

# DRAGONS DRIVE YOU

By EDWIN BALMER

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CHAPTER XIII—Continued

The door-bell rang. Winnie lifted the big bowl to the table, and as she was with her apron upon her, she went to the front door.

"Oh!" said Winnie. "Oh!" She reached for her apron and crumpled it in her thin hand. "Tis you." For the dread which had seized her when Cathal came home on the night this girl had called him, filled Winnie again. "Do ye seek me?"

"Yes," said Agnes.

"Will ye step in?"

Agnes stepped into the neat little sitting room, where a few old, plain chairs and the table told that they were memorable, treasured things. She looked about, and met Winnie's blue eyes.

"Will ye choose a chair? None else is home," Winnie explained, seating herself unsteadily, "or I'd call them."

"You are the one," said Agnes, "I wanted to see."

"Me?" said Winnie. "Over him?"

"Over him and myself," said Agnes; and she waited, not knowing what next to say.

"I'm pleased ye are here," said Winnie, trying to help her. "And why should ye not be? He's gone the many, many times to ye. Too many times, was it?" she asked anxiously; for she was still puzzled.

"Not too many for me."

"Then what trouble came to him?" Winnie asked, crumpling her apron.

"What trouble this week and more?" From the night he came home from the murder of that Lorie, he's lived for ye. For naught else but for ye."

"He told you?" asked Agnes.

"Wud he tell me? I've me eyes; and the blind cod see! . . . There was a time he never knew ye; and there's been the time since. As different to him as night and day. What's fallen between ye?"

"Fallen?" said Agnes. "Nothing's fallen. We mean to be married."

"Who?"

"Cathal—your grandson—and I."

"Whist!" cried Winnie. "Whist! . . . What I hear, did ye say? . . . Ye and he! . . . He's a bit of a book, with every word of ye and every pitcher of ye pasted in. I looked. Sure it was printed for all the world to read; but he pasted them all together. At last ye returned from beyond the sea. He goes to ye; then he goes no more; and he passes me, these days, niver speaking. Is that because he'll be married to ye?"

"That's it," said Agnes; and no longer could she sit still. She arose, and Winnie arose. "He thinks I won't do it; so I came here."

"And still ye will?" said Winnie, so proud of him and humble for herself that tears came to Agnes' eyes.

"Whist!" Winnie whispered again. "He was born beyond us all. Far, far beyond most men. Scarcely thirty he stands now, a single score and ten; and men twice his years—the great men of Chicago—send for him in their need. And they lay their troubles on him. Well, as a lad he was like that; he wud see to us all. Small as he was, he wud see to us all. Niver fear he will fall to see to ye."

"Oh, I know him, too!" Agnes cried.

"Not yet," said Winnie proudly. "Not yet the half of him! Not yet neither how strong nor how tender he can be! Once—sit down, Miss Glen-eith; sit down. Let me tell ye—"

Far away, a school bell beat; and for the first time, it meant nothing to Winnie; and Agnes heard nothing else at all. So the back gate had swung, and the children trooped into the kitchen, before Winnie remembered them.

The cakes that day were never baked; for Winnie had left them in batter; but there was the hot fresh bread to cut and butter and hand about with the mugs of cold milk. So Winnie O'Mara did that this day with Agnes Glen-eith helping her.

At five o'clock that afternoon the reception clerk at Cathal's office looked across his desk at a slight, straight, white-haired little woman in black-silk dress, new black bonnet and gray gloves.

"I wud see," she announced steadily, "Mr. Cathal O'Mara. Point me his door, and I'll trouble ye no more. Faith, now meself I see it." And forthwith she strode to it and opened it.

"Winnie!" cried Cathal, rising.

She faced him fair and told him. "I had a caller today, Cathal. Agnes Glen-eith come to see me over ye!"

Cathal could not bring himself back to his desk after his grandmother had gone; he stood half the room's width away, staring without recognition at the open books and the papers which a few minutes ago had absorbed him.

One meaning—one, and none other was possible—was declared in what Agnes Glen-eith had done this day, and which Winnie had told him. Agnes had broken down the last false barrier between them; it existed in her no more.

In him, what still held him? A lifetime of feeling the inferiorities inflicted upon a little boy of no fortune and no "birth"—but inferiorities which Winnie, from the first, so valiantly and steadfastly had denied for him.

When Winnie had opened his door, he had been studying how he might save from the penitentiary, and utter degradation, Philip Linsdale. This weak another gentleman in desperate straits—not a neighbor to the Glen-eiths, but certainly known to them—had appealed to Cathal to save him

from prison. Today, Cathal O'Mara—of no birth and background—had to refuse to take a like case.

For banks in the city and about Chicago were falling; great companies and corporations could not meet their debts; great men—great names of the city—dropped in dishonor. They who had held themselves above and beyond Cathal O'Mara were calling to him.

What had Davis Ayreforth all but done? How secure were Robert Glen-eith's own fortunes?

Cathal stepped to his desk; he laid paper-markers between the pages, and closed his lawbooks. One last moment he hesitated; he pressed his buzzer.

"Ask Mr. Parry," he said to his secretary, "if he can step in here." Then: "Jim, I'm going away for a couple of weeks."

"Now?" said Jim. "On what case?"

"No case," said Cathal. "But it's two weeks before I have myself to be in court. You can carry on for me till then, can't you? You see, Jim, I hope—I hope to be married."

North from the city, he drove; and no doubts dragged upon him. He drove, pilfering his dreams for a practical plan of that which Agnes and he—Agnes and he!—might do.

He never gained her door; for she awaited him by the road just within the gates.

It was dark. Clouds floated below the moon, clouds not of storm but of concealment; but in the dark he saw her white figure before he pointed toward her. He switched off his lights and stepped down. She said no word; nor did he. He grasped her hands, speaking then her name; but his breath went from him; and she whis-

pered there in the dark of the lawn, clinging to him: "You're here—you're here!"

He released her so that she could lead him toward the lake. They descended, cautioning each other of the steps, to the shore; and no one else was near.

No lightning threatened tonight. The lake lay calm. Ripples ran up on the beach, which sighed as the sand released the wavelets and let them retreat over tiny shifting shells and stones.

"Dare you do it? Dare you?"

"What?"

He swept her up in his arms. "The one thing left to us to do. Go on from this moment together."

"There's nothing else," she said, "for me."

"Nothing?" he denied for her. "There's any one in all the world for you!"

"No," she said, very simply. "Kiss me."

They went up together to the house, where lights betrayed her father figuring at his desk under the antlers and trophies of his gun-room. Her mother seemed to be upstairs.

Cathal, alone, sought her father.

"Hello, O'Mara." Bob Glen-eith turned on his chair. "You came awhile ago?"

"Yes, sir." The two men looked at each other; and Cathal knew that her father was well aware of why he was there. And it was Glen-eith, not he, that avoided it.

"You've Ormstead now, I hear, O'Mara," Bob Glen-eith said. "They've charged him with fraud—fraud and larceny too. He's taken for his private purposes, they say—to save himself—two millions. They've caught him; so he's come to you."

"Yes, sir."

Bob Glen-eith somewhat ruefully smiled: "You seem to be collecting my friends, O'Mara."

Cathal said nothing, and Glen-eith suddenly rose.

"What can you do for them? Will they spend the rest of their lives in a cell? They were good men. . . . You know I don't mean 'good,' but they had ability; they built things; and now—you stand between them and prison."

He struck at the wall beside him, which resounded at the blow. "Some-



Great Names of the City—Dropped in Dishonor.

times, O'Mara, I feel that even the walls we built must be of paper. . . . You came to ask me something."

"Yes, sir. I want to marry Agnes. She will marry me."

"I supposed so; and I suppose, whatever I say, you're both going to do it. Well, one thing; you're not paper, O'Mara. Whatever else you are, or aren't—you're not paper. . . . When are you planning—this thing?"

"Tomorrow."

"Tomorrow? You waste no time, O'Mara. . . . Well, I've had one big formal wedding in my family—about a dozen weeks ahead, a thousand guests. This is hardly the time for that again; and I'm willing that my other daughter try another sort of thing. Her mother won't be—you know that. But let me stand up with my daughter and give her away, even if it's before a justice of the peace."

CHAPTER XIV

"Fools, they were; for they ate the Cattle of the Sun. Were they fools, do you think?"

"What were the Cattle of the Sun?" Agnes asked. "Days?"

"Days. They devoured the days—the Cattle of the Herder of the Heavens—without counting them."

"Must we count them?"

"You don't want to, either."

"I can't bear to! I can't bear to know when this must come to an end."

"It will never come to an end, Agnes, what's between us."

"No; but you must go back to the people that so desperately need you! And you're so young—so young!" She caught his hand and kissed it; so he caught her to him; and for several moments both of them forgot about the Cattle of the Sun. Then he said, defiantly: "We won't count them, either. We'll throw away the calendar and never mark the days."

"But," she weakened, "can we?"

"See that great gray crag down there?" Cathal gazed into the valley. It was noonday, and they rested side by side, far up on the flank of their mountain, at the very edge of the snow-line. Above them rose rock and snow; beside them a single stout little dwarf pine clung in a cleft, a brave outpost of the forest below.

The Sun, herding his cattle through the pastures of Time, had climbed to his highest slope in the sky; and his radiance caught the gray crag so that it shone above the mountain's shadow.

Agnes gazed at the great rock, and she followed Cathal's feeling: "Until that falls into the shadow at noon, let us stay! Then we need never count the days. Only, some day that rock will tell us that we must go."

And so they agreed on it.

They were far in the west and the north, amid the mighty, majestic mountains; and for five days they had been married. (And Bob Glen-eith had stood by his Light One in the service at the house of the minister.)

To be married, to take your place in the procession of life, to realize at last how you had received your life and how, if you willed, you would pass life on—that was a solemn and also an ecstatically happy situation. And there were the mountains.

Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth. . . . Before these mountains were brought forth!

For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.

A thousand years ago, no one had ever dreamed of Chicago, and the forefathers of the millions in the teeming city were to beget sons and daughters and die, and they would bear children that would die through six hundred years, before a generation grew that would hear of this America. And the stock-market that now "made" or "ruined" so many men—what was it? A center of scheming through a moment of time. Your stocks maintained their prices, and you remained powerful and great like Issull, and clever and comfortable like Jeb. . . . They declined, and you were disgraced like Phillip Linsdale and John Ormstead; or you must destroy yourself, as Arthur Linsdale had done, and Davis had tried to do, in order to leave a few dollars to Bee and the boys. . . . Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep.

But the mountain would remain; the world continue to spin under the sun, each year in the spring exposing to the sunshine for a few days that great gray crag in the valley, and immersing it again in the shadow until another twelvemonth was turned. One new, reckoned year to add to the uncountable ages of eternal Time.

Agnes shivered a little.

"Cold?" He clasped her closer. "Are we all insane in the cities?"

"Here," he said, "it seems so. But you and I are going back."

"Not before we must! Oh, why do we ever leave here?"

He looked down at her. "All my life, I'll remember how you said that! And a thousand, thousand other—What magic you've made of my days!"

"You think I have? It seems to me you've done it all. I've merely moved, Cathal, into your kingdom."

"Mine?" he said. "Mine!"

"With your words, that night, you made its walls!"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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