Transcript Supplement

CHESTERTOWN, MARYLAND, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 27, 1923

The JOY of LIVING

By SIDNEY GOWING

Illustrations by Ellsworth Young

Copyright 1922 by Sidney Gowing

CHAPTER XXIII

Jack the Climber.

Mr. William Spencer, after arriving in the fallow-field where stood the clump of bushes that hid the broken Indian motorcycle, made a rapid survey of the situation. He resumed his task of quartering the ground for tracks.

This, being unfruitful, occupied but a little time. He gave it up and went forward again, dipping down into the crag-pits beyond.

Billy had formed upon the factors already in his possession a theory which appealed to him strongly. He hoped to prove it. But the hope was very slender.

"If I'd only got wise to this two days ago," he said gloomily, "I might have done something. But there's no saying how old the tracks are. And there's so little time."

He looked about him thoughtfully. The area of the crag-pits covered some twenty acres; a wide bottom of red sand studded here and there with tangled bushes. The place was shut in by low red bluffs of coraline crag, with a few gaps in them through which winding paths sloped up to the higher ground.

"The soil tells me nothing," said Billy to himself; "too loose and wind-blown to hold a trail more than two days. But there's five—maybe six caves, most of them too plain and easy—anybody can see 'em. Still, I'll go over them. My own first. I guess there's nobody could have found that."

He wound his way through the bushes to the screen of brambles that masked the cave where Aimee had taken refuge on the night of the burglary, and after scanning the ground near its approaches, pushed the briars aside and entered cautiously. The cave was empty—save for that super-motorcycle, the Flying Sphinx, which stood waiting in patient dumbness at the far end, weeping slow tears of oil into a little pool beneath the silencer.

Billy laid a hand upon his Arab steed, and sighed. Then his face brightened amazingly.

"Your time'll come again—and mighty soon!" he said with affection. He turned, and left the cave. It was holy ground to him now; for one night it had been Aimee's refuge.

He passed farther along the pits, inspecting a second and much more obvious cave on his way. He was just about to emerge from it when something caught Billy's eye, on the far side of the pits. He shrank back quickly into the cave's mouth and flattened himself against the wall, watching.

The object which gave him pause was very small, and fully four hundred yards distant. But it showed against the sky-line and to the eye of a frontiersman anything that cuts the sky-line, and that moves ever so little, is at once apparent. What Billy saw was the upper part of a head, peering over the edge of the little cliff on the opposite side.

A pair of shoulders followed the head, and their owner was obviously watching the pit with a desire to discover whether the coast was clear. There was a curious furtiveness about the figure that presently appeared, and dropping down the cliff by a steep path reached the lower ground and crossed it at a run.

Billy crept from the gloom of the cave's mouth and, crouching behind the briar bushes, peered through them



The Running Figure Was a Woman.

eagerly. The running figure was a woman—a small woman clad in a khaki-colored dust-cloak, carrying a little red bundle. She ran with a stooping gait, bending low as she threaded between the bushes. She reached a point against the cliff on Billy's side, three hundred yards farther along, close by a tangle of undergrowth. There she halted, and, looking round her quickly, disappeared with extreme suddenness.

"Great Christopher!" said Billy.

He rose to his knees, staring at the place where she had vanished. His eyes were bright, his face had lit up.

"I was right," he said in a hushed tone. "But, gee! I never thought of this."

He rose, as if to follow, but on second thoughts subsided again and waited. He remained there fully ten minutes, when the figure reappeared, and hurried along the pit bottom in his direction.

Billy wormed himself hurriedly under the tangled briars at some cost to his skin. The woman passed him within seventy yards, walking rapidly. She was no longer carrying the bundle.

When she had passed, Billy peeped after her. Though he could not see her face, he had not the slightest doubt who she was. She disappeared round the bend of the pits.

Billy extricated himself cautiously from the bush and waited for some time on his knees, staring in the direction she had taken. There was nothing more to be seen of her. Then, springing to his feet he sprinted to the spot where she had first vanished with the bundle.

The bushes partially cloaked the mouth of one of the many crag caves; the entrance was not difficult to find when one was close to it. Billy walked in without hesitation. He found precisely what he expected.

On the floor of the cave, stretched upon a couch of dry bracken, lay a man. He was not a spectacle which in any way gladdened the eye.

He was big and lusty of limb; what little could be seen of his face through a week's growth of brown stubble was haggard. His beak of a nose jutted between two fierce deep-sunk eyes. One of his legs was extended, and swathed from foot to knee in dripping-wet calico bandages that looked as if they had been ripped from a woman's garment.

Billy found himself looking down the muzzle of a small repeating pistol, held in a hairy but very steady fist.

"Stop right where you are," said the occupant of the cave, reclining on one elbow. "Don't move a step forward, nor yet a step back. Get me?"

Billy stopped obediently. He calculated the distance between them to be a dozen feet; there was no likelihood of capturing the pistol before the bullet struck him. The eyes of the man showed that he meant business. He was in fact, less like a man than a crippled wolf.

"Jack the Climber," said Billy blandly, "I am pleased to meet you. I've been looking for you quite a while."

"Don't give me that fool name!" snarled the caveman. "My name is Jake."

"Anything to oblige. Mr. Jake, there's the little matter of the Jervaulx burglary against you, among others."

"What are you givin' me!" retorted Jake.

"The bluff doesn't go," said Billy. "Your motorcycle's yonder in the clay pit. All the cards are out."

The man's face twitched.

"Are you the police?"

"No," said Billy.

Jake stared at the tall form in front of him, and emitted a startled oath.

"I b'lieve you're the guy that slugged me, last Saturday night," he said.

"Quite correct."

"You're on your own, eh?" Jake's head craned forward, his eyes on Billy's face. "And alone, I guess!"

"Do you take me for a fool?" said Billy calmly.

The man shivered. The expression in his eyes was dreadful.

"See here!" he said sullenly. "You've got me set. I can't move. I'm up against it. I know they'll pull me. Well, I'll take my dose. I'll throw my hand in!"

"Wise of you."

"But," said Jake with devilish ferocity, "I've got you, too." He raised one knee, and rested his pistol hand on it. "If I give up to you, there's somethin' I'm goin' to have you do first. You'll take my terms an' do what I ask—or I'll drop you, right there and now."

There was not the faintest doubt but that he meant what he said. A glance into his eyes told the listener that.

"Nothing doing," said Billy quietly. "I don't take orders from a malefactor. Least of all at the point of a gun."

"Then," said Jake thickly, "you're cold meat. I guess it's the best way. It gives me a chance yet."

"They don't electrocute in this country," said Billy, "they hang. But they do it very efficiently. You can shoot me in the back though, if you want to. I'm going to see about your exit."

He turned deliberately and walked to the mouth of the cave. Jake's finger trembled on the trigger.

"Come back!" he said hoarsely.

There was something so broken and piteous in the tone, that Billy turned his head. Jake flung the pistol toward him; it fell on the sand at Billy's feet, and he picked it up.

"I can't get you with a gun," gasped Jake, "but listen to what I got to say, if you're a man! For God's sake, listen!"

And Billy listened.

* * * * * * *

Some minutes later Billy stepped out of the cave into the sunlight. He was looking unusually grave, his lips were tight set; his eyes were positively harried. He walked a few steps, muttering to himself. He started as a voice called him excitedly by name, and he was aware of Monsieur de Jussac running toward him.

"Spencer!" he cried. "I have been looking for you everywhere. Where the devil have you been? The police have inquired for you at the abbey, and I think they are not far behind. I thought it well to come and warn you."

"The police?"

Bertrand turned round sharply. He permitted himself a military expression that would not pass the censor.

"And here they are!" he said, with a gesture of despair.

The helmet of Constable Polson appeared on the brink of the opposite cliff, about the same time as Panke's peaked cap obtruded itself over the one behind them, and the felt hat of Inspector Arkwright hove in sight among the bramble bushes below. In a very short time all three men were in the pit, closing strategically upon Billy and Bertrand.

"I don't think," murmured Billy, "that I ever knew policemen arrive so—so—what's the word?"

"A propos," said the Vicomte grimly, twisting his mustache.

"Thanks. That's it."

"Is there anything I can do?"

"Thanks again, but I think not. We'll see how they play the hand."

"That's him—the young one!" exclaimed Panke, as the three approached. Inspector Arkwright walked up to Billy, and addressed him by name.

"William Spencer?"

"That same bird," replied Billy pleasantly.

"And an admirable chauffeur," murmured de Jussac. "He drives like the Angel of Death."

Arkwright's cold gray eye swiveled upon the speaker.

"Who are you, and what are you doing here?"

"The Vicomte de Jussac, at your service. A guest at the abbey. Knowing Spencer was here, I came to inform him he was wanted."

"Oh. All right, sir. He's certainly wanted." The inspector turned to Billy. "Come along, my lad. We are overdue at Stanhoe police station."

"Does that mean I'm arrested?"

The inspector looked at him searchingly.

"That will depend on circumstances. Have you any objection to accompanying me?"

"I've no objection to anything. This is my afternoon off. But may I take it you are looking for the enterprising fellow who burgled the abbey?"

"I include that among my activities," said Arkwright sardonically.

"Then this is your lucky day. He's in the cave there."

"In the—cave?" said Arkwright, staring.

"If you'll step this way," said Billy, "I'll show you."

He turned toward the bushes. Arkwright, after a moment's hesitation, accompanied him, and motioned to Inspector Panke to follow. Bertrand brought up the rear. Billy led them into the cave.

Jake, prostrate on his couch of bracken, greeted them with a sullen stare. Inspector Arkwright looked at him—at the bandaged leg, the stubble-covered face, and deep-set eyes. The handkerchief with the broken food was no longer visible.

"That's your man," said Billy, "known to the popular press as Jack the Climber; but I gather he prefers to be called Jake—I think we ought to humor him so far. His motor-



"See If He's Shamming," Said Arkwright.

cycle is in the clay pit up the slope. His leg is rather badly hurt."

"See if he's shamming," said Arkwright briefly to Panke.

"Do I look as if I was shamming, you gazaboo!" growled Jake.

He certainly did not. Inspector Arkwright put a question to him, which Jake did not answer; nor did he look at the inspector—his eyes were fixed on Billy. Not a word of reply would the captive vouchsafe to any of Arkwright's queries. Billy took the Vicomte by the arm, led him outside, and drew a long breath.

"Got a cigarette?" he said anxiously. "I gave my list one to Jake."

Bertrand produced his case.

"But what a triumph!" he said with a dazed air.

"It's not the sort I enjoy," replied Billy, "but I had to see it through."

The two inspectors emerged.

"Panke," said Arkwright, "there's a gate in the field-fence just up there, I think. Will you and Polson lift it off its hinges and bring it here? We must get the man out; he can't walk." He turned abruptly to Billy. "And now—will you explain, Mr. Spencer?"

"Sure," said Billy. "I believe you know it was I who came across the thieves on the night of the hold-up, and got knocked out. It seems to have been taken for granted the pair of them made a get-away on their machine, and likely were half across England by morning. I wasn't so sure. The case was important for me, too, for it looked as if I was going to be suspected.

"I happened to come across some tracks of a cycle tire on the field here; they were old and faint, but they set me thinking. I wish I'd struck them before. I'm used to following trails—had a lot of experience in it. Went to the place where the argument happened, up the lane, and made out that the motorcycle, after the scrap, came back along the road yonder. The tracks are there yet if you've eyes to see them. I guess the machine was half-crippled, and they were driving it too hard. I made out that it crashed again—a bad crash that time. Do you follow me?"

"Yes," said the amazed Arkwright, "but how—"

"Here's a piece of the machine—found it on the road," said Billy, handing him the scrap of metal. "The tracks didn't go on. So what became of the machine? I found the tire-marks passing through a gateway into the field.

"What did that say? That the could wheel the machine, though couldn't drive it. Engine done up. What would they do with it? Hide it, so nobody would know they didn't get clear away. You'll find the machine, a twin Indian, over in the old clay pit, under some brushwood.

"What did the two of them do then? You can see by the tracks in the field that one of them was dead lame. So lame that he had to be carried or dragged, half of the way. It must have taken quite a while. They couldn't be far off, and, to cut it short, I searched the pits through and found Jake where he is. I didn't get wise to it till now. He's got a leg so badly sprained that a compound fracture wouldn't have laid him up much more thoroughly. And here you are, Inspector, just in the nick of time, as the story-books say. Of course," added Billy, "you'd have found it out yourself as soon as you got to work. I happened to be on the spot, that's all. And I shall be obliged if you'll say nothing about my share in it, at headquarters. Thief-catching isn't really in my line—I'm a motor-engineer, and it might do me harm to have it known I was wasting time on things that aren't my business."

Inspector Arkwright gazed at Billy dumbly. Arkwright was not a man of ungenerous instincts.

"I call that a very remarkable piece of work for an amateur," he said ungrudgingly.

"I suppose I've set your mind at rest, that I'd nothing to do with the burglary myself? You're not aching to haul me off to the station house any more? Or are you?"

Inspector Arkwright regarded Billy thoughtfully.

"No," he replied quietly, "but there are one or two points that have to be cleared up yet."

Billy took some papers from a pocketbook and handed them to Arkwright.

"If you want information as to my identity," he said, "you might look through those."

The inspector did so. His usually immobile face gave a twitch of surprise.

"Thank you. I'll keep these for the present," he said, with a change of manner. "I will have a word with you at the abbey, Mr. Spencer, when this business is off my hands."

"I'll be there," said Billy, with an inward twinge of anxiety.

Panke and the constable arrived, carrying a gate between them, which was taken into the cave. The prostrate Jake was lifted onto it, and borne out into the open.

"Wait! Set him down," said Arkwright suddenly. "He's safe, anyhow. We've got to get the other one." He turned to Billy. "You've seen nothing of her—the woman?"

Billy gave him a stare of undisguised amazement.

"The woman?" he exclaimed.

Jake threw away the stub of his cigarette.

"Yes—Calamity Kate!" said Arkwright impatiently. 'Good Lord, man, can't you see she must be somewhere here, too? She's been bringing him food and water, and tending his leg—how else could he have lived there six days when he can't move?"

"Great Christopher!" said Billy. "I suppose you're right."

"The prisoner refuses any information. But I'll have the pair of them," said Arkwright grimly. "I—"

"I suggest," broke in Panke, who was chafing at being thrust into a subordinate part, "that we get this man away as soon as possible, and that two of us wait in the cave. The woman probably visits it only at night, and the next time she comes with supplies, we shall get her."

"The weak point about that," replied Arkwright patronizingly, "is that it's not certain she only comes at night; this is a lonely place, and it won't surprise me if she is close by. She may have observed us already. We'll search these pits thoroughly first. There are half a dozen of these caves, and we'll go through them all. Mr. Spencer, I'll trouble you to remain by the prisoner. Panke, you and the constable try that cave opposite, and I'll take this side."

Inspector Arkwright strode forward with stern determination.

"The bag is not complete," he said grimly, "till I've got that woman!"

CHAPTER XXIV

"Sisters Under Their Skins."

Aimee came as near to sheer panic as she had ever been yet when, after overhearing from her coign of vantage in the second floor window the questions of the police, she saw them start for the crag pits.

The only bright feature of the situation, though not dazzlingly bright, was that de Jussac was already on his way, in the same direction. She had seen him go, and guessed his errand. Bertrand, at least, was an ally.

"I'd rather they got me than Billy!" she said with a little sob.

The one obvious and reasonable thing for Aimee to do, was to remain where she was. To lie low, like Brer Rabbit, and take no part in the coming crisis. As a natural consequence, it was precisely the thing which her mind refused to entertain. If Billy was going to meet trouble, she determined to be on the spot. There was no knowing to what lengths he might go, in his passion for self-sacrifice.

Ten minutes later Aimee was in the bushy dip of ground leading into the crag pits. The police were well ahead of her, converging round the far end. Aimee had taken some trouble to avoid being seen by them. At the moment she could not see them at all, and took it for granted they could not see her either.

Bending low and running between the bushes, Aimee made for the entrance of the Sphinx's cave. It seemed to her that must be where Billy had gone. On arriving at the mouth, however, she discovered her mistake. Through a gap in the brushwood she caught sight of Billy a considerable distance farther along the pits. And with him was de Jussac.

The police arrived almost immediately afterward. Aimee, crouching behind the bushes, watched the meeting.

Her throat felt dry and hot, her hands opened and shut nervously. She hesitated, uncertain what to do. Would Billy "get away with it?" A gleam of hope and confidence returned. Billy had a wonderful knack of getting away with things.

She saw the party disappear into the cave nearest them; she witnessed the emergence of Billy, and was aware of a certain relief of tension when the police returned and spoke with him. Finally, wondering as she watched, Aimee observed the arrival of the gate—saw the prostrate body of Jake carried into the open. The distance was considerable. But the significance of that pathetic figure on the gate came home to her. Aimee was not slow of comprehension. She began to realize the meaning of it all. The police had what they wanted. The captive could be no other than Jack the Climber himself. Billy had "got away with it" with a vengeance.

Aimee was staring dumbly at the group, when she heard a faint animal-like noise close beside her. She turned sharply, to find that she was not alone.

A woman, in a stained and ragged dust-cloak, was crouching behind the screen of brambles a few yards away. She was young, and not ill-looking, save for the deathly pallor of her face and the disorder of her hair. Indeed, there was a wild gipsyish beauty about her, that survived even the hunted expression in her eyes.

She was staring through the bushes at the distant group.

"They got him!" she said in a strangled whisper. She huddled herself together trembling.

"An' they'll get me, too. Let 'em. No good my runnin' for it.

"I dunno who you are!" she muttered. "What you doin' here? Are you goin' to gimme away?"



"Are You Goin' to Gimme Away?"

Aimee did not move. Her heart beat fast. But there was no menace in the woman's eyes; only an expression so broken and piteous that somehow a lump came into Aimee's throat. She had not the faintest doubt who this hunted woman was.

"You know who I am," the woman said thickly; "I can see it in your face." She came a step nearer. "Are you goin' to call out?"

Aimee did not answer that question.

"Is he much hurt?" she said quietly, looking towards the distant group round the man on the gate.

"Hurt?" said Calamity Kate. "He smashed himself days ago, it was." She had subsided on the sand, and embraced her knees with her arms, staring before her with unseeing eyes. "I got him down here. Tried to help him along—couldn't walk. Then I had to carry him."

"You!" said Aimee, looking wonderingly at the girl's slight figure.

"Yes, me. It took me—hours. Carried him—on me back—somehow. When it came daylight, I found the cave. Got him in. I ripped up me skirt to bandage him. I stole food for him, nights. In two or three days more I guess he'd have been able to get away. Now they've got him, an' they'll have me."

She rocked herself gently to and fro.

"It'll be [illegible] for Jake!" she said thickly. "To know they've got me!" She looked at Aimee. "If I could go with him—if they'd put us both in the same jug—I wouldn't care. But they don't do that."

She gave a great sob.

"I'd give me life to get him out of it. But he's done, and he'll know they've got me. It'll be h—l for him My man!"

An unreasoning flood of tears came into Aimee's eyes. She looked once more towards the group. The police were spreading out across the pits, moving in her direction.

"My man!" sobbed Kate.

"You love him?" said Aimee haltingly.

"He's my husband!" said the woman. She flung herself face downwards on the sand, and wept.

Suddenly Aimee stooped and caught her by the shoulder.

"Come with me!" she said swiftly, and, turning, crept in through the screen of brambles, into the cave.

Kate looked up comprehendingly. Then, with the instinct of the hunted animal she dived through the bushes and went to ground. The girls found themselves together in the cool gloom of the cave.

Kate stared at Aimee with wondering eyes.

"I'm sorry for you!" said Aimee unsteadily.

"I never thought," said Kate, "to find any woman sorry for me."

She glanced round the walls of the cave.

"They'll find me here—just the same."

"They may not." Aimee, very pale, looked at the fugitive. "Don't you think," she said, "that if you got clear this time, you might—drop it all? Try—something different?"

"I might," said Kate slowly. "But—they'll get me."

She caught sight of the Flying Sphinx, standing in the dim light at the cave's end.

"What's that?" she exclaimed, and moved swiftly to the machine. Aimee watched her.

"You couldn't ride it," said Aimee, "not even if the way was clear."

"I can ride anything with an engine to it!" said Kate desperately. There was a gleam of hope in the hunted eyes; already her hands were busy with the levers; searching, examining. But she stopped, baffled. The controls of the Sphinx were too much for her.

The next moment Aimee was beside her.

"That's the throttle!" said Aimee swiftly. "Here's the starter—this changes the gear—you have to be careful with the intake. On the second speed she goes over the roughest ground like a bird—on the level road she'll do eighty. If you could get her out clear of the bushes—but you'd never get away with it—"

The woman turned to her, gasping.

"Will you let me try—?" she exclaimed.

It was then that a shock of revulsion came over Aimee. This was the female rattlesnake who had nearly killed Billy, and caused all the trouble. Why should Aimee feel pity? The broken man in the hands of the police—

A rustle among the bushes at the cave's mouth made the two women turn quickly. De Jussac, stepping inside, halted and stared blankly at them both.

"Ten thousand devils!" exclaimed Bertrand, momentarily startled out of politeness.

"You needn't be frightened for me," said Aimee quickly. "She'll do me no harm."

Bertrand's active brain took in the situation briefly.

"No harm!" he said. "Name of a name! If the police found you here with that!"

Aimee turned very white. That aspect of the case had not even occurred to her. In the stress of new emotions, the realization of danger to herself had been crowded out. If she had to explain to the police . . .

"Yes," said Aimee quietly. "If they come here—I'm done for."

The strident voice of Inspector Arkwright was heard, very close at hand.

Monsieur de Jussac pushed his way out through the brambles and regained the open air. The three policemen together were converging towards the spot.

"Another cave there!" cried Inspector Arkwright. "I thought so. This way, Panke!"

De Jussac halted before the entrance, and, selecting a cigarette from his case, lit it deliberately.

"You may save yourself the trouble, Inspector," he said amiably. "There is nothing here."

Arkwright hesitated.

"Are you certain?" he said, coming forward again.

"I have proved it," said Bertrand, "at much expense to my skin. Curse these briars!"

"All right," said Arkwright, turning away; "push on and search the other end, Panke. No use wasting time here. I think we're on a fool's errand after all."

The three police passed out of sight round the bend of the pits. There was a long pause. Aimee's face peered cautiously through the brambles.

"What a fearful liar you are, Vicomte!" she said with mingled remorse and admiration.

Bertrand, without turning, bowed gravely.

"I do my best," he murmured, "in defense of a lady with such a genius for getting into difficulties. But let me beg of you to remain where you are."

"Are the police out of sight?" said Aimee eagerly.

"For the present, yes. They are away round the corner—all three. But they may come back."

A moment's silence followed the warning. Then the brambles parted, and the Flying Sphinx came thrusting through. Kate was beside it, her hands gripping the bars, her face white and strained, her resolve set. She gave a swift glance to either side, and began to run the machine down the slope.

De Jussac, with an amazed exclamation, turned to intercept her. He found a hand detaining him; Aimee had gripped him by the arm.

"Let her go!" said Aimee breathlessly. "Let her go!"

"Name of a name!" said Bertrand blankly. But he obeyed. There was little choice. Already Calamity Kate was well down the slope, running beside the free-wheeling Sphinx that gathered more and more impetus by its own weight. The deftness with which the woman steered it between the clumps of bushes was astounding.

"She hasn't a dog's chance," said Aimee with a gulp, "but what chance there is—let her take it."

"A nation of sportsmen—quoi!" murmured Bertrand with a paralyzed air. He glanced to the left, where the police had disappeared round the shoulder of the bluff. There was still no sign of them. Kate, reaching the trodden path at the bottom, turned sharp to the right and swung herself into the saddle.

"It is one's duty to stop her," said Bertrand, twisting his mustache in perplexity. "But—one does not hunt a woman."

"She'll never get started on that ground," said Aimee.

The engine fired, stopped, fired again—the wheels threw up spirts of sand, then getting onto harder ground the machine ran swiftly ahead with the faint pulsing whirr that was the Sphinx's song of triumphant progress. She shot forward much too fast, and was only just controlled in time.

No other cycle than the Sphinx could have made good over such ground; no other could have sailed so efficiently and noiselessly up the steep path through the gap towards the higher ground at the far end. It was a wonderful exhibition of riding. As the fugitive sped by, Billy standing on guard beside the capt[illegible] turned and stared in petrifie[illegible] ment.

Jake raised himself to a s[illegible] sition on the gate, and st[illegible]



He Uttered a Hoarse Cry.

He uttered a hoarse cry—almost a cheer.

The Sphinx and its rider breasted the crest of the rise, staggered, and sailed away out of view.

CHAPTER XXV

Two of a Kind.

Aimee gave a little gurgle of excitement as the Sphinx vanished.

"She's away! And I don't believe they've seen her! If she can stick to it over the field to the gate, there's open road before her and she's clear!"

Aimee turned to de Jussac with shining eyes. He shrugged his shoulders faintly.

"A supremely foolish act, mademoiselle," said Bertrand.

"She was in trouble—just as I've been. Everybody's shielded me at their own risk," said Aimee defiantly. "How could I do less for her?"

"Alas, the morals of the age!" said Bertrand, and he laughed gently. "A sermon would not become me—I also am a coadjutor. I will observe the movements of the enemy."

He climbed quickly onto the shoulder of high ground that divided them from the end of the pit, and returned in a few moments.

"Obviously our industrious police did not see her," he said; "they are now searching the last of the caves."

"Then it's time I got back into mine," said Aimee turning to dive back into her retreat.

"Not so!" exclaimed Bertrand quickly, catching her by the hand. "That is no place for you."

"Why?"

"The gentleman from Scotland Yard will search it before he leaves—he took my word for the moment, but he will make sure. It was merely that he was in a hurry. You must get out of this while you can; like your friend the lady burglar. Come along!" said Bertrand, setting off at a run and pulling her with him.

"You're right!" ejaculated Aimee. With long strides they sped round the clump of bushes, Aimee in tow of Bertrand, and, turning sharp to the right, scurried up one of the steep paths that led out of the pits.

Billy suffered yet one more shock as the pair of them came into his field of vision. He gaped at them, hardly able to believe his eyes. In a few moments they had passed; Aimee reached the top of the pit, and Bertrand glanced apprehensively back in the direction of the police.

To be continued.

©Maryland State Archives msa_sc3326_scm8222-0814