THE DOUBLE CROSS

By A. E. THOMAS

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CHAPTER I

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Early i.. the afternoon of a certain Saturday Jim Stanley stood at one of the windows of his lofty office looking out at a panorama of which he seldom tired. Away, through the haze of the late afternoon, he could see a glimpse of New York harbor, with its busy traffic, and in the far background a huge dim figure vaguely stabbed the murk with its uplifted torch. He gazed upon it in silence for a time and then with a sigh and a gesture of impatience he turned, sat down and began to dictate somewhat irritably to the audiphone upon his desk.

"Of course there is always the possibility of error in these calculations, and it would be wise to allow a considerable margin of safety, therefore; but on the whole we are in a position to say that we think well of the proposition. If you wish, I shall be glad to discuss the matter at length and in detail. Very sincerely yours."

He switched off the machine, took another letter from the heap awaiting his attention, and attempted to pin his mind on it. For some reason he was unable to do so. He fidgeted a moment, rose and walked again to the window and looked upon the far-flung panorama of Manhattan.

Now, this indecision or, better, perturbation, was not at all characteristic of this young man. Anyone who knew him well, watching him now, would have sensed that something had disturbed him deeply. He ran his hand through his brown hair with a gesture of discontent and turning at length again to his desk he rang the bell and said to the gray-haired little man who entered:

"Frank, when you leave the office this afternoon you will find O'Hara waiting with the car. I shan't need him again today. Take the audiphone and all this heap of correspondence on the desk, hand them to O'Hara, and tell him to take the whole lot down to the country and have Jefferson put them on the desk in the library."

"But I understood, sir," objected the secretary, "that you had planned to spend the week-end playing golf at Southampton."

"That's so, Frank," responded Stanley, "but I find I can't do it. Please get Mr. Roberts on the phone and explain to him that unexpected and imperative business will detain me. Be as apologetic as you know how. Grovel for me, Frank, grovel."

Wilson smiled. "Yes, sir," he said, "I shall grovel abjectly."

"Great invention the audiphone," continued Stanley, casting an interested eye upon the machine. "You can dictate for hours without having a stupid stenographer around saying, 'What's that, sir?' or 'How do you spell cat, sir?' Talk as fast as you please, talk as slowly as you please, the machine doesn't get restless. It doesn't fix its hair or tap the floor with its foot, and thank God it doesn't chew gum!"

"Yes, sir," smiled Wilson, "it certainly has some advantages over the female of the species, but doesn't it sometimes get out of order?"

"Well," replied Stanley, "the female of the species has been known to do that, too."

Employer and employee smiled together at this feeble jest. You would have guessed that relations between them were not wholly formal and official, and you would have guessed right. Wilson was more than secretary, he was a thoroughly confidential assistant. In fact he knew much more about the business of the firm than Rollin Waterman, who was not only Stanley's partner but his lifelong friend as well. And it was not only the business of the firm with which he was well acquainted. He knew much more about the private lives of both the members of the firm than either of them guessed—perhaps a good deal more than one of them would have liked, and he was thinking of that particular one when Stanley turned and mentioned his name.

"Frank," he said, "Mr. Waterman hasn't come in yet?"

"Not yet, sir."

Stanley hesitated an instant, and then tossed his head with an air of decision. "When he does, say I'd like to see him."

"Yes, sir, I will," answered the secretary.

The door had scarcely closed behind Wilson when upon the other side of Stanley's office another door opened and there entered briskly a young woman, clad in the business tweeds of Wall Street. She was a dark, good-looking girl of twenty-three or twenty-four, with assurance written large upon her handsome face and radiating from her eyes of Spanish black.

Stanley turned upon her entrance. "Well, Miss Morgan?" he said.

"Here is a letter," she said in her clipped voice, "which Mr. Waterman asked me to call your attention to."

He took the letter and read it swiftly. Then he faced the girl with a glance of dissatisfaction as he said: "Why, this is dated three days ago. It should have been attended to before. What happened to it?"

"It got mislaid some way," she answered.

"I see. It just crawled stealthily away and hid itself, I suppose—just out of spite."

The girl looked sulkily at the floor.

"I'll see Mr. Waterman about it. After all you're his secretary, not mine."

"I was about to suggest something of the sort, sir."

Stanley looked at her with curiosity but whatever he was thinking he passed over the impudence. "Hm," he said reflectively, and then, "is that all?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good."

She turned and went out. He was still looking after her in a puzzled sort of way, when the opposite door opened and Rollin Waterman came in, breezily, as usual. Perhaps that was one of the secrets of his charm—he always seemed to bring the out-doors with him.

In the Street these two men were known variously among their intimates as Damon and Pythias, Park and Tilford, or liver and bacon, and

The Girl Looked Sulkily at the Floor.

they spent more time together out of the office than in it. Their friendship dated from the days when they wore pinafores and played together in the park while their nurses gossiped on a nearby bench, presumably, if we credit the professional humorist, with handsome policemen. It is true that the credit side of the ledger of this friendship showed a heavy balance in favor of Jim Stanley, but it is equally true, too, that his opportunities for benevolence far exceeded those of his friend.

Jim and Waterman were about the same age. They had many points in common. They were both well born, of an old New York stock, they were at school together and at college. Jim's father, however, had been a canny and successful business man, and when he died had left a fortune of uncommon size entirely to his son. Waterman's sire, on the contrary, had been an able but erratic person who dissipated the fortunes of his family and left his son a heritage of debts—not that anyone could ever see, however, that these debts weighed noticeably on the mind of their inheritor.

"Hello, Rolly," said Stanley, "a bit late?"

"Why, does it matter? Lively day on the floor, you know."

"Yes, another million share day. Glad we held on to that B. & O. last spring."

"Yes, that will do us a bit of good. Er—Wilson said you wanted to see me."

"Oh, yes, I—oh, by the way, why do you keep that secretary of yours?"

"What's the matter with Miss Morgan?" inquired Waterman, with just the least indication of surprise.

"Well," said Stanley, "she's careless, and she's impudent. Aside from that she's first class."

Waterman laughed and answered: "Oh, she's all right if you understand her, and she's intelligent, which covers a multitude of sins. That what you wanted to see me about?"

The smile died from Stanley's face. "No," he said shortly, and then added slowly, "no, no it isn't."

"Well, then, shoot," adjured his friend. "What the deuce is it? You look as glum as a parson's face on a Monday morning."

It was clear that Stanley was embarrassed. This was a thing that seldom happened to him and he didn't like the feeling. However, it had to be done, and now was the time.

"Rolly," he said, "I've had something on my chest for quite awhile and now I'm going to get it off. We've been pals for a good many years. I hope we always shall be."

"I hope so, too," responded his partner. "Why not? Anything gone wrong? Have I done anything?"

"No, no, not a blessed thing," said Stanley hastily. "Don't misunderstand me. I think that ours is the kind of friendship that nothing could spoil, with possibly one exception."

"I can't imagine what the exception could be," laughed Waterman.

"The possible exception," responded the other, "is an exception that has ruined more than one friendship before now. I mean a woman."

"Oh," said Waterman blankly.

He rose from the desk on the corner of which he had been sitting, took one turn up and down the room and stopped in front of his friend: "I suppose you're talking of Doris Colby."

Stanley shrugged his shoulders.

"Well," said the other, "what about her?"

"Just this. Here we are, you and I, pals—same school, same college, same clubs, and now for two years partners; and as if that were not enough for us to hold in common, it looks to me as if we had gone and fallen in love with the same girl. Of course we've never talked about it—"

"People don't, as a rule," muttered Waterman.

"True, but we must."

"Why so?"

"I'll tell you, Rolly. It would be easy enough to let things drift along and take their natural course, but I've been thinking a lot about it and here's how it stands. Many a friendship has been wrecked on just this kind of a reef. Now I don't want our friendship to be wrecked, no matter what happens. I may be all wrong when I say that we both love the same girl. I can only speak for myself, and if I am wrong, just say so and we'll drop it."

He looked inquiringly at his friend, who presently dropped his eyes and shrugged his shoulders.

"All right, then," Stanley went on. "Now it is clear to me that it's begun to get on our nerves. We haven't been ourselves in each other's company for quite a while. It has bothered me a lot, this—this barrier that's been rising between us. Let's break it down. I think that Doris is fond of both of us, though perhaps in different ways. And for the moment there's apparently no one else in the running."

"No," agreed Waterman, "not since Monsieur Le Comte d'Estrelles took ship for home with a refusal in his luggage."

"But," continued Stanley, "she can't marry us both, and it may be that she hasn't the lightest idea of marrying either of us; but I have certain notions of my own upon the point, as no doubt you have also. Some time she must make a choice. So far as we're concerned, the sooner the better. It is my besotted idea that I am the husband designed for her by an all-wise Providence, and you appear to be nourishing designs of your own not precisely in line with that view. Is that right?"

"It is," said Waterman briefly.

"Very well, then, I propose this—we shall each go to her this very evening, one at nine o'clock, and one at nine-thirty. Each of us shall ask her to marry him and the loser shall take his medicine as best he can. What do you say?"

Waterman took another turn upon the rug. Then he thrust both hands deep into his trousers pockets, and thoughtfully jingled a few coins therein. Somehow he seemed to gather determination from the sound. At all events, he turned again to Stanley and observed, succinctly, "It's a bet."

Stanley breathed a sigh of relief.

"Good," he said, "and whoever wins, it's to make no difference whatever in his relations with the other."

Waterman jingled the coins again. "Right," said he.

"Fine," cried Stanley, his face lighting up. He put out his hand. Waterman took it.

"And now," said Waterman, "who goes first?"

"We'll toss for it," Stanley decided.

"Suits me," grinned Waterman, producing one of the jingly coins. "You call it, or shall I?"

"You toss," directed Stanley, "I'll call."

"Right. Here goes!" He tossed the coin.

"Heads!" cried Stanley, as it fell upon Waterman's palm. Stanley inspected the coin briefly, then his face fell a trifle. "Tails it is," said he. "You win. All right, old boy, you go first. But I know that you'll forgive me if I don't wish you luck."

Waterman grinned. "Under the circumstances, yes," said he.

"All right," said Stanley briskly, "I know she's to be at home tonight, for she told us so."

Waterman grinned again. "Yes," said he, "so I heard," and they grinned together.

"Well," said Stanley, "that's that," and made for the wardrobe closet, whence he took his hat and stick. "Awful joke on us," he remarked, "if she turned us both down."

"Can happen," answered Waterman philosophically.

"Anyhow, I'll be d—n glad to get it over."

"Me too."

"All right, then—you at nine, and at nine-thirty enter, so far as you're concerned, the villain. Of course if you've won I'll know it the moment I come in, and it won't be necessary for me to say anything but, bless you, my children. But, best of all, it's going to be a square deal."

"Surest thing you know!"

"Till tonight, then, old man. Win or lose it's all right, and—good luck to—one of us," and with that Stanley smiled again and departed.

The remaining partner gazed reflectively after him. Then he lighted a cigarette and sat down. He had a good deal to think about.

CHAPTER II

"Well, Rolly, do you mean it?"

Waterman started. The speaker stood behind him and he had not heard her enter. It was one of her accomplishments, the swift and silent apparition. She was not stealthy—she was simply silent.

"Mean what?"

"Don't stall. I happen to have heard every word you two have been saying."

"Well, what about it?"

"Do you mean it?" she demanded once more.

Waterman's hand was not to be forced.

"Do I mean what?" he said.

"That you're going to ask Miss Colby to marry you?"

Waterman blew the ash from his cigarette.

"What if I am?" he said.

The girl's mouth tightened, her face hardened, her black eyes flashed. "Just this," she said. "You can't do that kind of thing to me."

"No?"

"No, Mr. Rollin Waterman, not after all that's passed between us—no."

"Why," he said, "what could you do about it?" Though he spoke with a jeer, he was far from comfortable, for he knew well enough that she could and would do something about it. Wherefore his remark was not so much a gibe as a genuine request for information. Information was promptly forthcoming.

"I'll tell you what I can do about it. Do you suppose a girl like Doris Colby would have any use for you if she knew the truth about me?"

"Do you mean that you will tell her?"

"That's just what I mean. You will promise me here and now to give up all attempts to marry her, or I'll go to her and tell her the precise truth about you and me."

"Hm," said Waterman. "Blackmail, eh?"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

"Hm," Said Waterman. "Blackmail, Eh?"

Thomas Paine's Place in American History

A writer in the Detroit News pays this splendid tribute to one of the great spirits of the American Revolution:

"Thomas Paine was the first man to use the words that now echo over the whole world, 'The United States of America.' As one of the leading lights of the American Revolution, he was of great importance, although none of his many writings indicate that he had a gift for practical statesmanship. His words found everywhere with a large and splendid ardor for American ideals, for liberty, equality, and the right to happiness.

"His pamphlet, 'Common Sense,' printed in 1776 and followed by the various numbers of 'The American Crisis,' stirred and spurred Americans to the road to freedom more than any other words produced in those days by tongue or pen, unless they were those of the Declaration of Independence. When all men were hesitating over the audacity of final separation from Great Britain, he spoke boldly, demanding to be shown any reason for argument or delay. He preached federal union, that petty jealousies and local narrowness be forgotten:

"'Our great title is Americans—our inferior one varies with the place.'"

Origin of the Polka

A Hungarian dancing master on a walking tour in the 1830s stopped at a small village in Poland where he saw a peasant girl dancing a folk dance that particularly pleased him. He brought back the new steps to Prague, where the dance immediately won great popularity, and named it polka for the land of its origin.

The polka was introduced to America about a decade later, when James K. Polk was a Presidential candidate. Because of the similarity of names the polka became a campaign dance. Articles of various kinds were named for the dance—polka scarfs, polka gloves and finally the polka dot.

ULTRA-VIOLET RAYS OF SUNLIGHT HELP

Children Playing in Their Sun Suits.

(Prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture.)

Children seek sunshiny places to play in almost as instinctively as kittens look for warm pleasant spots where the sun's rays help them to drowse contentedly. Both children and other young growing things need the unobstructed ultra-violet rays of sunlight to keep them well and help them develop normally. Children, however, must be specially dressed for sun baths, in such a way that the largest possible area of skin surface may be reached by the beneficial rays.

The little sun suits shown in the picture have been designed by the bureau of home economics of the United States Department of Agriculture to meet this requirement. Cool, thin print is used in one case, with very short, loose legs and comfortable shoulder straps which are broad enough to prevent slipping down. Legs, armholes, and neck are finished with a flat binding. This garment is cut from a romper pattern having a fold in the crotch. It is roomy and loose all over, with specially good length from neck to crotch. A matching hat or short-backed sun bonnet could be made to protect the little girl's eyes from glare during the hot part of the day.

The other little suit is more boyish in cut, with short trunks or trousers of opaque white material buttoned to a waist of heavy net, reinforced by flat straps. This type of waist allows the ultra-violet rays to reach even more of a child's skin than the printed fabrics. It is necessary to accustom children gradually to their sun baths, by exposing them for a short time each day when the temperature is 80 degrees Fahrenheit or more, until they acquire a coat of tan.

CLUB GIRLS LIKE ORDERLY CLOSETS

Old Broomstick Used to Hold Clothes Hangers.

(Prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture.)

The girl in the illustration is a member of one of the 4-H clubs in room improvement directed by the United States Department of Agriculture and the various agricultural colleges. She has made certain changes in her room at the suggestion of the club agent, including the rearrangement of her clothes closet. Freshly painted woodwork and furniture, a revarnished floor, and new covers for her bed and other pieces of furniture were also a part of the improvement she effected. In the closet, which she wanted to make orderly and attractive, she put a lengthwise pole made of an old broomstick, and provided as many clothes hangers as she needed, to economize space and keep her garments fresh and unwrinkled.

Having the closet arranged so that it was just as easy to put things away

Making the Closet Orderly.

as to throw them on the bed or a chair, was a direct help in curing this girl of some untidy habits she had developed. Many mothers have doubtless found it difficult to train their daughters to be neat at home, and perhaps the reason is a lack of suitable ways of keeping order.

During the warm months when there are several dresses in the wash for each girl or woman in the family, and a great many for the little tots who wear cotton rompers or bloomer dresses entirely, it is a good plan to keep a supply of hangers downstairs near the ironing board. As each garment is pressed it can be hung on a hanger and placed on a line or a clothes horse until it is dry and well aired.

Strawberry Shortcake

Strawberry shortcake for breakfast, made with or without plain cream, makes a delicious variant of the ordinary diet. With it should be served either a glass of milk or a dish of cottage cheese to make it a more complete meal. This is an ideal breakfast or lunch for children, as well as a very satisfactory change for Sunday night supper.

Orange Sherbet Always Refreshing in Summer

Ices and sherbets made of fresh fruit juice are always refreshing in hot weather. If egg white is beaten into the mixture after it has been partly frozen the mixture is more fluffy and creamy in texture and to many people less bitingly cold than a plain ice. These fresh fruit desserts have the merit of contributing to the day's supply of vitamines. This recipe for orange sherbet is from the bureau of home economics:

2¼ cups orange juice
¼ cup lemon juice
¾ cup sugar
¼ teaspoon salt
1 egg white

Strain the fruit juices, add the sugar and salt, and stir until the sugar is dissolved. Freeze with a mixture of 1 part of salt to 4 to 6 parts of ice. Turn the crank slowly until the mixture is partly frozen, then quickly add the beaten white of egg, and continue to turn the crank until the ice is firm. Remove the dasher, press the contents solidly into the can, cover with waxed paper and replace the top on the can. Pack with more ice and salt and allow to stand an hour or more to ripen before serving.

Curried Chicken With Coconut Quite Unusual

Curries of all kinds have penetrated to the western world from India, and this unusual way of preparing chicken is no exception. The recipe has been tested by the bureau of home economics and found excellent:

1 fowl weighing 3 to 4 pounds
1 quart water
½ cup sliced onions
¼ tsp. curry
1½ tsp. salt
Flour

Disjoint the fowl and simmer in the water to which 1 teaspoonful of salt has been added. When the fowl is tender, drain it, and measure the liquid. For each cup of liquid, blend 2 tablespoonfuls of flour with 2 tablespoonfuls of fat removed from the top of the broth. Brown the onion in a small amount of the chicken fat, add the broth and the blended flour and fat, and cook until thickened. Then add the curry and the remaining ½ teaspoonful of salt. Remove the skin from the back and legs of the fowl and add the meat to the sauce. Allow the meat to heat through but take care that it does not become broken while stirring. Serve the chicken with flaky boiled rice.

Blend of Greens Cooked Entirely Without Water

Those who do not especially care for the flavor of kale or dandelion greens may find more acceptable a blend of these greens with spinach. To conserve the mineral constituents and the vitamines for which these vegetables are important in the diet, they are cooked the shortest possible time and entirely without water, with a small amount of butter or other fat to prevent burning. The directions for preparing them are given by the bureau of home economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

Use equal quantities of spinach and kale and half as much dandelion greens. Cut or chop these into short lengths and cook them for 3 minutes in a frying pan in which enough butter has been melted to season the greens and prevent their sticking to the pan. In general, about one tablespoonful of butter should be allowed for each quart of greens.

It May Be Urgent

When your Children Cry for It

Castoria is a comfort when Baby is fretful. No sooner taken than the little one is at ease. If restless, a few drops soon bring contentment. No harm done, for Castoria is a baby remedy, meant for babies. Perfectly safe to give the youngest infant; you have the doctors' word for that! It is a vegetable product and you could use it every day. But it's in an emergency that Castoria means most. Some night when constipation must be relieved—or colic pains—or other suffering. Never be without it; some mothers keep an extra bottle, unopened, to make sure there will always be Castoria in the house. It is effective for older children, too; read the book that comes with it.

Fletcher's CASTORIA

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HAROLD SOMERS Brooklyn N. Y.

PARKER'S HAIR BALSAM
Restores Color and Beauty to Gray and Faded Hair
Hiscox Chemical Works, Patchogue, N. Y.

Ship's Bells

The striking of bells on board ship dates from the time of the half-hour sand-glass. The bell was struck each time the glass was turned.

HUSBAND DISTRIBUTES BOOKLETS

Wife Tries Compound

Every year the Pinkham Medicine Company distributes about 30,000,000 booklets from house to house. Mr. Ted Hinzman does this work in Lodi, California. His wife writes: "It was in these little books that I read about so many women being helped by the medicine. I thought I would give it a trial and I can truly say that it has done me good. My neighbors and friends ask me what I am doing to make me look so much better. I tell them that I am taking Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound."

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