The JOY of LIVING

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SYNOPSIS

CHAPTER I.—Disliking the prospect of a month's visit to her austere aunt, Lady Erythea Lambe, at Jervaulx abbey, and her cousin, Alexander Lambe, Aimee, vivacious daughter of the Very Reverend Viscount Scroope, is in a rebellious mood.

CHAPTER II.—She wanders into the park, there encountering a strange youth in trouble with a motorcycle. He laughingly introduces himself as "Billy," American. The two cement the acquaintance by a ride on the motorcycle, the "Flying Sphinx," and part. With Georgina Berners, her cousin, Aimee sets out for Jervaulx. On the way she decides that Georgina shall impersonate her at Jervaulx while she goes on a holiday. Georgina's horrified protest is unavailing.

CHAPTER III.—Happy in her new freedom, Aimee again meets "Billy." He tells her his name is Spencer, and she gives hers as Amy Snooks, at present "out of a job." Billy offers to take her into partnership in selling the Sphinx. In a spirit of madcap adventure, she accepts. The two proceed to the town of Stanhoe, taking separate lodgings in Ivy cottage.

CHAPTER IV.—That night Aimee visits Georgina and learns that the deception has not been discovered. By her dominant personality she compels Georgina to continue the subterfuge.

CHAPTER V.—On a trial spin next day on the Sphinx, with Billy, Aimee almost collides with a carriage in which are her aunt, Georgina and Alexander. The pair escape unrecognized.

CHAPTER VI.—Georgina learns that Lord Scroope is coming to visit Lady Erythea and, realizing what will happen on his arrival, is in hopeless bewilderment.

CHAPTER VII.—While Aimee is secretly visiting Georgina at Jervaulx, the place is burglarized. Aimee escapes.

"A get-away!" said Billy. "My job!"

He threw his leg over the Sphinx and whirred off round the corner. He lifted his chin and gave a joyous laugh, like the bay of a hound. The lust of the hunter was in his blood.

The rider ahead, already aware that he was being chased, let out his machine at breakneck speed. The ray from Billy's lamp showed him a man crouching low between the handlebars, his arms spread like the wings of a bat. On the pillion behind crouched a small, muffled figure.

"Give up!" shouted Billy, as he overtook them. "You can't make it. I've got you!"

A hand stretched out from the figure on the pillion, and emitted a barking flash of fire. It dazzled Billy for the moment. Something zipped through his hair; automatically his left hand tightened on the valve-lifter and the Sphinx slowed, allowing the other cycle to shoot ahead.

Billy made a lurid remark, and at once increased speed again to close with the fugitives. Right ahead the lane forked on to the main road, and thither the driver of the other cycle was obviously heading. But the lights of a car were in sight, approaching rapidly on the road. The rider of the cycle had evidently no ambition to meet it; at the last moment he swerved left and continued along the narrow lane.

Billy laughed aloud.

"The guy's cornered himself!" he thought. "He's taken the blind alley. Me for him!"

The lane was very rutty and uneven. The cycle ahead had vanished round a bend; Billy, shutting off his engine, swung round it immediately afterward. As he did so he heard a crash. The driver of the other cycle, realizing too late that he was in a cul-de-sac, had swerved, braked violently, and came thoroughly to grief.

Billy sprang from the Sphinx, letting her fall on her side with the headlight still glowing. The other cycle lay prostrate; a small heap was huddled beside it on the grass.

The taller man, the driver, was just staggering to his feet when Billy ran at him. The cyclist whipped out a repeating pistol.

A gun, at night, and in the hands of a shaken man, is much less certain than a fist with six feet of activity behind it. Billy's left dashed the pistol hand aside, the bullet spat impotently into the air, and his right came with a terrific upper-cut beneath the man's chin, lifting him off his feet to fall inert.

As he came down, something skipped and rolled away from him along the grass, in the ray of the Sphinx's headlight. With the swift instinct for loot Billy pounced upon it—a sumptuous looking little case of leather, with a clasp. Billy thrust it in his pocket and turned to the fallen man, who lay with closed eyes and his head moving faintly from side to side.

"Mighty slow with a gun," said Billy, stooping over him. "I'm going over you for the rest of the goods, Bud."

A moan from the other malefactor, lying by the fallen cycle, interrupted him. So pathetic and treble a moan was it that Billy started and jerked himself upright, staring.

"Lordy!" he gasped, with remorse and concern. "It's a woman!"

The discovery was disconcerting enough. But a thought shot through his brain that nearly paralyzed Billy. What woman was it?

He hurried to her side. She had already raised herself on one hand and seemed trying feebly to get up. Billy stooped over her.

"Much hurt?" he stammered. "Here—"

At that moment the fallen driver recovered and stirred. Billy turned his head toward him, with a quick instinct—the danger lay closer at hand.

The woman's hand was grasping a stone, and, as Billy turned, she brought her arm round with a sweep, swift as a striking snake. The chunk



He Fell as an Ox Falls.

of rock crashed full on the side of Billy's head. He fell as an ox falls, and lay still.

The woman staggered to her feet and ran to her prostrate companion.

"He's got his!" she panted. "You hurt, Jake?"

She helped the man to rise. He stood dazedly for a moment; the spinal jar from a knock-out under the point of the chin is terrific, but evanescent.

"Look lively an' beat it!" gasped the woman, hauling the motorcycle upright with surprising ease. "See if the bulgine'll run—we'll have the cops here next!"

"Got to settle with him!" said the man thickly, glancing at the prostrate Billy.

"He's all in, I tell you. Get her going!"

The man wrenched the motorcycle round, and fumbled at the feed and controls with nervous fingers. While he did so the woman snatched up another stone, and, running to the Sphinx, hammered on the engine and the levers. She had dealt three or four lusty strokes when the other motorcycle came spitting and wobbling past her. The woman ran to it and swung herself up deftly behind.

"Let her out. We'll clear yet!"

The motorcycle, coughing and missing fire badly, trundled back down the lane the way it had come. Jack the Climber leaned to the handle-bars, Calamity Kate, her arms tight round him, settled herself on the pillion. Together they whirred away into the darkness.

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Confession.

It was very dark and very quiet at the lane's end when Billy at last stirred, and, after an interval of slowly returning consciousness, managed to raise himself dizzily to a sitting position.

He pressed his hands to the side of his head and remained for awhile motionless, conscious of a damp warmth under his left palm. His eyes dwelt on a white, chalky stone, as big as a doubled fist, that lay on the grass beside him. Events began to reconnect themselves in a brain that still buzzed faintly.

"A granite skull," murmured Billy, not without a touch of pride, "isn't altogether a disadvantage in an argument."

He looked about him thoughtfully. Not far away something gleamed in a rut—a small repeating pistol. His late opponents had evidently left in too much of a hurry to take an inventory of their effects.

"She must have dropped that when the machine crashed," thought Billy. "She loosed it at me when I was riding up. Lucky for me she hadn't it just now. Some girl."

He heaved himself to his feet unsteadily, made for a ditch where there was a glitter of water, and bathed the tender side of his head. The water revived him; save for a cut under his hair, no serious damage was done, though the blow might easily have cracked a weaker skull.

"I don't see that I shine much, over this job," said Billy despondently; "they sure handed it to me. Got right under my guard. Never thought of a woman sharing in a hold-up; an' yet I guess it's been done before."

He picked up the pistol, was about to pocket it, but altered his mind and flung it in the ditch. The other automatic was nowhere to be seen. Billy walked towards the Sphinx, the headlamp of which was now in darkness. His hand swung against a large lump projecting from the side of his coat. He halted and dragged out the leather case. Billy had forgotten its existence.

"Why, here's something saved from the wreck!" he exclaimed. "They couldn't have seen me get it!"

He dropped on one knee, opened the case, and switched the little electric torch over it.

Billy gave a stifled gasp. On a bed of cream silk velvet reposed a necklace of amethysts, ending in a loop of nine superb emeralds that shone with changing green fires under the torch's glow. Billy was not an expert in gems, but he guessed that these were such as a prince might be proud to own.

"This is the darnedest game I ever was up against," he said dazedly, returning the case carefully to his pocket.

He made a rapid examination of the Sphinx, and at once became aware of Calamity Kate's handiwork. In spite of the best intentions, however, that enterprising lady had overestimated the vulnerability both of Billy's skull and his motorcycle. She had done some damage, but had missed the more vital parts of the Sphinx. After ten minutes' work Billy's capable hands restored the machine to fair running order, and he rode away down the lane. Both lamps were out of action.

Any further pursuit of the thieves he put aside as a useless proposition. He had a vague idea that they had gone hours ago; in fact, however, he had not been unconscious more than a few minutes.

"There's only one thing to do," said Billy, "an' that's—"

A disconcerting thought flashed through his mind. The bumping of the jewel-case against his side suggested it.

"Gee!" he murmured, "I'm Little Boy Blue, all right. But if I was to run against the cops now, it'd take a heap of explanation before they slugged me. My story'd look pretty thin. Jewel-case—motorbike—it only wants one item to complete the outfit!"

He turned on to the high road, rapidly resolving on a plan of action as he rode. It was a good plan, but a few moments later it was hopelessly upset again. He was, as it happened, nearer to Stanhoe than to Jervaulx abbey, and as he turned in the direction of the latter Billy became aware of someone running toward him along the road—a dark figure, with a peculiar moving gleam of whiteness about it. He stopped the Sphinx immediately and thrust out his feet to steady himself.

The dark figure checked in its stride, hesitated, and seemed about to bolt back again.

"Partner!" cried Billy in amazement. "Is that you?"

The reply was a wild gasp. Aimee, breathless, muddy, with an appreciable breadth of white cambric showing at the base of her skirt, rushed up to him and seized his arm.

"Billy! Oh, I'm so glad—I'm so glad!" she panted. "Billy, I—I'm in an awful mess! The absolute limit!"

"How! Why?"

"I was in a house—and it was burgled"—gulped Aimee, struggling for breath "they thought it was me—and I scooted—they're chasing me."

It was not a vividly lucid explanation. But Billy's intelligence department connected with it at once; it supplied the missing factors. Before he could answer, a pair of lights flashed into view far down the road, approaching at speed.

"Car!" exclaimed Aimee, and with a note of panic—"Billy, suppose it's police? If so, they'll be looking for me!" She made a dash for the pillion of the Sphinx. "Get me out of this, Billy—start her quick!"

"Not on your life!" said Billy swiftly. "That's the last thing on earth for you now. Come with me."

He ran back fifty yards along the road to a field gate. In a few moments he had it open, thrust the Sphinx through, let her fall behind the hedge, and dragged Aimee with him into the ditch. They had hardly gained that cover when the car swept by with a roar, showing a glimpse of police helmets scudding past the low rampart of thorn fence. The majesty of law and order, sweeping inexorably through the night. A rattle, a hoot, and it was gone.

In the ditch there was painful silence. Billy mechanically felt his bulging pocket, glanced for a moment at the Sphinx, and then stared blankly at Aimee.

"Close call, partner," he observed.

"I thought it must be they," said Aimee breathlessly. "I wonder they haven't called out the military as well. All the countryside seems to be chasing me! Billy!" she said, with a suspicious tremble in her voice, "you'll help me, won't you? I'll tell you about it. I—I've kept it from you, but I won't any longer. I—"

Billy laid a hand on her arm.

"Amy," he said quietly, "just repeat this piece to yourself. Say: 'I'm safe, my partner's lookin' after me.' Got that? I'll see you through; you've nothin' to worry for at all. But we can't talk here. We've got to beat it."

He picked up the Sphinx.

"Follow close after me, an' keep quiet."

He wheeled the machine along the field path at a run, passed through another gate, crossed a stretch of heathery common-land, and made for a small copse at the foot of the slope. Aimee trotted behind silently, with an odd sense of relief and security. Billy would see it through. He had said so. He halted by the copse, and looked round to make sure of his bearings.

"It ought to be close handy here," he said. "Yes—I've got it."

He pushed on to a small bosky dell which led into a series of old cragpits, masked with brambles. Aimee wondered how he could find his way so confidently in the dark; she had not the remotest idea where she was.

"Wait here a minute. I'll come back for you," said Billy.

He wheeled the Sphinx away along a scarcely visible path, and presently returned without it.

"I was fooling around here on an off day, first time I came to Stanhoe," he said, "an' I lit on something that's goin' to be mighty useful. The old Sphinx has got to disappear for a bit, an' you'll soon understand why. Follow behind; there's only room for one at a time."

He led the way through the brambles and, pressing ahead, turned on the light of his pocket torch cautiously. Aimee, close at his heels, presently found herself in the entrance of a sandy cave with a very small mouth, screened by rough creeper and brush.

"There's several of these around here," said Billy, "but this is one you don't find unless you hunt for it with a sounding pole. It's a heap quieter spot than the high roads tonight. Suppose we sit down."

They seated themselves on the powdered crag in the cave's mouth.

"It's time to show down our hands, partner," said Billy. "Do you mind putting me wise? Don't leave anything out. I want the facts."

Aimee was silent some moments. She found it difficult to begin.

"It was like this, Billy."

She plunged into the tale, and went through it from beginning to end—leaving out nothing. It took some time. She could hardly see Billy in the gloom. He made no comments; he was so silent that sometimes she wondered if he was there. Billy was, for a time, too flabbergasted to speak.

At the finish, she heard a stifled, grunting noise, a sense of something shaking. It seemed to touch a spring in Aimee. She bowed her head on her knees and laughed till her cheeks were wet.

"Haven't I torn it!" she moaned. "And I downed Cousin Alexander—and the butler's got yards of my skirt!"

Billy wiped his eyes with his sleeves.

"An' you can laugh," he said, with intense delight, "after all that! Gee, but you're the stuff! Sand right through. You're all right. As long as you can laugh, the Red Gods'll stand by you! An' so will I. I'm one of 'em."

"Billy! There's nothing but you between me and those beastly police.



Aimee Gave a Little Cry.

But I'll bet it's enough. What's to be done?"

"Hear my side of it!" said Billy, dropping on his knees and producing the jewel case. "Here's the first item!"

He opened the case and shone the torch upon it. Aimee gave a little cry. Billy explained briefly how he had come by the gems. He said little about the struggle; that point was as sore as the side of his head. The best of us have our pride.

"One of them knocked me out for a spell, and like a fool I let 'em get away," he said. "I guess I didn't get all the goods, but this looks like an ace flush to me."

"How splendid you are!" cried Aimee, a catch in her voice. "Why, those will be the Lambe emeralds. I've heard of them—everybody has. They belong to my Aunt Erythea!"

"Then I shouldn't wonder if they scooped the jack-pot. But there's some high cards out against us. See here. We had to run for it. Here's the police prancin' over the country after a man and a woman on a motorcycle—for I guess they must be wise to it. Here's me with the stuff in my pocket, and you with a dress sample in the hands of the sleuth-hounds. Been the station-house for ours, if they'd got us just now—an' there'd be too much explaining to do. We'd have hit the cells for the night, sure. No place for you, partner. And all the newspapers spreading themselves over it."

"I know. It's f-fearful!"

"Not a bit!" cried Billy. "For now you can get in ahead of the cops. Don't you see? Put your folks wise to it—lay down all your cards. You're Lord Scroope's daughter—you ain't a burglar. Give it them straight. I'll stand by an' see you through."

"But—I can't, Billy! It'll all have to come out, then. Every bit of it," said Aimee with a gasp.

"Why, of course it will! It was bound to come out anyway, soon or late. You didn't think you could keep up this Jervaulx racket? I don't see any way you could do that. But you can keep it in the family. You've got to face the music."

There was a long pause.

"I—can't," said Aimee, scarcely audibly.

Billy was amazed. If it had not been so dark—and an incredible supposition in any case—he would have supposed from her voice that she was crying.

"You aren't afraid?" he said wonderingly.

"Of a row? No! It isn't that."

Billy sat down beside her.

"What is it then, partner?" he said gently.

"I never thought of it—till Georgie told me," said Aimee in stifled tones.

"Told you what?" he answered quietly. "What's the trouble?"

"About staying there. I—Ivy cottage!"

Billy moved slightly.

"I—I don't quite get you," he said.

"I can't tell Dad!" Aimee put her hands over her eyes and burst into tears. "I daren't! Billy, what am I to do?"

CHAPTER XII

A Gambler's Chance.

Billy stared straight before him. When at last he found his voice, it had so dazed a tone that Aimee hardly recognized it. He laid a hand on her shoulder.

"This thing's got me guessing," said Billy slowly. "I—I don't know what—"

"Of course, you never thought twice about it. And no more did I!" said Aimee. "I didn't care! And I don't care now! or I wouldn't if it wasn't for Dad. But people—it's all this miserable sentiment — that's what's wrong."

"Yes?" said Billy dizzily. "Well—"

"And now—why, the police are looking for a man and woman on a motorcycle, and they'll find out we were at Ivy cottage. They'll get my description. And even when they find out who I really am"—

Billy drew in his breath sharply.

"Georgie told me it was my finish—even before this silly burglary happened," continued Aimee gloomily. "Georgie knows about these sort of things. It isn't the burglary that matters. I could get over that. It's this—this other thing."

Billy was silent.

"The idea is," continued Aimee, with the same remarkable calm, "that I've lost my character; like a housemaid that's been stealing, or a groom caught selling the corn. Only I haven't been caught—yet.

"But—if Dad knew! You don't know my father, Billy. I couldn't explain him to you. Dad is just about the nearest thing that ever lived—in his way. But he belongs to a time about two hundred years back. Mother would understand; but not Dad. It's his creed that a girl mustn't be even—suspected. It was only tonight Georgina told me this thing would—well, it would break his heart. And I know him; I see she's right. If you and I—"

"Stop!" said Billy hoarsely. "Don't say any more. I—I've got to think this thing out."

Aimee found that he had suddenly left her. Presently she became aware of the outlines of his big figure, standing motionless just outside the cave He was there quite a long time. Aimee sat where she was, twisting her handkerchief between her fingers. She felt very much calmer. The trouble and the stress were now with Billy.

He came back, and stood over her.

"I'm a coyote," he said quietly. "What I need is a quirt laid across me. I've been a fool."

"Not a bit!" said Aimee quickly. "How should you know?"

"It was my business to know! There isn't any excuse. But—things are so different, where I come from. And I don't know anything about women. We think a lot of women, down my way, but we don't talk about them—much. Partner, this thing I've let you in for through my foolishness—it's broken me all up."

"Because I'm Lord Scroope's daughter?"

"No!" said Billy shortly. "Be the same if you were his housemaid. But it's up to me to see you clear—you and him, too. And I'll do it."

His voice was so confident that Aimee's trouble fell away from her, as a sun-ripened chestnut sheds its prickly husk.

"What are we to do then, Billy?"

"It seems to me," said Billy gently, "that the simplest way is the best way. Let's you an' me go to the old man. No use talkin' about it here. I'll put it straight for you, partner."

"No!"

"I hope I can make him see sense—even if he's two hundred years old, as you say. It's all my fault. It isn't yours—not one scrap of it. I won't say much—but come right along with me to your father now—an' leave the talking to me."

Aimee rose.

"Never! I won't have it, Billy!" she said desperately. "I don't know—I don't know what you might say. If it comes out I'm done for anyhow; I'm going to take the chance that it won't! There must be a way to stop it—there must be some way."

"It's my trouble—mine! And I won't have it given away."

Billy drew a quick breath and straightened himself.

"Right!" he said. "Those are the orders. I accept them. I s'pose a man can't give away a girl's secret, if she wants it kept. I know that much."

"Why, of course," said Aimee simply. "But will you please understand, Billy, that I'm not going to drag you into this. The best thing you can do is to get away out of it all. I shall manage all right. I don't want to—"

"Cut that out," said Billy very quietly. "It don't go." There was a pause. "I did think, for a while, it might be best—for you. But that's wrong. I've got to be right on hand, for I'll be wanted. Now hold on while I tell you what we've got to do."

"Yes?" said Aimee eagerly.

Billy stretched out a long arm, plucked a leaf from the bramble that screened the cave, and chewed it pensively.

"There's just a gambler's chance," he said at last. "It's pretty thin—like drawing to a three-card flush. But it's wonderful how they come off sometimes, if you back your luck, good an' full."

He flashed the torch round the walls of the cave.

"What d'you think of this place?"

"It's—snug."

"Snug!" echoed Billy admiringly. "That's you! It would give some women fits. But you've sand. Do you think," he added diffidently, "that you could make out here for a bit? Could you sleep here?"

"Certainly I could. Why, they'll never find me—!"

"Come up here," said Billy, leading the way along the cave, which turned in a long curve, narrowing to a very small space. At the end stood the Sphinx.

"She'll have to stay here, too. There's a bit of risk to that—but very little. We can't help it. In the pannier-case you'll find iron rations, a can-opener, biscuits, an' chocolate. I always carry those. Down the pit yonder, just by the alder bush, is a spring of water. That settles supplies.

"Now, the first deal is to keep you right out of the way. For a few hours, perhaps for a day or more—I can't say how long. But we've got to put up a bluff. And you'll be at least as safe here as anywhere in the British isles.

"Our best chance is that the police may get the bracelets onto the real thieves right away. I'm not much stuck on that chance. Police, wherever you strike 'em, are—well, they're just police. We're in a lot more danger from them than that dead-beat who broke into Jervaulx, and the female rattlesnake he had along. The police mustn't get you, at any price. And—they mustn't get me either. Only there's more to it than that. Half a hundred things. There's a mighty tangled deal in front of me.

"Now, I'm going to sail right in. All you've got to do is lie here in this cache till about seven or eight o'clock. I'll be back here by then. If I'm not," said Billy quietly, "it'll be because I've fallen through. You bet your life I won't. But—if I don't get here by then, you must throw your hand in, just get straight to your father, best way you can. Do you promise that?"

"Y-yes! But tell me what you're going to do, Billy!" she said breathlessly.

"I can't tell you anything. I'll have to play the hand as it's dealt me; it just depends how the cards fall. And don't you worry any!" he said earnestly. "If you get doubtful or scary, just wash it right out of your mind, an' say this: 'Billy's running the thing for me, an' he'll see me through!' I'm off. Shake!"

With a sudden gesture Aimee put both her hands in his. He gave them a crushing grip, and broke into the sunniest smile.

"We sure are seein' life, partner!" he chuckled.

Aimee replied with a rather tremulous laugh. The next moment Billy had dropped her hands, and was gone.

Once clear of the crag-pits, Billy made for the road by another route. While climbing a gate he glanced at the luminous dial of his wrist watch, and emitted a whistle of consternation. Aimee's account of herself was absorbing, but he did not realize till now what an unconscionable time they had spent in the cave. The night was nearing its close.

Billy avoided the roads. He struck right across country and reached Ivy cottage with as little loss of time as possible. But the eastern sky was rapidly lightening when he arrived. Entering the garden with extreme caution, Billy found everything quiet. He climbed the trellis deftly, and heaved himself through Aimee's window.

With a certain sense of embarrassment Billy swept the walls with his torch, unhooked the blue dust-cloak that hung on the door, folded it small, and packed it inside his jacket. That was the main object of the expedition.

He also annexed a cake of soap, a towel and a brush and comb—these latter he had himself bought for Aimee at Syderford on the first morning. Billy again descended the trellis, raked over his footprints carefully, and with all possible speed shook the mud of Ivy cottage from his feet.

It was broad daylight when he had crossed the fields and came within sight of Jervaulx abbey. He hid the cloak and its accessories under a thorn bush, glanced at his watch again, seated himself under the hedge, and lit a cigarette.

He drew the jewel case from his pocket and examined the necklace, thoughtfully emitting puffs of smoke. Then he replaced the case in his pocket and finished his cigarette, his smooth forehead wrinkling into tiny lines. Finally he rose and walked briskly towards the entrance lodge of Jervaulx.

There was no electric bell in the great porch. He pulled a pendant handle of wrought iron, and was answered by an archaic clanging inside. After a brief pause the doors were thrown open by Tarbeaux the butler. He looked at Billy inquiringly.

"I want to see the proprietor—on urgent business," said Billy. "Is he up yet?"

"If you mean Lady Erythea Lambe," said Mr. Tarbeaux with dignity, "her ladyship has not yet risen."

"I am a stranger here," said Billy, "but what I want you to do is get a message to her ladyship that it will be worth her while to see me as soon as convenient. Say I've important news about some property that's missing from here."

Mr. Tarbeaux became more alert.

"Come this way," he said, and Billy followed him.

In less than ten minutes Lady Erythea arrived, pallid after her night of stress, but unconquerable, clad in a purple wrap. Billy turned to face that tremendous presence.

"What do you want to see me about?" she said sternly.

With his sunniest smile, Billy



Billy Laid Before Her the Lambe Emeralds.

opened the leather case and laid before her the Lambe emeralds.

CHAPTER XIII

"Very Good, My Lady."

"Do these interest you, madame?" said Billy simply.

Lady Erythea stared as though the green gems hypnotized her. Then, with a little gasp of joy, she lifted them from the case with trembling fingers. It was one of the rare occasions of her life when Lady Erythea exhibited emotion.

She laid down the necklace and looked at Billy as one might regard a materialized angel. Before she could speak, however, Mr. Alexander Lambe entered the room.

It has been said that Mr. Lambe's eyes were large. They expanded indescribably when he saw the Lambe necklace lying on the table. He closed the door softly behind him, and approached the table in an awestruck manner.

He glanced from the emeralds to Lady Erythea's face, and then, somewhat sternly, at Billy.

"How did you come by these?" said Lady Erythea, pointing to the emeralds. Suddenly she presented the ear-trumpet at Billy. "Explain!"

The ear-trumpet startled Billy a little. He felt—so he declared to Aimee afterward—as if Lady Erythea had the drop on him. But his face, as he answered, was ingenuous as a baby's.

"I was passing by your park gates early this morning, on my way to Syderford. It was past one, an' the house was dark. When I got to the place where the lane turns into the road I heard a motorcycle coming up behind, h—l for—coming mighty quick," said Billy, turning pink. "It came right by me, pretty near out of control. It hadn't any lights, there was a bend just ahead, an' I heard it crash."

(To be Continued)



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WORTON MARYLAND

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