IN THE LAST HOUR

By RICHARD BARKER SHELTON

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Thorpe had ideals of honor and a square jaw. The latter showed that he had the courage and determination to keep the former above compromise. Indeed Thorpe's ideals were no less unrelenting than his method of backing them up. He also had a heart. Several little affairs had made him aware of the existence of that organ, but of its real nature, its capacity for untold pleasure and its potentiality of untold pain, he was quite unaware until he met Emily Royce at the Barrys' house party.

Then there began strange proceedings in his cardiac region, the like of which he had never before experienced. He rode with her through the autumn lanes, he shot with her in the autumn woods. The world and its cares were somewhere far away, and life was very new and strange and altogether charming.

It was the evening of the impromptu dance that Thorpe came back to earth with a shock. He and Emily were seated behind a screen of friendly palms. Some one was playing a Waldteufel waltz on the piano, and the swish of skirts and the click of dainty shoes on the polished floor came in pleasant rhythm. They had drifted from the shallows of commonplace talk into deeper waters. Her cheeks were scarlet and her eyes had dropped to the fox skin rug at her feet. The words were on the edge of his tongue, but they were never said, for suddenly the square jaw set, the shoulders went back, and Thorpe in his masterful way was suggesting that they take a turn or two in the waltz.

That night, in the seclusion of his own room, Thorpe lit a cigarette and communed with himself. That Emily Royce was the one woman in the world he would ever care for he admitted frankly. But Emily Royce was the heiress to a round million, and Thorpe's assets were merely a promising array of prospects. There was but one course left to him, and as he lit another cigarette he began packing his suit case. In the morning, despite the threats and entreaties of Barry and his guests, he departed. It was his ideals of honor that said he must go; it was his square jaw which caused this decision to be carried out, but it was his newly discovered heart which tortured him poignantly with pictures of a girl behind the palm screen, scarlet cheeked, with her eyes on the fox rug. He went to the other side of the continent.

CLOSE TO HIM HE SAW HER WHITE FACE.

It was June when he came back east. At the office he found a letter from Barry saying he would never be forgiven if he did not run up into the country for a day or two upon his immediate return. For a moment the thought of going there filled him with a vague dread, but this he put sturdily from him.

"Come, closer ranks there!" he said grimly to himself. "Don't skulk behind the bushes in that fashion." And, forestalling his arrival by telegram, he left late Saturday afternoon for Barry's place.

When Thorpe boarded the train he went at once to the smoking compartment of the Pullman to finish his cigar. The sun had gone down behind the hills and mellow twilight lay over the green meadow lands across which the train was speeding when he rose to go to his seat in the car. As he passed down the aisle he suddenly stopped short, aware that every nerve in his body was tingling. He had come face to face with Emily Royce.

The seat just ahead of her was vacant, and after an interchange of surprised greeting he dropped into it. If the cardiac disturbance returned with renewed vigor the square jaw was as tense as steel, and no hint of the true state of his feelings was conveyed to her. Their conversation, moreover, kept within bounds quite consistent with his ideals of honor—small talk about the Barrys, town or the view from the window as they sped through some picturesque bit of country. Thorpe was thinking vaguely that this meeting would only make the future less endurable, yet in his present contentment he cared little for that.

Suddenly there was a jolt of set brakes, then a crash, a moment of suspense in which he saw an agonized face opposite his, and then darkness. When he came to himself he was lying on his side beneath a pile of debris. Car chairs and broken boards were piled above him. Close to him he saw her white face, with disheveled hair and wide open eyes.

"Emily," he cried, "are you hurt?"

"No," she said slowly. "I think not. But I can't move. I'm pinned down. Are you hurt?"

"No," he said; "not at all."

He struggled fiercely to free himself, but it was useless, and a terrible pain in his left leg made him smother a groan.

"We're quite helpless," he said, "but keep your courage up. They'll have us out of here in a bit."

"I'm not afraid," she said. "But you are hurt. I know by your face. It's very white."

He said nothing, but began another struggle for freedom, enraged at his own helplessness. Outside was a confused din of ax blows and voices. He listened. An ominous crackle came to his ears, and even as he choked down a curse an acrid smoke was borne in upon them. He covered his face with his free hand.

"Oh, my God!" he groaned. "To have to die like this!"

"I don't think I shall be afraid," she said, "with you."

He stretched out his hand and took hers.

"I have fought to keep myself from telling you," he said. "But now nothing matters. I can tell you now."

"Oh," she said, "I saw and I knew, and because I was helpless I was miserable."

He felt her hand tighten on his. The smoke thickened. Then all at once the ax blows were near, a flood of light broke upon them. Voices were close at hand. He saw her lifted out and felt strong arms beneath him.

"I should never have told you if I had thought we would ever be here," the told her later in the bare, front room of the farmhouse where they had been taken. He lay on a sofa, his left leg swathed in bandages, and she sat close beside him.

"Dear," she said, "I would go through all that—and more—to hear it."

It was then the square jaw weakened.

Sports Are Useful.

That a given occupation is pursued for sport and no longer as a means of livelihood does not necessarily withdraw it from the category of things useful for training. The natural boy's pursuit of frogs, birds and woodchucks is a survival of a habit indispensable to primitive man. Hunting and fishing were the most necessary means of livelihood for savages. They are pursued now as sports as well as for livelihood, and there is good training in them when practiced merely as sports. They teach civilized man alertness, accuracy of observation, quickness of action, endurance and patience, just as they developed these valuable qualities in generations of savages, who never knew what humanism, altruism and idealism were. The justification of unproductive athletic sports, like ball games, races of all sorts and dancing, lies in the facts that they develop in civilized man some of the invaluable qualities which hunting and fishing developed in savages and that they recreate and revive in people who lead the unnatural life of civilization the power for useful work. They also defend young people against laziness and vice by affording pleasurable activities and innocent gladness.—President Charles W. Eliot in Atlantic.

Overreached Himself.

A prominent Scottish member of parliament, when addressing a large audience recently, touched on the subject of labor and advocated that a more kindly bond of feeling should exist between employer and employee. Just then a man—a political opponent to all appearance—rose up in the middle of the hall, and in a loud, scoffing voice cried:

"How do you treat your own workmen? Long hours and short pay. I should know, for I was one of them."

For a moment the member of parliament was nonplused by the suddenness of this charge, while the audience eagerly awaited developments. Then, looking hard at his interrupter, he inquired amid a breathless silence:

"Were you employed in my Glasgow works?"

"Yes, I was," retorted the other defiantly.

"Then allow me to inform you and the audience," came the quiet reply, "that I have never had works either in or within fifty miles of Glasgow."

The cheers which greeted this explanation showed that the member of parliament had scored in no uncertain fashion.—London Standard.

A Scheme That Failed.

"Did you hear about Samuels?" asked Mrs. Graymare's husband.

"No; I didn't hear about Samuels," the lady answered. "When you have anything to tell, why don't you tell it?"

"Yes, dear. Well, Samuels was going home the other night when a footpad shot at him, and the ball hit a latchkey in Samuels' vest pocket, and his life was saved. So you see what good a latchkey is."

"Indeed! If Samuels had been going home at a reasonable hour he wouldn't have met any footpad; secondly, he carries £2,000 insurance, payable to his wife, and if it had not been for that key she would be a rich widow now. So if you are hunting around for a latchkey you will have to bring home some better story than that one. That's all. I'm going to bed now, and out goes the gas in two ticks. Latchkey, indeed!"—London Globe.

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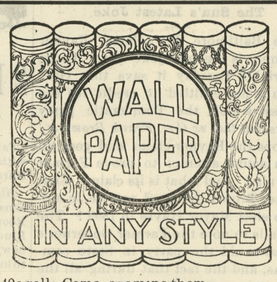

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