

THE PLUGE

By DAVID GRAHAM PHILLIPS, Author of "THE COST" and "THE BROTHERS"

CHAPTER XVII.—Continued.

"They're mamma's friends," Anita was answering. "Dish and tiresome. When you leave I shall go straight on up to bed."

"I'd like to—to see your room—where you live," said I, more to myself than to her.

"I sleep in a bare little box," she replied with a laugh. "It's like a cell. A friend of ours who has the anti-germ fad insisted on it. But my sitting-room isn't so bad."

"Langdon has the anti-germ fad," said I.

She answered "Yes," after a pause, and in such a strained voice that I looked at her. A flush was just dying out of her face. "He was the friend I spoke of," she went on.

"You know him very well?" I asked.

"We've known him—always," said she. "I think he's one of my earliest recollections. His father's summer place and ours adjoin. And once—I guess it's the first time I remember seeing him—he was a freshman at Harvard, and he came along on a horse past the pony cart in which a groom was driving me. And I—I was very little then—I begged him to take me up, and he did. I thought he was the greatest man who had ever lived." She laughed queerly. "When I say my prayers, I used to imagine a god that looked like him to say them to."

I echoed her laugh heartily. The idea of Mowbray Langdon as a god struck me as peculiarly funny, though natural enough, too.

"Absurd, wasn't it?" said she. But her face was grave, and she let her cigarette die out.

"I guess you know him better than that now?"

"Yes—better," she answered, slowly and absently. "He's—anything but a god!"

"And the more fascinating on that account," said I. "I wonder why women like best the really bad, dangerous sort of men, who have at least respect for them, or for anything."

I said this that she might protest, at least for herself. But her answer was a vague, musing, "I wonder—I wonder."

"I'm sure you wouldn't," I protested earnestly, for her.

She looked at me queerly.

"Can I never convince you that I'm just a woman?" I asked, merrily.

"Just a woman, and one a man with your ideas of women would fly from."

"I wish you were!" I exclaimed.

"Then—I'd find it so—so impossible to give you up."

She rose and made a slow tour of the room, halting on the rug before the closed fireplace a few feet from me. I sat looking at her.

"I am going to give you up," I said at last.

Her eyes, staring into vacancy, grew larger and intenser with each long, deep breath she took.

"I didn't intend to say what I'm about to say—at least, not this evening." I went on, and with it seemed to be some other than myself who was speaking. "Certain things happened down town to-day that have set me to thinking. And—I shall do whatever I can for your brother and your father. But you—you are free!"

She went to the table, stood there in profile to me, straight and stender as a sunflower stalk. She traced the silver chasings in the lid of the cigarette box with her forefinger; then she took a cigarette and began rolling it slowly and absently.

"Please don't scent and stain your fingers with that filthy tobacco," said I rather harshly.

"And only this afternoon you were saying you had become reconciled to my vice—that you had canonized it along with me—wasn't that your phrase?" This incoherently, without turning toward me, and as if she were thinking of something else.

"So I have," I retorted. "But my mood—please oblige me this once. She let the cigarette fall into the box, closed the lid gently, leaned against the table, folded her arms upon her bosom and looked full at me. I was as acutely conscious of her every movement, of the very coming and going of the breath at her nostrils, as a man on the operating table is conscious of the slightest gesture of the surgeon.

"You are—suffering?" she said, and her voice was like the flow of oil upon a burn. "I have never seen you like this. I didn't believe you capable of—of much feeling."

I could not trust myself to speak. If Bob Corey could have looked in on that scene, could he have understood it? How amazed he would have been!

"What happened down town to-day?" she went on. "Tell me, if I may."

"I'll tell you what I didn't think two minutes ago, I'd tell any human being," said I. "They've got me strapped down in the press. At ten o'clock in the morning—precisely at ten—they're going to put me on the screws. I thought I guess they'll have me squeezed pretty dry before noon."

"Yes—Langdon," I replied. "But I've no quarrel with him. My reverse is nothing but the fortune of war. I assure you, when I see him again, I'll be as friendly as ever—only a bit less of a trusting ass, I fancy. We're a lot of free lances down in the street. We change sides whenever it's expedient; and under the code it's not necessary to give warning. To-day, before I knew he was the assassin, I had made up my mind to try to save myself at his expense, though I believed him to be the best friend I had down town. No doubt he's got some good reason for creeping up on me in the dark."

"You are sure it was he?" she repeated.

"He, and nobody else," replied I. "He decided to do me up—and I guess he'll succeed. He's not the man to lift his gun unless he's sure the bird will fall."

"Do you really not care any more than you show?" she asked. "Or is your manner only bravado—to show off before me?"

"I don't care a damn, since I'm to lose you," said I. "It'll be a godsend to have a hard row to hoe the next few months of years."

She went back to leaning against the table, her arms folded as before. I saw she was thinking out something. Finally she said:

"I have decided not to accept your release."

I sprang to my feet.

"Anita!" I cried, my arms stretched toward her.

But she only looked oddly at me, folded her arms the more tightly and said:

"Do not misunderstand me. The bargain is the same as before. If you want me on those terms, I must—give myself."

"Why?" I asked.

A faint smile, with no mirth in it, drifted round the corners of her mouth.

"An impulse," she said. "I don't quite understand it myself. An impulse from—from—" Her eyes and her thoughts were far away, and her expression was the one that made it



"SHE BLAZED A LOOK AT ME THAT LEFT ME ROOTED THERE, ASTOUNDED."

"Your ideas of life and of men are like a cloistered nun's," said I. "If there are any real men among your acquaintances, you may find out some day that they're not so much like lapdogs as they pretend—and that you wouldn't like them, if they were."

"What—just what—happened to you down town to-day—after you left me?"

"A friend of mine has been luring me into a trap—why, I can't quite fathom. To-day he sprang the trap and ran away."

"A friend of yours?"

"The man we were talking about—your ex-god—Langdon."

"Langdon," she repeated, and her tone told me that Sammy knew and had hinted to her more than I suspected him of knowing. And, with her arms still folded, she paced up and down the room. I watched her slender feet in pale blue slippers appear and disappear—first one, then the other—at the edge of her trailing skirt. Presently she stopped in front of me. Her eyes were gazing past me.

"You are sure it was he?" she asked.

I could not answer immediately, so amazed was I at her expression. I had been regarding her as a being above and apart, an incarnation of youth and innocence; with a shock it now came to me that she was experienced, intelligent, that she understood the whole of life, the dark as fully as the light, and that she was capable to live it, too. It was not a girl that was questioning me there; it was a woman.

"I thought I understood her better than she understood herself. And suddenly my passion melted in a tenderness to me as rain to a desert. I noticed that she had a hanging look. 'You are very tired, child,' said I. 'Good night. I am a different man from what I was when I came in here.'"

"And I a different woman," said she, a beauty shing from her that was as far beyond her physical beauty as—as love is beyond passion."

"A nobler, better woman," I exclaimed, kissing her hand.

She snatched me, and said: "If you only knew!" she cried. "It seems to me, as I realize what sort of woman I am, that I am almost worthy of you." And she blazed a look at me that left me rooted there, astounded.

But I went down the avenue with a light heart. "Just like a woman," I was saying to myself cheerfully, "not to know her own mind."

A few blocks, and I stopped and laughed outright—at Langdon's treachery, at my own credulity. "What was I doing, making of myself a mart to myself. And I could see myself as I really had been during those months of social struggling—ass, braying and gambling in a lion's lair, and under the shadow of a dagger."

But not wholly to no purpose. I reflected, again all in a glow at thought of Anita.

Illinois State News

Recent Happenings of Interest in the Various Cities and Towns.

FLOYD WHITTEMORE IS DEAD.

Former State Treasurer of Illinois Succumbs to Asthma.

Springfield.—Floyd K. Whittemore, former state treasurer of Illinois and assistant to a number of state treasurers, died of asthma and heart trouble in the Springfield hospital. His remains were taken to his former home in Sycamore, Ill., where the funeral was held. He was never married and left one brother, Henry C. Whittemore, a former member of the general assembly, who lives at Sycamore. During his long public life in the state of Illinois Mr. Whittemore became intimately identified with great financial affairs in connection with banks, the state government and the national government. Since his retirement from the office of state treasurer, which he held from 1898 to 1900, he took little active part in state politics, devoting himself to the management of his vast farming interests in Illinois.

JOSEPH LEITER FOUND GUILTY.

Violated Mining Laws in Employing an Unlicensed Inspector.

Duquoin.—Joseph Leiter, operator of the Zeigler colliery, the scene of numerous labor conflicts during the last two years, was found guilty of violating the state mining laws and will be assessed a fine of from \$200 to \$500.

Mr. Leiter was found guilty of employing a mine examiner who did not hold a certificate issued by the state mining board at the time of the disastrous explosion in April, 1905, when 60 men lost their lives. The prosecution based its fight principally on that point, arguing that the examiner's ignorance of mining laws was in a measure responsible for the disaster.

Mr. Leiter said the case would be taken to the appellate court.

There are two other cases against Mr. Leiter, charging him with unlawfully storing powder in the Zeigler mine, and with constructing rooms in a coal mine without cross-cuts, which were completed until March 11.

DOCTORS IN PLEA FOR CLINICS.

Elgin Medical Men Ask That the Instruction Be Continued.

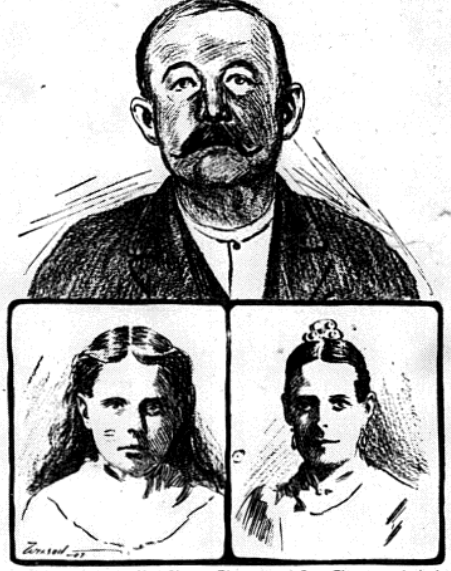
Elgin.—At a meeting of the Physicians' club here, the subject of clinics at state institutions was taken up and a committee was appointed to draft resolutions showing that the club favors the continuance of clinics and upholds Superintendent Podstata of the Northern insane hospital.

TATE GOES TO PEORIA.

Will Be Questioned as to Recent Blowing Up of Safe.

Chicago.—Pressure brought to bear by officials more powerful than himself impelled Chief of Police Collins to permit Edwin S. Tate, the "gentleman burglar," to be taken to Peoria.

MURDERER AND TWO OF HIS VICTIMS



Thomas Baldwin, Mrs. Simeon Eiseman and Cora Eiseman, principals in recent tragedy at Colfax.

ent and stated that his only object in giving the clinics was to benefit humanity. The physicians were unanimous in the belief in the good derived from clinics, and it is probable a special meeting of the Fox River Valley Medical association will be called soon to pass resolutions upholding Podstata.

Big Coal Mine Is Sold.

Danville.—The Kelly Coal company was sold to R. O. Hammond, J. K. Deering and Hugh Shirkle. It is stated that the consideration was \$4,000,000. The property was owned equally by John R. Walsh, of Chicago, and the Illinois Traction system interests.

The property consisted of five shafts in this subdistrict with average output of 2,000,000 tons annually and many thousands acres of coal lands.

Killed in Mine Fall.

Petersburg.—Case Levering, a former resident of this city, living lately at Cripple Creek, Col., was killed accidentally by falling down the shaft of a gold mine. No particulars were learned and Harvey Levering and Perry Dixon left for Colorado to bring back the remains.

New Church Dedicated.

Pana.—The new Christian church was dedicated here. Dev. J. Fred Jones, of Bloomington, delivering the dedicatory address. The building was erected by the members at a cost of \$2,000. Rev. Mr. Henry is pastor.

Found Dead in Home.

Havana.—James Barry, a local chavero, was found dead at his home here. He was 54 years of age and was well known in this part of the state. Death is ascribed to his irregular habits.

There he will be questioned relative to the assertion that Tate blew up the school board safe in that place through connivance with Newton C. Dougherty, former superintendent of schools, now a convict at Joliet.

The latest charge against Tate is that he communicated with Dougherty through the medium of the advertising columns of a newspaper. Sept. 29 last, it is said, the following advertisement was inserted:

"To A. B.: Tell old man any time after 20th: \$3,000."

This is understood to have been an offer to Dougherty to blow up the safe for \$3,000. "A. B." is said to be a "trustee" who can smuggle correspondence for Dougherty. Dougherty can read the newspapers in his cell. For a time Tate and the ex-superintendent had been cellmates.

Springer Named for Warden.

Springfield.—Gov. Deneen has appointed Thomas W. Springer, of Edwardsville, warden of the southern penitentiary at Chester, vice Gen. James B. Smith, resigned. The appointment is to take effect May 1. Mr. Springer is at present circuit court clerk of Madison county.

Holdups Rouse Citizens.

Sterling.—Two more robberies were added to the long list in this city, and Mayor J. R. Lewis issued a proclamation calling on all citizens to assist in capturing the holdup men and offering a heavy reward for arrest.

Firemen to Have \$5,000 in Prizes.

Kewanee.—The executive committee of the Illinois Firemen's association decided to increase the prize for the state tournament, to be held here this summer, to \$3,000. The tournament will open July 14.

(To Be Continued.)