

To the Depths and Back

By HOWARD FIELDING

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On the last day of the year I sold all my interest in a corporation which I had organized, promoted and nominally managed. My associates bought me out at a very high figure. They eliminated me because I was too conservative. I had gone into this venture with a handful of borrowed dollars; I had come out with something like a fortune. I felt myself a favorite of destiny—the universe was my friend.



"I SAW HER, AND I HEARD HER."

genius. Miss Lasalle was her latest protegee. She was the daughter of a mechanic in very poor circumstances, chiefly because he spent all his money on "some foolish invention," as Mrs. Moore expressed it.

Here was a young queen. Among that company there was not a woman to compare with her in natural dignity, in modest self-possession or even in those small refinements of manner that cannot be a gift, but are necessarily acquired.

"In the name of wonder," said I to my hostess at the first possible opportunity, "where was this girl bred?"

"Oh, not here," she said—"in some little cultivated community away from cities. I forget the name. But wait till you have heard her sing."

Again I was surprised. I saw her and I heard her, and my notion of myself as a rather important young man died, not painfully, but with a smile. I must begin tomorrow and really be somebody, said I. There is more in life than I had supposed.

At the earliest possible moment I made the acquaintance of Irma's father. I had had considerable experience with inventors and had learned not to expect too much. Lasalle, however, was a practical man who knew precisely what he was doing, and his invention had passed the doubtful stage. He had an electric storage battery which was the best in the field.

Lasalle was already in negotiations with a man named Elmer Rainsforth, who could command some money, but not nearly enough. I might easily have crowded him out, but it seemed unfair. Instead I accepted him as an associate.

We organized a company, and I financed it. Lasalle received a cash payment, a good block of stock and a liberal salary. Thus Irma escaped from the grip of poverty.

We bought and remodeled a factory, equipped it with special machinery and engaged in other expensive operations, but we could not sell the stock.

I was soon heavily involved, but fortunately I could still borrow money. Bankers who had accommodated me in my previous venture had faith in me and piled up my discounts.

The company issued \$100,000 worth of bonds and turned them over to me in payment of cash loans which had exceeded that sum, whereupon I pledged the bonds with banks and borrowed more money, which I put into the company.

In view of the general business situation which developed in the fall my position was undoubtedly dangerous, and yet I believe that I should have come through with flying colors if those who held guard beside me had been loyal.

I will state what happened as briefly as possible. The company had a contract with Lasalle binding him to give it the call upon all his inventions in the line of electrical storage for a period of ten years. Lasalle invented a storage battery now known as the Glynn which was so much better than ours that competition was futile. He secretly turned this over to a dummy

named Edward Glynn, and it was patented in his name and a company was formed to exploit it. I was permitted to examine a working model, and I had no hope afterward. The only honest thing to do was to suspend all operations and let the company drift into bankruptcy as serenely as possible.

I knew what Lasalle had done, but I could not prove it. To prove it had I possessed the evidence would have been to jail him, and he was Irma's father. I preferred ruin to this alternative.

On top of all this the court of appeals of the state handed down a decision in a certain case reversing another which had been my model in the matter of the bonds. It appeared that I had had no right to them and that my action in putting them up as collateral for personal loans had been criminal. These loans would now go unpaid, and the banks could send me to prison if they pleased.

I laid the whole case before my counsel in one grand final interview. I showed him that by herculean efforts I had put off the inevitable to about Feb. 1 of the following year—a matter of six weeks. All my personal liabilities which I could not meet, amounting to about \$100,000, were concentrated around that fatal spot in the calendar.

Incidentally I remarked to my lawyer that my life was insured for \$105,000. He smiled upon me benevolently and pronounced this able and comprehensive legal opinion:

"The only thing that you can do, so far as I can see, is to die."

My associate, Rainsforth, in some almost forgotten moment of prosperity, had bought a little island with a cabin on it in the middle of a Florida river which at that point extends to the dimensions of a lake. He now offered me the island as a refuge.

"Go down there and hide," said he, "till this thing blows over."

If I were conversing with my own soul I should not dare to say why I went to Rainsforth's island. If I had gone there with the deliberate intention of drowning myself I might not be so much ashamed of it, but to have gone with a lazy notion of doing it by accident, of taking risks upon the water, I hardly know how to describe it. The proceeding simply stamps me as a man sunk to something more insignificant than cowardice. I made my journey in the last week of December, and on the morning of the first day of the year I awoke in Rainsforth's hut.

One dull thought, aching like a bruise, was in my mind—I should never see Irma again.

New Year's morning—the same occasion of hope and resolution which I had been so ready to greet one year ago! Could this be the man who had been so happy, so courageous, so exalted, in spirit on that other day of a year? The contrast was unbearable. I could not lie there and behold my best day and my worst thus side by side.

Sheer misery drove me to exertion. I kindled a fire and began to prepare some breakfast. Yet I made a meal after a fashion and was reminded that my supplies were running low after my three days' residence upon the island. It would be necessary to replenish them from the village.

A wind had sprung up from the eastward and was freshening. I sat upon the shore and watched the waves break higher and higher. An hour from now, said I to myself, a canoe will have trouble out there, and I waited.

I got under way from the lee of the island, and when I passed beyond the shelter of the handbreadth of mud I felt the sweep of the wind and waves. I made less than no headway. I was carried backward. There seemed to be no strength in me, no will to do anything.

Then something inside me seemed to say: This isn't fair. You must at least try. I shook myself awake, and at that instant half a wave came over the side, and before I could take any measure of safety another followed it, and the canoe sank under me. Instantly, I knew not why, the fighting instinct awoke in me. I never gave another thought to the possibility of death. I was all for the battle for its own sake.

I swam beside that canoe and swashed the water out of her and climbed into her. By this time I was far to leeward of my island, but I headed straight for the village and reached it after a heartbreaking fight, exhausted to the marrow of my bones, but somehow happy.

I sat on a little pier and dried myself in the sun, and various persons came and congratulated me upon being alive and politely told me that I was a fool, but I knew better. For the first time in months I felt the glow of pride.

A familiar voice smote upon my ear. I sprang to my feet, amazed, and faced Rainsforth.

"Why, what the deuce are you doing here?" I demanded.

He led me ashore.

"It's all up," said he. "They know you're here."

"Who knows I'm here?"

He named two bank presidents, Ellsworth and Duane.

"Well?" said I.

"They're going to push you on the bond proposition," said he. "It's get out of the country or go to jail. I learned of this the day after you left and waited only to verify it beyond question."

"I'm glad you waited," said I. "I'm glad you didn't come yesterday."

"Why?"

"Because I should have run."

"Run?" he cried. "Why, man, what else can you do? You can't settle. I can give you enough to get you to South America or wherever you think you'll be safest. How much have you

"Enough to carry me back to New York," said I. "Now look here, Rainsforth, I've had a lesson which I don't pretend to understand, but this is what happened. I fought two hours for my bare life right under the eye of nature—clean, clear pleasure every minute of it—and somehow I got back to first principles. The lesson is, fight! I've had a very pleasant and profitable vacation, thanks chiefly to you, and now I'm going back to do my level best and let the consequences take care of themselves."

Rainsforth seemed to be aghast. He pleaded with me, he begged, he drew the blackest picture that ever I saw of the horrors of criminal prosecution. Yesterday it would have driven me to the moon if necessary, but today it merely excited my pugnacity.

Three days later I was in New York, and the first thing I did was to walk into Ellsworth's bank and to the president's desk. The old gentleman greeted me with his usual grave cordiality.

"I hear that you are looking for me," said I.

"No," said he. "Always glad to see you."

"You understand my situation?"

"Yes; it's very unfortunate, but we have no disposition to make it any worse. As I said to Mr. Rainsforth the other day, we intend to give you every possible chance. It's the fair way, and it's the way to get our money."

"You said that to Rainsforth?"

"Yes; he was in here the day after Mr. Lasalle's death."

"Lasalle dead? And Rainsforth knew?"

I checked myself. There was a mystery here which would not bear discussion at the moment. Why had Rainsforth concealed the truth from me? Why had he lied about Ellsworth's attitude? But these facts, startling as they were, immediately vanished at the thought of Irma, whom I had deserted in the hour of her need.

I found her at the house of Mrs. Moore, whose guest she was in her rejuvenement. Irma had heard from Rainsforth the worst possible version of my sudden and secret departure. She had been led to believe that I should never return. She spoke of this without concealment and with exquisite kindness. Upon my side I told her the story of my lapse from heroism, of the better light that I had seen at last.

She had been ignorant throughout of my suspicions of her father, and if these were ever to be disclosed this was surely not the time. She told me that his last wish—almost his last word—was that his documents and all his earthly affairs should pass into my care. I knew not what to make of this, nor whether I could honorably accept the trust. Could it be that the man had been innocent and that he had left behind him evidence to prove it? After long consideration I decided to proceed upon this theory and to examine the documents.

They contained a complete revelation of the whole matter, but no "outsider" could have understood it or made any use of it. This accounted for Rainsforth's frantic efforts to send me to the ends of the earth. Lasalle, as I suspected, was the inventor of the Glynn battery, which was therefore the rightful property of my company. Rainsforth had a hold upon Lasalle, whom he had deliberately tricked into a fraudulent transaction. The inventor, ignorant of business and of the law, had been frightened into giving his invention to Rainsforth, who had organized

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the fraud of the dummy patentee and the rival company. With this evidence I held the whole situation in my hand.

What should I tell Irma? It makes no difference what I decided upon, for that was not what I said. I was so overwhelmed with tenderness for her that I spoke of that alone and never came to any other subject, or at least not then. Our hearts were one, our interests united forever before I told her that her father's wish had expressed the desire of an erring but honest man to make full reparation for a wrong. Fortunately a woman's ideas of right and wrong are unchangeably primitive. Irma saw Rainsforth as the criminal and her father as his victim, who at the last had defeated the enemy and re-established justice. Therefore her grief was not darkened by any sense of shame for her father, and when the cloud had passed the natural sunshine of her youth and love made bright the world for her, and she was happy.

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Propriety.

They waited and waited to a wild, sweet strain.

The music throbbed, like a beating heart—

They waited and waited, and they waited again.

It seemed, in fact, that they couldn't part.

He held her close with his hand and arm. Near to her cheek his own cheek burned. Against his bosom her soft young form closely pressed as they twirled and turned.

Later, when taking her to her coach, He caught her hand on the stairway dim.

"How dare you?" she asked, with stern reproach.

And "What do you mean, sir?" she asked of him.

—Puck.

How He Escaped.

One of the boys had broken one of the school rules, and no one would own up.

The teacher announced that he would thrash the whole class if some one did not tell him who had committed the offense.

All were silent, and he began with the first boy and thrashed every one in the class until finally he reached the last one. Then he said, "Now, if you will tell me who did this I won't thrash you."

"All right, sir. I did it," was the reply.—Idens.

Thoughts at 8 A. M.

I love to think of boyhood days when I the turkey's foot.

I used to fix their breakfast food ere yet the sky was red.

I used to dry shampoo the horse and man and cure the cow.

I love to lie in bed and think I needn't do it now.

I love to think of boyhood days when I rose at four

And fetched the water from the well, a hundred pails or more.

And then I dragged the harrow out and harnessed up the plow.

I love to lie in bed and think I needn't do it now.

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To Bank Depositors - AND - Prospective Depositors

We herewith submit for your consideration a condensed statement of the condition of this Bank, at the close of business February 20th. 1912.

| RESOURCES. | | LIABILITIES. | |
|--|------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| High Grade Railroad and Government Bonds | \$ 1,234,589.48 | Deposits, | \$ 1,430,587.88 |
| Cash and Reserve | 212,919.09 | Capital Stock | 150,000.00 |
| Total, | \$ 1,447,508.57 | Surplus | 150,000.00 |
| Loans and Discounts | 281,034.91 | Undivided profits less expenses paid | 41,455.60 |
| Banking House | 40,000.00 | National Bank Notes outstanding | 53,400.00 |
| U. S. Bonds to secure circulation | 56,900.00 | | |
| Total, | \$ 1,825,443.48 | Total, | \$ 1,825,443.48 |

NO OTHER BANK IN THIS COUNTY OFFERS BETTER SECURITY TO ITS DEPOSITORS THAN THE OLD RELIABLE

Honesdale National Bank

OFFICERS:

H. Z. RUSSELL, President, ANDREW THOMPSON, Vice-President,
L. A. HOWELL, Cashier, A. C. LINDSAY, Asst. Cashier.

DIRECTORS:

Henry Z. Russell, Andrew Thompson
Edwin F. Torrey, Hon. C. Greene
Horace T. Menger, James C. Birdsall
Louis J. Dorfinger, E. B. Hardenbergh
Philip R. Murray

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Agency at Honesdale, Wayne Co., Pa. FROM THE 36 ANNUAL REPORT.

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| Total admitted assets | \$ 273,813,063.55 |
| Total Insurance in force | 1,090,229,706.00 |
| Total number policy-holders | 425,181.00 |
| New Insurance Reported and paid for in 1910 | 112,789,033.00 |
| Increase in Insurance in force over 1909 | \$ 7,740,112.00 |
| Total Income for 1910 | \$ 7,979,802.25 |
| Total payment to policy-holders | 32,890,826.00 |
| Ratio of expense and taxes to income | 11.78 per cent. |

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