at the words, but she drew his head down against her cheek, and he did not care. He had found Mrs. Porter, and that was all sufficient.

THEN CAME THE TELEGRAM.

his evenings there when other distractions did not offer. He was always certain of finding Eda home and as regularly in good humor. He could not know at what cost she recruited at times her flagging energy that he might not see how hard the struggle was for her.

Now the cheery place seemed dark and lonesome, and, with a sobbing cry, she threw herself upon the sofa and gave vent to the grief within her soul. John Porter had never been a demonstrative man, but she had not dreamed that his calls were merely because he liked to spend a restful evening in her homelike apartment.

Now he had gone in search of a wife, and she should lead her life alone. Long ago the time for making new friends had passed.

Somehow during the next two weeks she managed to keep up her work while always the dull ache was in her heart and the soft color faded from her cheeks and the slender hands became more slender. Porter had not written. "I never was much of a hand at letter writing, and she did not even know where he had gone. Then came the telegram that seemed to wring her heart afresh.

"Have discovered her," it ran. "Will be home this evening and will call to tell you about it."

So his quest had been successful. Eda signed the book and stood staring after the departing messenger, wondering what impulse had led her to tip the lad a quarter for bringing her bad news. Womanlike, she seldom tipped, but some impulse had led her to give the boy the money, and even in the first new access of her grief she had wondered at her liberality.

Late in the afternoon Eda roused herself to make the little flat presentable. It would probably be the last time that Porter would ever come. She could not receive calls from an engaged man. She wanted him to remember the place at its best.

It was a very inviting room that Porter entered that evening. The Morris chair was drawn close to the window, and his ash tray was beside it on the table. The shaded lamp sent out a soft glow that did not suggest heat, as did the gas, and Eda in her faintest gown sat by the other window. Porter looked about him with pleasure.

"This seems like home," he sighed, "only I want a bigger place, this is so tiny. It's different from a hotel room even at a hotel where you are supposed to get the best. They can't make the rooms seem homelike."

"Where did you go?" she asked.

"All over," he replied, with a laugh. "Surely you did not expect to find your ideal on the porch of the first place you registered," she suggested. "What is worth having is worth looking for."

"Don't I know?" he admitted. "The trouble is that you don't have to look hard enough sometimes. Then you are apt not to see it. I went to Glenville first. They have the athletic girl there. There was a golf tournament on, and every girl was walking about with a lot of sticks. Some of them were for hitting the ball, and the rest they called men, though they were mostly pretty poor apologies."

"The better chance for you," he remarked.

"No More Deadlocks. Old Lawyer—Yes, sir; I'm in favor of women jurors. If we have women to fix up the verdicts there would be no more disagreements or deadlocks. Young Attorney—How do you figure that out?"

Old Lawyer—All that would be necessary to get a quick verdict would be to send a newspaper to the jury room containing a bargain advertisement good for that day only.—Chicago News.

"PAGEANT."

Professor Skeat on the Proper Pronunciation of the Word.

Instead of trusting to casual observers, it is far better to understand the principles that govern our pronunciation. There is one principle in particular which, rightly considered, gives us a good deal of help in the instance under consideration.

In my "Primer of English Etymology" I give some simple rules of accentuation. Rule 1 is as follows:

"When the length of a word is augmented an original long vowel is apt to be shortened by the accentual stress falling upon it." Such augmentation is due to the formation of a derivative.

An easy example is seen in the case of some pronounced with a long "o" for if we form a derivative by adding the suffix "ic" the result is comic, with a short "o."

There is a general principle that affects the whole language and sets up a standard habit. By way of illustration, compare bile with bilious, erica with erinacean, brake and bracken, dine and dinner, mine and mineral, coal and collier and perhaps at least seventy more. A remarkable instance is seen in collic, which is merely a new pronunciation of coaly. Certain dogs were once called coaly dogs because of their coal black markings. An extension of the same principle may be made in comparing the dissyllable forms agent and cogent with the allied trissyllables agitate and cogitate.

When once such a principle has become general it is obvious that a word like pageant will be influenced by the very large number of dissyllables that have the former vowel short, and this is why the truly normal pronunciation of the word resembles the "a" in Pageant. I do not certainly know the origin of that name, but I suppose it is merely the diminutive of "page," in which the "a" is shortened as a matter of course simply because the diminutive "et" has been added.

The pronunciation of primer has often been discussed, and many are of the opinion that they elinch the matter by saying that the "i" in the Latin primus is long, that proves nothing at all as regards modern English, and those who have studied our peculiar ways with the closest attention are well aware that the normal way is, after all, to pronounce it as if it were spelled primer. We do not therefore spell it with a double "m," because that is not our system. We write tonic and comic and mimic in order to show their connection with tone and comic and mime, and we trust that the unfortunate reader, after he has thus had the etymology explained to him, will provide the pronunciation for himself. Such a word as pageant may be usefully compared with magic and tropic and agitate.—London Academy.

STAGE FRIGHT.

Actors Have Been Known to Die From the Malady.

Perhaps the most terrible malady which can attack the actor in the course of his performance in the peculiar disease known as stage fright. Through its evil effects strong men and women have been known to faint, break down and do many other queer things, and there are even on record several cases of people who have died through this horrible seizure.

Some years ago a young novice who was to appear for the first time arrived at the theater very white and shaky. Brandy being given him, he appeared slightly better, but no sooner had he set his foot on the stage than he clapped his hand to his heart, with a low cry, and fell down dead. The overwhelming sensation induced by stage fright had attacked his heart, and his theatrical career ended thus even at its beginning.

Quite as ghastly was the case of the young amateur actress who, strangely enough, had never experienced stage fright when playing with her fellow amateurs, but who was seized with the attack on making her first professional appearance. She went through the scene aided by the prompter, her eyes glazed, her hands rigid, and when the exit came it proved her exit from life's stage as well as the minute boards, for she staggered to her dressing room and fell into a comatose state, from which she never recovered.

Perhaps, however, the most peculiar instance of all was that of the veteran performer who had gone through thirty years of stage work without experiencing this malady. One night, however, he confided to a fellow player that a quite unaccountable nervousness had suddenly taken hold of him and that he did not think he could ever act again.

His comrade laughed at the notion and urged him to go on, as usual, but his astonishment may well be conceived when the poor old player went on the stage and, after making several vain efforts to speak, fell back and expired. The doctor who made the post-mortem examination stated that death was due to failure of the heart's action, evidently induced by the presence of an attack of stage fright.—Pearson's Weekly.

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