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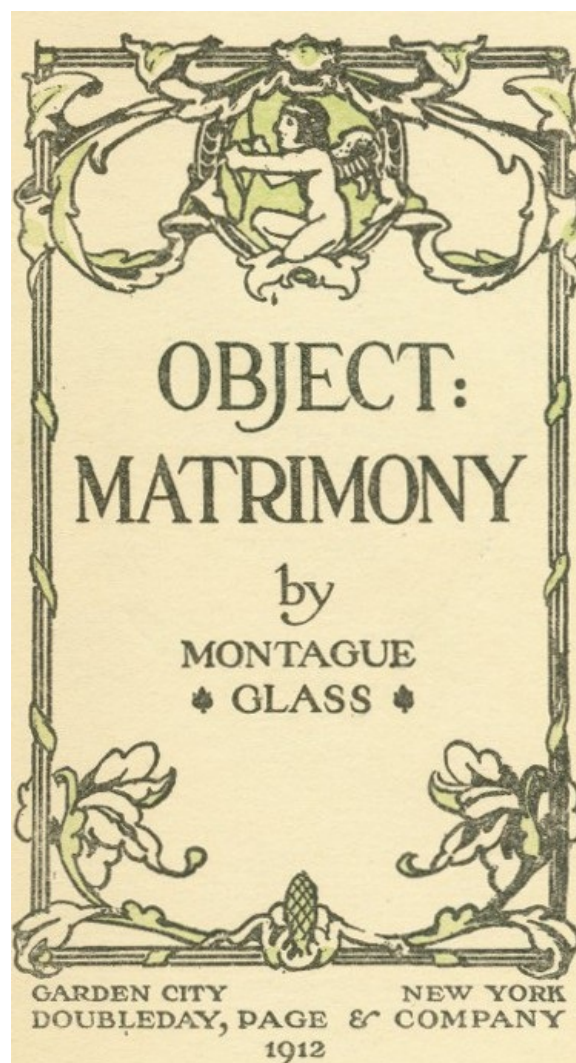
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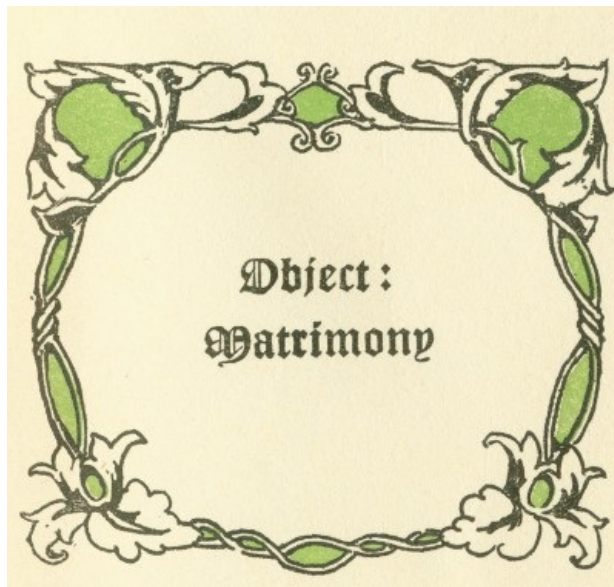
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK OBJECT: MATRIMONY ***





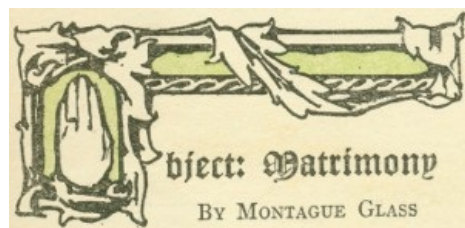
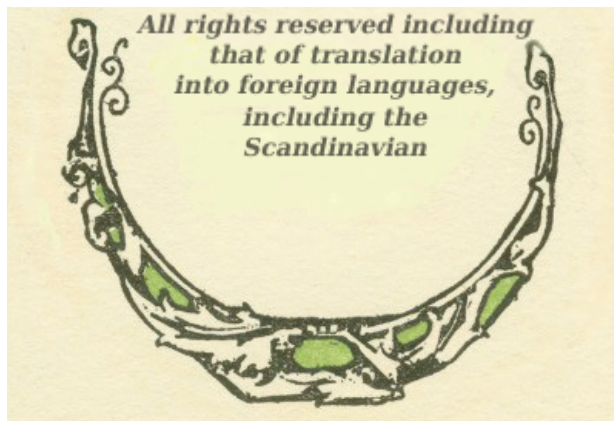
"DID YOU EVER SUFFER FROM STUMMICK TROUBLE?"

OBJECT: MATRIMONY

By MONTAGUE GLASS
GARDEN CITY NEW YORK
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1912



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REAL ESTATE!" Philip Margolius cried bitterly; "that's a business for a business man! If a feller's in the clothing business and it comes bad times, Mr. Feldman, he can sell it his goods at cost and live anyhow; but if a feller's in the real-estate business, Mr. Feldman, and it comes bad times, he can't not only sell his houses, but he couldn't give 'em away yet, and when the second mortgage forecloses he gets deficiency judgments against him." [4]

"Why don't you do this?" Mr. Feldman suggested. "Why don't you go to the second mortgagee and tell him you'll convey the houses to him in satisfaction of the mortgage? Those houses will never bring even the amount of the first mortgage in these times, and surely he would rather have the houses than a deficiency judgment against you."

"That's what I told him a hundred times. Believe me, Mr. Feldman, I used hours and hours of the best salesmanship on that feller," Margolius answered, "and all he says is that he wouldn't have to pay no interest, insurance and taxes on a deficiency judgment, while a house what stands [5]

vacant you got to all the time be paying out money."

"But as soon as they put the subway through," Mr. Feldman continued, "that property around Two Hundred and Sixty-fourth Street and Heidenfeld Avenue will go up tremendously."

"Sure I know," Margolius agreed; "but when a feller's got four double flat-houses and every flat yet vacant, futures don't cut no ice. Them tenants couldn't ride on futures, Mr. Feldman; and so, with the nearest trolley car ten blocks away, I am up against a dead proposition."

"Wouldn't he give you a year's extension?" Mr. Feldman asked.

"He wouldn't give me positively nothing," Margolius replied hopelessly. "That feller's a regular Skylark. He wants his pound of meat every time, Mr. Feldman. So I guess you got to think up some scheme for me that I should beat him out. Them mortgages falls due in ten days, Mr. Feldman, and we got to act quick." [6]

Mr. Feldman frowned judicially. In New York, if an attorney for a realty owner knows his business and neglects his professional ethics he can so obstruct an action to foreclose a mortgage as to make Jarndyce vs. Jarndyce look like a summary proceeding. But Henry D. Feldman was a conscientious practitioner, and never did anything that might bring him before the grievance committee of the Bar Association. Moreover, he was a power in the Democratic organization and right in line for a Supreme Court judgeship, and so it behooved him to be careful if not ethical. [7]

"Why don't you go and see Goldblatt again, and then if you can't move him I'll see what I can do for you?" Feldman suggested.

"But, Mr. Feldman," Margolius protested, "I told it you it ain't no use. Goldblatt hates me worser as poison."

Feldman leaned back in his low chair with one arm thrown over the back, after the fashion of Judge Blatchford's portrait in the United States District Courtroom.

"See here, Margolius: what's the real trouble between you and Goldblatt?" he said. "If you're going to get my advice in this matter you will have to tell me the whole truth. *Falsus in uno, falsus in omnibus*, you know." [8]

"You make a big mistake, Mr. Feldman," Margolius replied. "It ain't nothing like that, and whoever told it you is got another think coming. The trouble was about his daughter Fannie. You could bring a horse a pail of water, Mr. Feldman, but no one could make the horse drink it if he don't want to, and that's the way it was with me. Friedman, the Schatchen, took me up to see Goldblatt's daughter Fannie, and I assure you I ain't exaggeration a bit when I tell you she's got a moustache what wouldn't go bad with a dago barber yet." [9]

"Why, I thought Goldblatt's daughter was a pretty good looker," Feldman exclaimed.

"That's Birdie Goldblatt," Margolius replied, blushing. "But Fannie—that's a different proposition, Mr. Feldman. Well, Goldblatt gives me all kinds of inducements; but I ain't that kind, Mr. Feldman. If I would marry I would marry for love, and it wouldn't make no difference to me if the girl would have it, say, for example, only two thousand dollars. I would marry her anyway."

"Very commendable," Mr. Feldman murmured.

"But Fannie Goldblatt—that is somebody a young feller wouldn't consider, not if her hair hung with diamonds, Mr. Feldman," Margolius continued. "Although I got to admit I did go up to Goldblatt's house a great many times, because, supposing she does got a moustache, she could cook *gefüllte Fische* and *Fleischkugeln* better as Delmonico's already. And then Miss Birdie Goldblatt—"

He faltered and blushed again, while Feldman nodded sympathetically.

"Anyhow, what's the use talking?" Margolius concluded. "The old man gets sore on me, and when Marks Henochstein offers him the second mortgages on them Heidenfeld Avenue houses it was yet boom-time in the Bronx, and it looked good to Goldblatt; so he made Henochstein give him a big allowance, and he bought 'em. And now when he's got me where he wants me I can kiss myself good-bye with them houses." [10]

He rose to his feet and put on his gloves, for Philip was what is popularly known as a swell dresser. Indeed, there was no smarter-appearing salesman in the entire cloak and suit trade, nor was there a salesman more ingratiating in manner and hence more successful with lady buyers.

"If the worser comes to the worst," he said, "I will go through bankruptcy. I ain't got nothing but them houses, anyway." He fingered the two-and-a-half-carat solitaire in his scarf to find out if it were still there. "And they couldn't get my salary in advance, so that's what I'll do." [11]

He shook hands with Mr. Feldman.

"You could send me a bill for your advice, Mr. Feldman," he said.

"That's all right," Feldman replied as he ushered his client out of the office. "I'll add it to my fee in the bankruptcy matter." [12]

II

About Miss Birdie Goldblatt's appearance there was something of Maxine Elliott with just a dash of Anna Held, and she wore her clothes so well that she could make a blended-Kamchatka near-mink scarf look like Imperial Russian sable. Thus, when Philip Margolius encountered her on the corner of Fifth Avenue and Twenty-first Street his heart fairly jumped in admiration. Nevertheless, he raised his hat with all his accustomed grace, and Miss Goldblatt bowed and smiled in return. [13]

"How d'ye do, Miss Goldblatt," he said. "Ain't it a fine weather?"

"Sure it's fine weather," Miss Goldblatt agreed. "Is that all you stopped me for to tell me it was fine weather?"

"No," Philip said lamely.

"Well, then, I guess I'll be moving on," Miss Goldblatt announced; "because I got a date with Fannie up on Twenty-third Street."

"One minute," Philip cried. "It was about your sister what I wanted to speak to you about."

"What have you got to do with my sister Fannie?" Miss Goldblatt demanded, glaring indignantly at Margolius. [14]

"Why," Philip replied on the spur of the moment, "I got a friend what wants to be introduced to her, a—now—feller in the—now—cloak business."

Miss Goldblatt regarded Philip for one suspicious moment.

"What's his name?" she asked abruptly.

A gentle perspiration broke out on Philip's forehead. He searched his mind for the name of some matrimonially eligible man of his acquaintance, but none suggested itself. Hence, he sparred for time.

"Never mind his name," he said jocularly. "When the time comes I'll tell you his name. He's got it a good business, too, I bet yer." [15]

Miss Goldblatt grew somewhat mollified.

"Why don't you bring him down to the house some night?" she suggested, whereat Philip could not forbear an ironical laugh.

"I suppose your father would be delighted to see me, I suppose. Ain't it?" he said.

"What's he got to do with it?" Miss Goldblatt asked. "Do you think because he's called in them second mortgages that me and Fannie would stand for his being fresh to you if you was to come round to the house?"

"No, I don't," Philip replied; "but just the same, anyhow, he feels sore at me." [16]

"He's got a right to feel sore at you," Miss Goldblatt interrupted. "You come a dozen times to see my sister, and then——"

"That's where you are mistaken," Philip cried; "I come once, the first time, to see your sister, and the other times I come to see *you*."

"Ain't you got a nerve?" Miss Goldblatt exclaimed.

"Why do I got a nerve?" Philip asked. "Miss Goldblatt—Birdie, what's the matter with me, anyway? I'm young yet—I ain't only thirty-two—and I got a good name in the cloak and suit business as a salesman. Ask anybody. I can make it my five thousand a year easy. And supposing I am a foreigner? There's lots of up-to-date American young fellers what couldn't keep you in hairpins, Birdie." [17]

He paused and looked pleadingly at Birdie, who tossed her head in reply.

"Them houses up in the Bronx," he said, "that's a misfortune what could happen anybody. If I got to let 'em go I'll do it. But pshaw! I could make it up what I lost in them houses with my commissions for one good season already."

"Well, my sister Fannie——" Birdie commenced.

"Never mind your sister Fannie," Philip said. "I will look out for her. If you and me can fix it up, Birdie, I give you my word and honour as a gentleman I will fix it up for Fannie a respectable feller with a good business." [18]

He paused for an expression of opinion from Birdie, but none was forthcoming.

"What are you doing to-night?" he asked.

"Fannie and me was——" she began.

"Not Fannie—*you*," he broke in. "Because I was going to suggest if you ain't doing nothing might

we would go to theaytre?"

"Well, sure," Birdie continued. "Fannie and me could go and we wouldn't say nothing to the old man about it."

"Looky here," Philip pleaded, "must Fannie go?"

"Sure she must go," Birdie answered. "Otherwise, if she don't go I won't go."

Philip pondered for a moment.

"Well——" he commenced.

"And why wouldn't it be a good scheme," Birdie went on, "if you was to ring in this other young feller?"

"What young feller?" Philip innocently asked her.

"What young feller!" Birdie exclaimed. "Why, ain't you just told me——"

"Oh, that's right!" Philip cried. "That's a good idee. I'll see if I can fix it."

He stopped short and looked at his watch. "I'll meet you both in front of the Casino at eight o'clock," he declared.

It was five o'clock and he only had a trifle over three hours to discover a man—young if possible, but, in any event, prosperous, who would be willing to conduct to the theatre a lady of uncertain age with a dark moustache—object: matrimony.

"You must excuse me," he said fervently as he shook Birdie's hand in farewell. "I got a lot of work to do this afternoon."

III

On his way to the office of Schindler & Baum, his employers, he was a prey to misgivings of the gloomiest kind.

"I got such a chance of getting a feller for that Fannie like I would never try at all," he murmured to himself; but, as he turned the corner of Nineteenth Street, Fortune, which occasionally favours the brave, brought him into violent contact with a short, stout person proceeding in the opposite direction.

"Why don't you hire it a whole sidewalk for yourself?" Philip began, and then he recognized the stout gentleman.

"Why, hallo, Mr. Feigenbaum!" he cried.

"Hallo yourself, Margolius!" Feigenbaum grunted. "It's a wonder you wouldn't murder me yet, the way you go like a steam engine already."

"Excuse me," Philip said. "Excuse *me*, Mr. Feigenbaum. I didn't see you coming. I got to wear glasses, too."

Mr. Feigenbaum glared at Philip with his left eye, the glare in his right eye being entirely beyond control, since it was fixed and constant as the day it was made.

"What are you trying to do, Margolius?" he asked. "Kid me?"

"Kid you!" Philip repeated. "Why should I want to kid you?"

And then for the first time it occurred to him that not only was One-eye Feigenbaum proprietor of the H. F. Cloak Company and its six stores in the northern-tier counties of Pennsylvania, but that he was also a bachelor. Moreover, a bachelor with one eye and the singularly unprepossessing appearance of Henry Feigenbaum would be just the kind of person to present to Fannie Goldblatt, for Feigenbaum, by reason of his own infirmity, could not cavil at Fannie's black moustache, and as for Fannie—well, Fannie would be glad to take what she could get.

"Come over to Hammersmith's and take a little something, Mr. Feigenbaum," he said. "You and me hasn't had a talk together in a long time."

Feigenbaum followed him across the street and a minute later sat down at a table in Hammersmith's rear café.

"What will you take, Mr. Feigenbaum?" Philip asked as the waiter bent over them solicitously.

"Give me a package of all-tobacco cigarettes," Feigenbaum ordered, "and a rye-bread tongue sandwich."

Philip asked for a cup of coffee.

"Looky here, Feigenbaum," Philip commenced after they had been served, "you and me is known

each other now since way before the Spanish War already, when I made my first trip by Sol Unterberg. Why is it I ain't never sold you a dollar's worth of goods?"

"No, and you never will, Margolius," Feigenbaum said as he licked the crumbs from his fingers; "and I ain't got a thing against you, because I think you're a decent, respectable young feller."

Having thus endorsed the character of his host, Feigenbaum lit a cigarette and grinned amiably.

"But Schindler & Baum got it a good line, Feigenbaum," Philip protested. [25]

"Sure I know they got it a good line," Feigenbaum agreed; "but I ain't much on going to theaytres or eating a bunch of expensive feed. No, Margolius, I like to deal with people what gives their line the benefit of the theaytres and the dinners."

"What you mean?" Philip cried.

"I mean Ellis Block, from Saracuse, New York, shows me a line of capes he bought it from you, Margolius," Feigenbaum continued, "which the precisely same thing I got it down on Division Street at a dollar less apiece from a feller what never was inside of so much as a moving pictures, with or without a customer, Margolius, and so he don't got to add the tickets to the price of the garments." [26]

Philip washed down a tart rejoinder with a huge gulp.

"Not that I don't go to theaytre once in a while," Feigenbaum went on; "but when I go I pay for it myself."

Philip nodded.

"Supposing I should tell you, Mr. Feigenbaum," he said, "that I didn't want to sell you no goods."

"Well, if you didn't want to sell me no goods," Feigenbaum replied with a twinkle in his eye, "the best thing to do would be to take me to a show, because then I sure wouldn't buy no goods from you."

"All right," Philip replied; "come and take dinner with me and we'll go and see the Lily of Constantinople."

"I wouldn't take dinner with you because I got to see a feller on East Broadway at six o'clock," Feigenbaum said; "but if you are willing I will meet you in front of the Casino at eight o'clock." [27]

"Sure I'm willing," Philip said; "otherwise, I wouldn't of asked you."

"All right," Feigenbaum said, rising from his chair. "Eight o'clock, look for me in front of the Casino."

At seven o'clock Philip alighted from a Forty-second Street car. He strode into a fashionable hotel and handed ten dollars to the clerk in the theatre-ticket office.

"Give me four orchestra seats for the Casino for to-night," he said.

Thence he proceeded to the grill-room and consumed a tenderloin steak, hashed-brown potatoes, a mixed salad, pastry and coffee, and washed down the whole with a pint of ebullient refreshment. [28]

Finally, he lit a fine cigar and paid the check, after which he took a small morocco-bound book from his waistcoat pocket. He turned to the last page of a series headed, "Schindler & Baum, Expense Account," and made the following entry:

"To entertainment of Henry Feigenbaum, \$15.00."

IV

The acquaintance of Henry Feigenbaum with Miss Fannie Goldblatt could hardly be called love at first sight.

"Mr. Feigenbaum," Philip said when they all met in front of the Casino, "this is a friend of mine by the name Miss Fannie Goldblatt; also, her sister Birdie." [29]

The two ladies bowed, but Feigenbaum only blinked at them with unaffected astonishment.

"All right," he stammered at last. "All right, Margolius. Let's go inside."

During the short period before the rising of the curtain Birdie and Philip conversed in undertones, while Fannie did her best to interest her companion.

"Ain't it a pretty theaytre?" she said by way of prelude.

Feigenbaum glanced around him and grunted: "Huh, huh."

"You're in the same line as Mr. Margolius, ain't you?" Fannie continued. [30]

"Cloaks and suits, retail," Feigenbaum replied. "I got six stores in the northern-tier counties of Pennsylvania."

"Then you don't live in New York?" Fannie hazarded.

"No, I live in Pennsylvania," said Feigenbaum. "But I used to live in New York when I was a young feller."

"Why, you're a young feller yet," Fannie suggested coyly.

"Me, I ain't so young no longer," Feigenbaum answered. "At my age I could have it already grandchildren old enough to bring in a couple dollars a week selling papers."

"I believe you should bring up children sensible, too," Miss Goldblatt agreed heartily. "If I had children I would teach 'em they should earn and save money young." [31]

"So?" Feigenbaum said.

"Sure," Miss Goldblatt continued. "I always say that if you make children to be economical when they're young they're economical when they grow up. My poor mother, *selig*, always impressed it on me I should be economical, and so I am economical."

"Is that so?" Feigenbaum gasped. He felt that he was a drowning man and looked around him for floating straws.

"I ain't so helpless like some other ladies that I know," Miss Goldblatt went on. "My poor mother, *selig*, was a good housekeeper, and she taught me everything what she knew. She used to say: 'The feller what gets my Fannie won't never die of the indigestion.'" [32]

Feigenbaum nodded gloomily.

"Did you ever suffer from stummick trouble, Mr. Feigenbaum?" she asked.

The composer of the Lily of Constantinople came to Feigenbaum's assistance by scoring the opening measure of the overture for brass and woodwind with heavy passages for the *cassa grande* and cymbals, and when the uproar gave way to a simple rendition of the song hit of the show, My Bosphorus Queen, Fannie surrendered herself to the spell of its marked rhythm and forgot to press Feigenbaum for an answer.

During the entire first act Feigenbaum fixed his eyes on the stage, and as soon as the curtain fell for the first *entr'acte* he uttered no word of apology, but made a hurried exit to the smoking-room. There Philip found him a moment later. [33]

"Well, Feigenbaum," Philip cried, "how do you like the show?"

"The show is all right, Margolius," Feigenbaum replied, "but the next time you are going to steer me up against something like that Miss Fannie Goldblatt, Margolius, let me know. That's all."

"Why, what's the matter with her?" Philip asked.

"There's nothing the matter with her," Feigenbaum said, "only she reminds me of a feller what used to work by me up in Sylvania by the name Pincus Lurie. I had to get rid of him because trade fell off on account the children complained he made snoots at 'em to scare 'em. He didn't make no snoots, Margolius; that was his natural face what he got it, the same like Miss Goldblatt." [34]

"You don't know that girl, Feigenbaum," Philip replied. "That girl's got a heart. Oi! what a heart that girl got—like a watermelon."

"I know, Margolius," Feigenbaum replied; "but she also got it a moustache like a dago. Why don't she shave herself, Margolius?"

"Why don't you ask her yourself?" Philip said coldly.

"I don't know her good enough yet," Feigenbaum retorted, "and how it looks now I ain't never going to." [35]

But the way to Feigenbaum's heart lay through his stomach just as accurately as it avoided his pocketbook, so that when Miss Fannie Goldblatt suggested, after the final curtain, that they all go up to One Hundred and Eighteenth Street and have a supper at home instead of at a restaurant, she made a dent in Feigenbaum's affections.

"Looky here, Birdie," Philip whispered, "how about the old man?"

"Don't you worry about him," she said. "He went to Brownsville to play auction pinocle, and I bet yer he don't get home till five o'clock."

Half an hour afterward they sat around the dining-room table, and Fannie helped Feigenbaum to a piece of *gefüllte Fische*, a delicacy which never appears on the menus of rural hotels in Pennsylvania. At the first mouthful Feigenbaum looked at Fannie Goldblatt, and while, to be sure, she did have some hair on her upper lip, it was only a slight down which at the second mouthful became still slighter. Indeed, after the third slice of fish Feigenbaum was ready to declare it to be a most becoming down, very bewitching and Spanish in appearance. [36]

Following the *gefüllte Fische* came a species of *tripe farcie*, the whole being washed down with coffee and topped off with delicious cake—cake which could be adequately described only by kissing the tips of one's fingers. [37]

"After all, Margolius," Feigenbaum commented as he lit an all-tobacco cigarette on their way down the front stoop of the Goldblatt residence—"after all, she ain't such a bad-looking woman. I seen it lots worser, Margolius."

"That's nothing what we got it this evening," Philip said as they started off for the subway; "you should taste the *Kreploch* what that girl makes it."

"I'm going to," Feigenbaum said; "they asked me I should come to dinner to-morrow night."

But Philip knew from his own experience that the glamour engendered of Fannie's *gefüllte Fische* would soon be dispelled, and then Henry Feigenbaum would hie him to the northern-tier counties of Pennsylvania, leaving Philip's love affair in worse condition than before. [38]

"I got to cinch it," he murmured to himself as he went downtown next morning, "before that one-eyed feller skips out on me."

As soon as he reached Schindler & Baum's office he rang up the Goldblatt house, assuming for that purpose a high tenor voice lest Goldblatt himself answer the 'phone; but again fortune favoured him, and it was Birdie who responded.

"Birdie," he said, "do me the favour and come to lunch with me at the Park Row Building."

"Why so far downtown?" Birdie asked. [39]

"Reasons I got it," Philip replied. "Come at twelve o'clock at the Park Row Building, sure."

Thus it happened at quarter past twelve Philip and Birdie sat at a table in the Park Row Building in such earnest conversation that a tureenful of soup remained unserved before them at a temperature of seventy degrees.

"An engagement party ain't nothing to me," Philip cried. "What do I care for such things?"

"But it's something to me, Philip," Birdie declared. "Think of the presents, Philip."

"Presents!" Philip repeated. "What for presents would we get it? Bargains in cut glass what would make our flat look like a five-and-ten-cent store." [40]

"But Popper would be crazy if I did a thing like that," Birdie protested. "And, besides, I ain't got no clothes."

"Why, you look like a—like a—now—queen," Philip exclaimed. "And, anyhow, what would you want new clothes for when you got this?"

He dug his hand into his trousers pocket and produced a ring containing a solitaire diamond as big as a hazelnut.

"I took a chance on the size already," he said, "but I bet yer it will fit like it was tailor-made."

He seized her left hand in both of his and passed the ring on to the third finger, while Birdie's cheeks were aglow and her eyes rivalled the brilliancy of the ring itself. [41]

"But——" she began.

"But nothing," Philip interrupted. He rose from his seat and helped Birdie on with her coat. "Waiter," he called, "we come right back here. We are just going over to Jersey for a couple of hours."

He pressed a bill into the waiter's hand.

"Send that soup to the kitchen," he said, "and tell 'em to serve it hot when we come back."

Two hours later they reappeared at the same table, and the grinning waiter immediately went off to the kitchen. When he returned he bore a glass bowl containing a napkin elaborately folded in the shape of a flower, and inside the napkin was a little heap of rice. [42]

V

There was something about Mr. Elkan Goldblatt's face that would make the most hardy real-estater pause before entering into a business deal with him. He had an eye like a poll-parrot with its concomitant beak, and his closely cropped beard and moustache accentuated rather than mollified his harsh appearance.

"Such fellers I wouldn't have no more mercy on than a dawg," he said to his attorney, Eleazer Levy. "Oncet already I practically kicked him out from my house, and then he's got the nerve to come back, and two weeks ago he brings yet a feller with him and makes bluffs that the feller wants to marry my daughter Fannie." [43]

"He was just trying to get you to extend those second mortgages, I suppose," Levy said.

"Sure he was, because this here feller—a homely looking feller with one eye, mind you—says he got to go back to Pennsylvania where his stores is, and we ain't seen nor heard a word from him since," Goldblatt concluded. "And him eating two meals a day by us for ten days yet!"

Eleazer Levy clucked with his tongue in sympathy.

"But, anyhow, now I want we should go right straight ahead and foreclose on Margolius," Goldblatt continued. "Don't lose no time, Levy, and get out the papers to-day. How long would it be before we can sell the property?" [44]

"Six weeks," said Levy, "if I serve the summons to-morrow. I put in a search some days ago, and the feller ain't got a judgment against him."

"So much the better," Goldblatt commented. "The property won't bring the amount of the first mortgage and I suppose I got to buy it in. Then I will get deficiency judgments against that feller, and I'll make him sorry he ever tried any monkey business with me and my daughters. Why, that feller actually turned my own children against me, Levy."

"Is that so?" Levy murmured.

"My Birdie abused me, I assure you, like I was a pickpocket when I says I would foreclose on him," Goldblatt replied. "And even my Fannie, although she is all broke up about that one-eyed feller, she says I should give the young feller a show. What d'ye think of that, hey?" [45]

"Terrible!" Levy replied. "A feller like that deserves all he gets, and you can bet yer sweet life he won't have any let-up from me, Mr. Goldblatt."

Levy was as good as his word, for that very afternoon he filed a notice of pendency of action against the Heidenfeld Avenue property, and the next morning, as Philip left his house, a clerk from Levy's office served him with four copies of the summons and complaint in the foreclosure suit of Goldblatt vs. Margolius, actions numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4. But Philip stuffed them into his pocket unread; he had other and more poignant woes than foreclosure suits. Only ten days wed, and he was denied even the sight of his wife longer than five minutes; for she was not endangering future prospects in favour of present happiness. [46]

"We could, anyway, get the furniture out of him," she argued when she saw Philip that day, "and, maybe, a couple of thousand dollars."

"I don't care a pinch of snuff for his furniture," Philip cried. "I will buy the furniture myself."

"But I can't leave Fannie just now," she declared; "she's all broke up about that feller." [47]

"What about me?" Philip protested. "Ain't I broke up, too?"

"So long you waited, you could wait a little longer yet," she replied; "but poor Fannie, you got no idea how that girl takes on."

"She shouldn't worry," Philip cried. "I promised I would fix her up, and I will fix her up."

Daily the same scene was enacted at the Goldblatt residence on One Hundred and Eighteenth Street, and daily Birdie refused to forsake her sister, until six weeks had elapsed.

"But, Birdie," Philip announced for the hundredth time, "so sure as you stand there I couldn't keep this up no longer. I will either go crazy or either I will jump in the river." [48]

Birdie patted him on the back.

"Don't think about it," she said. "Take your mind off it. To-day your property gets sold and Popper says he will be down at the salesroom at twelve o'clock."

"Let 'em sell it," Philip cried; "I don't care."

He turned away after a hurried embrace, and was proceeding down Lenox Avenue toward the subway when Marks Henochstein, the real-estate broker, encountered him. Marks clutched him by the shoulder.

"Well, Philip," Henochstein cried, "you are in luck at last."

"In luck!" Philip exclaimed bitterly. "A dawg shouldn't have the luck what I got it."

"Well, if you don't call it lucky," Henochstein continued, "what would you call it lucky?" [49]

"Excuse me, Henochstein," said Philip; "I ain't good at guessing puzzles. What am I lucky for?"

"Why, ain't you heard it yet?"

"I ain't heard nothing," Philip replied. "Do me the favour and don't keep me on suspension."

"Why, the city is going to widen Two Hundred and Sixty-fourth Street in front of them houses of yours, and you will get damages. Oi! what damages you will get!"

Philip stared blankly at his informant for one hesitating moment; then he dashed off for the nearest subway station.

Half an hour later he sat in the office of Henry D. Feldman and gasped out his story.

[50]

"In three quarters of an hour, Mr. Feldman," he cried, "that property will be sold, and, if it is, the feller what buys it will get damages for the street opening and I will get nix."

"This is a fine time to tell me about it, Margolius," Feldman said. "You came in here six weeks ago and asked me to help you out, and I haven't seen you since. The time to do something was six weeks ago. Why didn't you come back to see me before the suit was started?"

"Because I was busy, Mr. Feldman," Margolius replied. "A whole lot of things happened to me about that time. In the first place, the next day after I saw you I got married."

[51]

"What!" Feldman exclaimed, "you got married? Well, Margolius, you recovered pretty quickly from that affair with Birdie Goldblatt."

Margolius stared gloomily at his attorney.

"What d'ye mean I recover from it?" he echoed. "I didn't recover from it, Mr. Feldman. That's who I married—Miss Birdie Goldblatt."

Feldman sat back in his chair.

"Well, of all the unfatherly brutes," he said, "to shut down on his own daughter's husband!"

"Hold on there, Mr. Feldman," Philip interrupted; "he don't know he's shutting down on his daughter's husband, because we was secretly married, y' understand? And even to-day yet the old man don't know nothing about it."

[52]

"What do you mean?" Feldman asked. "Why wouldn't he know his own daughter was married?"

"Because she's living home yet," Philip replied, and "I can't persuade her to go housekeeping, neither."

Feldman frowned for a moment and then he struck the desk with his fist.

"By jiminy!" he shouted, "you've got the old man by the whiskers!"

It was now Philip's turn to ask what Feldman meant.

"Why," the latter explained, "your wife's inchoate right of dower is still outstanding."

[53]

"That's where you make a big mistake, Mr. Feldman," Philip corrected. "My Birdie is a neat dresser and never so much as a pin out of place."

"You don't understand," Feldman continued. "As soon as Birdie and you got married she took an interest in your property."

"Sure she took an interest in my property," Philip assented. "Why, if it wouldn't be for her I wouldn't know nothing about this here sale to-day."

"But I mean that as soon as she married you she became vested with the right to receive the rents of a third of that property during her lifetime as soon as you died," said Feldman.

[54]

"Well, we won't worry about that," Philip said with a deprecatory wave of his hand, "because, in the first place, that property is pretty near vacant and don't bring in enough rents to pay the taxes, and, in the second place, I'm still good and healthy and I wouldn't die for a long time yet."

"Oh, what's the use!" Feldman cried. "What I mean is that they can't foreclose those second mortgages unless they make Birdie a party to the suit and serve her with the summons; so, all you have to do to stop the sale is to go down to the salesroom and, when the auctioneer starts to ask for bids, get up and tell 'em all about it. Why, they'll have to begin their suit all over again."

[55]

"But," Philip protested, "if I tell 'em all about it the old man will throw Birdie out of the house."

"Hold on!" Feldman broke in. "You mustn't tell them you're married to Birdie. Just tell them you're married, and let them find out your wife's name for themselves. Although, to be sure, that won't take long, for the record of marriage licenses at the city hall will show it."

"License nothing!" Philip cried. "We didn't get no license at the city hall. We got married by a justice of the peace in Jersey City."

"Fine!" Feldman exclaimed, his professional ethics thrown to the winds. "That'll keep 'em guessing as long as you want."

[56]

"All I want is a month, and by that time I can raise the money and fix the whole thing up," Margolius replied.

Feldman looked at his watch.

"Chase yourself," he said; "it's a quarter of twelve, and the foreclosure sale begins at noon."

On the rostrum of an auctioneer in the Vesey Street salesroom stood Eleazer Levy in weighty conversation with Miles M. Scully, the referee in foreclosure. Scully's brow was furrowed into a thousand earned wrinkles, and the little knot of real-estate brokers who regularly attend foreclosure sales gazed reverently on the two advocates.

[57]

"And here was this guy," Levy concluded, "with nothing but a pair of sixes all the time."

"But in a table-stakes game," Scully murmured, "you make a sight more if you don't butt into every pot. If you think you're topped lay 'em down. That's what I do, and it pays."

They were waiting for the auctioneer to appear, and Goldblatt hung around the edge of the crowd and gazed anxiously at them. He had heard that morning of the proposed street widening and wanted the sale to go through without a hitch. At length the auctioneer arrived and the clerk read off the notice of sale in a monotonous gabble just as Philip elbowed his way through the crowd.

[58]

"Now, then, gentlemen," the auctioneer announced pompously, "the four parcels will be sold separately. Each is subject to a first mortgage of twenty thousand dollars and is otherwise free and clear except the taxes. The amount of taxes is——"

"Hey, there!" Philip cried at this juncture. "I got something to say, too."

The auctioneer paused and fixed Philip with what was intended to be a withering look.

"Put that man out!" the auctioneer called to one of the attendants.

"You could put me out," Philip yelled, "if you want to, but you couldn't put my wife out, because she ain't been served with the summons and complaint in the first place, and she ain't here in the second place."

[59]

Goldblatt turned pale and started for the rostrum, while the auctioneer motioned the attendant to hold off for a minute.

"Is he a married man?" the auctioneer asked Levy.

"He's a faker," Levy replied. "Go ahead with the sale."

"Am I a faker?" Philip yelled, holding up his left hand. "Well, look at that there ring."

He pulled it off with an effort and handed it to the auctioneer.

"Look inside," he said. And, sure enough, the inner side bore the inscription: "B. G. to P. M., 10-20-'09." Goldblatt looked at it, too; but B. G. meant nothing to him and he handed it back to the auctioneer.

[60]

"That's only a scheme what he's trying to work it," he said. "Give him back the ring and go ahead with the sale."

"One moment," said Miles M. Scully. "I'm the referee here, and I ain't going to take no such chance as that. I'm going to adjoin this here sale one week and investigate what this here guy says in the meantime."

Forthwith, the auctioneer announced a week's adjournment of the four sales, and Philip resumed his wedding ring with a parting diabolical grin at Goldblatt, and left the auction-room. He went to the nearest telephone pay station and rang up the Goldblatt residence, but for over half an hour he received only Central's assurance that as soon as there was an answer she would call him.

[61]

"But, Central," he protested, "there's got to be somebody there. They can't all be out."

And Philip was right. There were two people sitting in the front parlour of the Goldblatt residence, and another and more interested person stooped in the back parlour, with her ear to the crack of the sliding doors which divided the two rooms. The telephone bell trilled impatiently at brief intervals, but all three were oblivious to its appeal; for the two persons in the front parlour were engaged in conversation of an earnest character, and the person in the rear room would not have missed a word of it for all the telephones in the world.

[62]

"Yes, Fannie," said one of the two persons, "I come back to you, anyhow, and I come back for good."

He placed his arms around her ample waist.

"I assure you, Fannie," he concluded, "them dollar-a-day American-plan hotels in the northern-tier counties is nothing but poison to a feller. I am pretty near starved."

"Why didn't you say so at first?" Fannie replied, rising from the couch where she had been sitting with Feigenbaum. "I got some fine *gefüllte Fische* in the ice-box."

Whereupon Birdie answered the 'phone.

[63]

"Hallo!" came a voice from the other end of the wire. "Where was you all the time? I got some good news for you."

"I've got some good news for you, too," Birdie replied. "Fannie and Mr. Feigenbaum are engaged."

VII

Elkan Goldblatt usually arrived home at seven o'clock to find his dinner smoking on the table. His daughter Fannie always attended to the carving, but on the night of the foreclosure sale it was Birdie who presided at the head of the board.

"Where's Fannie?" he asked.

"She went out to dinner," Birdie explained.

[64]

Elkan nodded and lapsed into gloomy silence.

"What's the matter now?" Birdie inquired.

"That lowlife Margolius," he said, "what do you think from that loafer? He goes to work and gets married."

Birdie gasped and turned white, all of which her father mistook for symptoms of astonishment.

"Ain't that a loafer for you?" he continued. "All the time he hangs around here, and then he goes to work and gets married."

"Who did he marry?" Birdie asked innocently.

"A question!" Goldblatt exclaimed. "Who can tell it who a lowlife like him would marry?"

Birdie tossed her head.

[65]

"He ain't no lowlife just because he gets married," she retorted. "What's more, any girl would be glad to get a good-looking, decent young feller like Philip Margolius."

Goldblatt laid down his knife and fork.

"You are crazy in the head," he said. "Why should you stick up for a young feller what comes around here and upsets my whole house? *You* I don't care about, because you could always get a husband; but Fannie—that's different again. It ain't enough for that loafer that he disappointed her himself, but he also got to bring around here that one-eyed feller—another such lowlife as Margolius—and he also disappoints Fannie. That feller Margolius is a dawg, Birdie, believe me."

[66]

Birdie rose from her seat and threw her napkin on to the floor.

"I won't sit here and listen to such talk," she cried and ran out of the room. For a moment Goldblatt essayed to finish his dinner, and then he, too, rose and followed Birdie. He found her weeping on the parlour lounge.

"Birdie!" he cried. "Birdiechen, what are you taking on so for?"

"I won't have you say such things about Ph-Ph—Feigenbaum," she sobbed.

"Why not?" he asked.

"Because Mr. Feigenbaum came here this afternoon and proposed to Fannie," she explained to her father, "and they're downtown now getting the ring from a friend of his what keeps a jewellery store on Grand Street."

[67]

Goldblatt sat down heavily on the lounge and wiped his forehead. For ten minutes he sat motionless in the shrouded gloom of that front parlour before he could realize his daughter's good fortune.

"After all," he said finally, "when a feller's got six stores you could easy excuse him one eye."

"You ought to be ashamed to talk that way," Birdie cried. "Mr. Feigenbaum is a decent business man, and if it wouldn't be for Philip—Philip Margolius—Fannie would of lived and died an old maid."

At this juncture came a ring at the bell and the sound of voices in the hall. It was Fannie and her fiancé, who had returned from Grand Street, and the next moment Goldblatt clasped his affianced daughter in his arms and bestowed on her great kisses that fairly resounded down the block. Next he grabbed Feigenbaum's hand and shook it up and down.

[68]

"The happiest day what I ever lived," he cried, slapping his new son-in-law on the back. For almost a quarter of an hour Fannie and Birdie mingled their tears with their father's embraces, and in the midst of the excitement the bell rang again. When the maid opened the street door some one inquired for Mr. Goldblatt in a barytone voice whose familiar timbre chilled into silence the joyful uproar.

[69]

"Margolius!" Goldblatt hissed. He started for the hall with blood in his eye, when Feigenbaum seized him by the arm.

"Mr. Goldblatt," he said, "for my sake don't make no fuss with Margolius. He's a friend of mine, and if it wouldn't be for him Fannie and me would never of met already."

As Philip entered the darkened front parlour there was a silence so profound that he believed the room to be empty.

"Excuse me," he cried when he recognized the assembled company. "I thought Mr. Goldblatt was alone."

He turned to his father-in-law.

[70]

"Mr. Goldblatt, could I speak to you for a minute by yourself?" he asked.

Goldblatt coughed impressively.

"Margolius," he announced, "if you got anything to say to me, say it right here. I ain't got no private business with you."

"All right," Philip replied cheerfully. "I come here to ask you how much would you take it for them second mortgages what you hold on my Two Hundred and Sixty-fourth Street property?"

Goldblatt waved his hand haughtily.

"You come to the wrong party, Margolius," he said. "Because I just made up my mind to something. I made up my mind that because Mr. Feigenbaum is engaged to my Fannie I will give her them mortgages as a marriage portion. So you should ask Feigenbaum that question, not me."

[71]

While Philip turned pale at this announcement, Feigenbaum grew positively crimson.

"Looky here, Goldblatt," he protested to his proposed father-in-law; "I don't want you should unload them second mortgages on me."

"What's the matter with you, Feigenbaum?" Goldblatt retorted. "Them second mortgages is as good as gold. Only thing is they got to be foreclosed against Margolius' wife."

"His wife!" Feigenbaum and Fannie cried with one voice, for Birdie had kept her secret well.

[72]

"Yes," Goldblatt replied, "his wife. That lowlife has got a wife. But who or what she is nobody don't know."

"Hold on, Goldblatt!" cried a voice from the hall. "There's somebody that does know."

The next moment a short, stout person entered the parlour. It was Eleazer Levy, who had rung the bell and had been admitted to the house unnoticed.

"Yes, Margolius," he said, "you thought you could fool an old practitioner like me. I seen you didn't get out no license in this county, so I hiked over to Jersey City and, sure enough, I spotted you."

He turned to Birdie.

"Mrs. Margolius," he said, "here's four copies of the supplemental summons and amended complaint in the foreclosure suits of Goldblatt vs. Margolius, actions numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4."

[73]

"What do you mean?" Goldblatt cried.

"I mean," Levy answered, "that your daughter Birdie married Philip Margolius in Jersey City on the twentieth of October last."

Elkan Goldblatt collapsed in the nearest chair, while Feigenbaum ran downstairs for the bottle of schnapps. At length Goldblatt was restored.

"So, Margolius," he croaked, "you are a thief, too. You steal my daughter on me?"

"That ain't here nor there," Margolius said with his arm around Birdie's waist and her head on his shoulder. "That ain't here nor there. How much will you take it now for a satisfaction piece of them mortgages?"

[74]

Goldblatt looked at Feigenbaum, who returned his glance unmoved.

"For a marriage portion," Feigenbaum declared, "second mortgages is nix."

There was an embarrassing silence, and finally Goldblatt cleared his throat.

"All right, Margolius," he said; "you married my Birdie, and I suppose I got to stand for it, so you can take them four second mortgages and keep 'em as a marriage portion yourself."

Birdie seized her father around the neck and kissed him on the ear.

[75]

"Then we are forgiven? Ain't it?" she cried.

"Sure you are forgiven," Goldblatt said. "Only, Margolius has got to pay Levy's costs and disbursements."

"And the referee's fees and the auctioneer's fees," Levy added.

"I am agreeable," Philip replied.

Levy turned and beamed a benediction on his client's reunited family. "I wish you all joy," he said.



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[77]

Transcriber Notes:

Obvious punctuation errors have been repaired.

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