The Proving.

By GRANT OWEN.

"I don't just know how to explain it," said Margaret West.

She turned her eyes from the cool, blue stretches of the lake and looked thoughtfully at Graham, who, perched on the rail of the boathouse, was absently pulling at the fingers of the gauntlets in his hands.

The young man stiffened, and a slow smile, in which there was a hint of grimness, curved the corners of his mouth.

"I rather think I understand," he said quietly. "You are disappointed in me. Isn't that it?"

She was silent for a moment.

"Yes, that is it," she said at length, and at something in her voice his face hardened.

"Then you wanted me to enter that road race Thursday?" he asked.

"Yes," she said simply.

"And because I won't"—

She turned to him quickly.

"It isn't that I'm tremendously interested in that race," she interrupted him, "nor that I care a snap whether or not you win it. The point is—the point is"—

She paused; her brows drew together in a little frown; her fingers toyed nervously with a bit of wisteria she had broken from the vine that covered the porch.

"I wanted you to be in it—to go over the course. That would be sufficient," she finished.

"I see," he said. "You wanted me to disprove these stories that are going the rounds about my lack of nerve. Is that it?"

"Yes," she said again.

He drew himself up. His shoulders were squared. His attitude was that of a man summoning to his aid all his moral courage.

"The stories they have told you are quite correct," he said, somewhat huskily.

"Oh!" she said, and in her voice there was something of pain and something, too, of weariness, as if she had been expecting this very thing and yet was unwilling, even in her preparedness, to hear it.

"They are perfectly right in what they say of me," he went on calmly. "I have lost my nerve. There's nothing would tempt me to take up road racing again."

"Nothing?" she questioned.

"Nothing," he repeated inexorably. "I am not in the habit of offering an explanation nor any excuses for my position in the matter. But I would like you to know the circumstances. Would you care to listen to them?"

"If you choose to tell me," she said dully.

"You remember that race three years ago over the Meadow island course?" said he. "Well, it was then it happened. Stanley was with me. He and I had a good lead. We were tearing past the curve at the old church, letting out the car for all there was in her. As we swung that turn I saw a child just in front of us not twenty feet away, it seemed.

"How she got past the ropes that held the crowd back I can't say, but there she was right in the course and not a ghost of a show apparently of escaping us. I don't know to this day what saved her. I only know there was a great gasping sigh from Stanley and a groan from the crowd. I tried to swing out for her, but there was so little time. Anyway, it was some sort of a special Providence that saved her. We shot past her, so close that I shut my eyes."

The girl saw a nervous tremor shake the big shoulders. Her eyes narrowed.

"But the child wasn't hurt, you say?" she asked.

"Not in the least. But those few seconds were enough for me. I couldn't stand them again. That is why I am out of the game—a quitter, if you choose to put it that way."

The girl said nothing. She sat looking out at the sparkling lake with troubled eyes.

At length Graham arose.

"I don't blame you in the least for thinking of me as you do," said he, "nor for being disappointed. Goodby."

He slid from the rail and went down the steps to the big road car standing in the driveway. He had pulled on his gauntlets and was just climbing into the car when around the corner of the boathouse came a wild eyed, dishevcled gardener from one of the houses down the street.

"Mr. Graham, sir," he panted, "will you be gettin' the doctor, quick! Tim Comley's fell from the stagin' on the stables where they're paintin' an' he's hurted bad, sir. 'Tis dead he'll be in ten minutes if the doctor's not fetched before that. Hurry! For God's sake, hurry!"

"I'll have him here in five," Graham called, and opened up the big car.

It sprang forward like a thing alive and went tearing down the driveway in a great cloud of dust.

Margaret, who had run to the edge of the veranda, saw him swing into the roadway beyond, and the drifting dust which rose high above the poplars told of the terrific pace he was setting.

It was four minutes later, after a nervous pacing of the veranda, that she heard the whir of the approaching car again. She ran down the steps and hurried along the drive to the roadway. Up the hill, with honking horn, came a dull, black streak. She could see Graham bending low over the steering wheel and the doctor, hatless and begrimed with dust, clinging desperately to the seat beside him.

Then out of the crossroad just below where she stood and directly in the path of the coming cyclone came a rattling farm wagon, driven by old Mrs. Clark, who was as deaf as a post. The girl covered her eyes and screamed. There were a wild yell, the sound of splintered wood and a terrific grinding crash.

When Margaret looked again the wagon alone was in the road. The automobile, turned on its side, lay against the shattered fence. In the field beyond lay two huddled figures.

In a moment the girl was running in that direction with all the speed she could summon. As she reached the scene of the accident one of the two figures scrambled limply to his feet. The other painfully propped itself upon an elbow. Then she saw that the man who stood erect was the doctor.

Even as she came running into the field she heard Graham's voice, rather faint, it is true, but perfectly calm.

"How badly are you hurt, doc?" it inquired.

"Only a bit," was the response, "a few bruises and a scratch or two."

"Then get up to the Copley place as fast as you can."

"But you?" the doctor demurred.

"I'm all right. Never mind me. I'll be fresh as a lark when you get back. Hurry on now."

Margaret ran to his side and, kneeling down, began to wipe the blood from his face. Already the doctor was making a hurried examination, while Graham fumed and fretted and bade him hurry to Tim Conley.

"H'm!" said the doctor at length. "Pretty badly smashed up, but we're lucky, both of us, to get out of it as well as we did. Talk about your nerve! By Jove, the way he swung that car out of the way was magnificent. Never a thought for himself nor me either, I'm convinced," he ended.

He pulled a roll of bandages from his case and handed them to the girl. "Just do up his head and stop the flow of blood as best you can, if you will, Miss West," he commanded. "I'll go up to Copley's and fix Tim up. Then I'll come back here and set Graham's fractures."

He went limping up the road, and the girl bent closer to Graham.

"It was splendid!" she cried, her eyes shining.

"That?" said Graham. "Oh, that was nothing. I had to do that, you see. It was a question of killing the old lady or getting a bit banged up myself."

Her face was very close to his. Something warm and moist struck his cheek.

"Those wicked stories they told about you"— she began.

"They're true," he declared. "I have lost my nerve. I couldn't go into a road race to save my life. This was different, you see. This was something that had to be done."

Two warm lips were pressed to his grimy, blood stained forehead.

"Had to be done!" she repeated meaningly. "Oh, you delicious simpleton!"

The doctor, limping back a few moments later, discreetly screened himself behind a tree.

"There are times it is better to wait before reducing fractures," he meditated.

Republic of Haiti.

It was in 1791, under the influence of the French revolution, that the "Black republic," Haiti, came into being. The mutual antipathies of the mixed population burst forth into one of the most vindictive struggles on record, which resulted in the extermination of the Europeans and the independence of the negro insurgents.

The Eyes of Genius.

All men of genius are said to have eyes clear, slow moving and bright. This is the eye which indicates mental ability of some kind, it doesn't matter what.

Sulphur.

Sulphur thrown into the fire of a stove, furnace or fireplace will instantly extinguish the fire in a chimney or flue. If a small bag or parcel of sulphur, say three or four ounces, were kept in a handy place and used when needed, as directed above, it might be the means of saving property and perhaps life.

Siamese Football.

The Siamese play football with a wicker ball. They are permitted to touch the ball only with knees, head and shoulders. The object of the game is to keep the ball in the air as long as possible. He who lets it strike the ground loses a point.

Dogs of Portugal.

The dogs of Portugal are fond of grapes, and sticks are purposely fastened to the animals' necks to impede or prevent their entrance to the vineyards in search of the luscious fruit.

Our Deepest Well.

At present the deepest well in this country is one drilled for gas in Pittsburg. It was sunk to the depth of 4,680 feet, when work had to be abandoned on account of the drilling cable breaking of its own weight.

Finger Nails.

The nails of two fingers never grow with the same degree of rapidity. The nail of the middle finger grows with the greatest rapidity and that of the thumb the least.

Plantain and Banana.

The plantain (Musa paradisiaca) is a small tree plant that is closely akin to the banana, but differing from it in not having the purple spots on its stem. The fruit of the plantain is also larger and more angular than that of the banana.

RAINBOW AND ROSE

In the middle of June many centuries ago the sun was at its height. On the higher land all the trees and flowers were scorched and dried up from the long drought, and his burning rays pierced their way even to the cool and stately garden which lay in the shelter of the valley many feet below, but they only touched lightly the myriad of beautiful flowers that raised their heads so gladly to meet his soft, caressing touch, which fell in slanting shadows amid the thick green foliage.

Everything seemed to thrive in this old fashioned garden, from the proud white lily to the humble blue forgetmenot growing in bunches in the soft moss, but the most beautiful of all were the masses of roses—red, yellow and pink, and the faintly tinted tea rose—and in their midst, seeming to stand alone and apart from all the rest, a beautiful pink La France, her bright green leaves forming a halo around her. The other roses in the gardens looked up to her as their queen, the birds would come and sing their best songs before her, and the proud peacocks would carry their tails higher and strut more vainly as they passed before her.

The flowers had it all their own way in this beautiful, half forgotten acre of God. No rough gardener came to cut away their thorns, snip off their dead buds and gather them to put into vases, where they would droop and die in a few short hours. Only a little child would come sometimes and touch them softly, almost reverently, with his thin white fingers and whisper childish things to them, and the flowers would answer back, and the boy seemed to understand them and know their language, for his wistful eyes would brighten and a smile play round his small mouth.

And he was always tired now, and in the great heat of the day he could seldom drag his weary little body as far as the roses, only when the sun began to set and the cool of the evening came. Then, if he were well enough, he would come.

But one day the shadows grew longer and longer, the weary flowers raised their drooping heads in vain, the tiny white robed figure came no more, and over the garden was a great hush, and the petals of the roses dropped silently to the ground in their grief, the birds' songs were hushed, and the bright hued peacocks swept their drooping feathers dejectedly behind them.

The stately queen of roses bowed her proud head, and a black silence crept closer and closer, for in the garden was the shadow of death.

And the roses mourned among themselves long and sorrowfully, but none mourned so deeply as the stately queen. She missed the soft, caressing fingers of the child. She missed the golden curls which had rested so often and so lovingly near her heart.

Must she always grow alone, without anything to love and call her own? Why could she not have a little child to take the place of the one who was gone?

The days passed on, and she held herself more apart from the other flowers, and the mantle of her sadness descended over them and over all the garden. The birds ceased their songs, the sparkling streams of water no longer rippled over the smooth, white pebbles, but were almost dried up, with only a faint thread trickling half heartedly along. The roses were withered and dying, until one morning there came a soft, refreshing shower of rain, and the flowers began to revive.

All day long the rain increased in volume, then toward evening suddenly died away, and on the clear blue of the sky above appeared the many colored hues of a rainbow, and as the roses looked toward their queen they raised their drooping heads in amazement.

For the rainbow had descended from the sky above and enveloped her in his clinging folds, hiding her from the eyes that would see and making her his own.

Summer once more in the garden that lies in the shelter of the valley—summer, but not the noonday heat; eventide and the silver moon arrayed in all her best.

Birds are singing on every bough as if their little throats would burst, so eager are they to do homage to the occasion. All the flowers are arrayed in their brightest and bravest colors, and the streams make merry music as they bubble over the smooth, white pebbles.

And by the queen of roses nestles a small pink rosebud. So small, so tender, is he that her leaves almost enfold him. For the stately La France's wish has been granted her, and tonight the garden is en fete for the christening of the offspring of the many hued rainbow and the proud rose.

The insects come one by one to bring their offerings and lay them at the rose's feet, and each flower wafts one of her petals, which contains a wish for the sleeping child. The stars, too, drop from heaven and rest lightly ove. him, and then, when all have come and gone, the moon's silver rays center themselves on the rose and her child, lighting them up and leaving all the rest in gloom, and in the silence and hush of that glorious summer night the moon speaks:

"I give to this child a name that shall live for ever and ever, that shall work more good than evil, that shall bring happiness to many and misery to few—a name without which no one can live, for the name which I give to your child is—Love."—Lady's Realm.

NEW SHORT STORIES

High Finance.

The late Bishop Potter at one of the delightful reunions of the Episcopal academy in Philadelphia—Bishop Potter was educated at this venerable and aristocratic school—condemned modern finance.

"I condemn at least," he is reported to have said, "that sort of modern finance that consists in getting something for nothing. I once knew a boy who would have made a splendid financier.

"This boy, strolling idly through the streets—he never had anything to do—met another.

'I wish,' he said, 'that I had a nickel. Then I'd buy a good five cent cigar and go into the woods and have a smoke.'

"'I have a nickel,' said the other boy.

"'Have you?' the first cried eagerly. 'Then lets form a corporation.'

"'All right. How is it done?'

"'I'll be the president. You'll be the stockholder. The nickel will be the capital, and we'll invest it in tobacco.'

"The thing was agreed to, and the president, taking the stockholder's 5

"I DON'T SEE IT," HE SAID.

cents, bought a cigar forthwith. Then he led the way to the woods. There he sat down on a log, lit up and began to smoke skillfully.

"The stockholder waited for his turn to come. He waited very patiently. But the cigar diminished. One-third of it, two-thirds of it disappeared, and still the president showed no signs of satiety.

"'Say,' exclaimed the stockholder at last, 'don't I get a whack here?'

"The president, knocking off the ashes, shook his head.

"'I don't see it,' he said.

"'But what,' shouted the angry stockholder, 'do I get for my capital?'

"'Well,' said the president, 'you can spit.'"—Washington Star.

They Were, of Course.

Parker M. White, the humorous advertisement writer, was talking in Pittsburg about the universality of advertising.

"Doctors, lawyers, clergymen," he said, "claim not to advertise, but somehow or other we see their advertisements occasionally. Am I not right?

"The millionaire proprietor of a patent tonic called on a well known doctor one day.

"'Look here,' he said; 'you are the Dr. Leroy Fisher who is attending Senator Stoxon, are you not?'

"'I am, sir,' the physician answered.

"'Well,' said the tonic man, 'what'll you take to put on the daily bulletins that you give out about the senator this sentence: "Use Blood Bitters. They ward off disease?"'

"'Why, man,' said the famous doctor indignantly, 'I wouldn't do that for anything. Those bulletins are not advertisements.'

"The other chuckled harshly.

"'Ain't they?' he said. 'Then take your own name off 'em.'"

Mark's Triumph Over the Doorkeeper.

Mark Twain tried the other day to go behind the scenes on one of the roofs.

"Yez can't come in," said the doorkeeper who guarded the entrance from the boxes.

"But I have a pass," said the humorist.

"I don't care if you have a sayson ticket," said the doorkeeper. "No wan gets through this door. Go to th' rig'ler stage door if yez want to git in. I've turned down iverybody."

"But I'm Mark Twain," said Mr. Clemens.

"I don't care if ye're Big Tim Soolivan," said the doortender.

Mr. Twain got the manager and was triumphantly escorted through the door. "What do you think now, my man?" he asked, with a bit of kindly malice.

"I t'ink it's a dom shame," said the doortender. "An' after me toornin' down Eddie Foy no longer ago than lasht night."—Cincinnati Times-Star.

A Witty French Aeronaut.

It would appear that M. Santos-Dumont, the famous aeronaut, has a pretty wit. He was once called as a witness in a case concerning a disputed will, and during his cross examination he was much bullied by a very conceited young lawyer. "Now tell me," said the latter, speaking of the deceased testator, "was not Mr. X. in the habit of talking to himself when alone?" "I'm sure I don't know." "And yet you have told the court that you were an intimate friend of his. Why don't you know?" "Because," replied the aeronaut, amid roars of laughter, "I was never with him when he was alone."—Gaulois.