

# The Flying Scarab and the Seventh Heaven

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## 1

Fletcher Kent, inventor among other things of Kent's Aeromotor Muffler and Kent's system of aero-telephony, as well as a successful sustainer; champion aviator of a continent or two and unwilling idol of several more — Fletcher Kent, in pale blue pajamas was treading the greensward with pink, dew-drenched feet, in the early dawn of a June day. In his left hand he held a spray of wild roses which he frequently sniffed; with his right he steadied the pail of spring water that rested upon his shoulder.

Click — click! The enterprising eye of the *Daily Sun*, concealed behind a bush near by, winked impudently at Fletcher Kent. The world and his wife at breakfast next morning would gaze delighted at a picture of the famous flyer in his robe de nuit, feet au naturel, and presenting the appearance of a bifurcated Rebecca at the well.

Splash — and again splash!

"Oh, that's all right, Mr. Kent," spluttered Dawson of the *Sun*, as he emerged from behind the bush, pouring the spring water from the gulleys of his soft hat, and sopping it up with a couple of handkerchiefs from his coat. "Don't mention it. It didn't hurt the camera in the least."

"Now you get out of here," roared Kent. "Is a man never to have a blamed minute's privacy, without some of you fellows on his trail? I tell you it's outrageous!"

"Sorry you feel that way about it, Mr. Kent," said Dawson serenely, tucking his camera under his arm and starting for the cowpath that led to the main road. "Orders is orders, you know."

Horrid visions of the fantastic film that reposed in the reporter's camera cooled Kent's ire for a moment.

"See here, Dawson," he began, setting his pail down with determination and absently sticking the spray of roses in the pocket of his garment, "see here, now, you can't use a picture like that, you know — really you can't. Absurd! Ridiculous! — But of course, you're not seriously intending to?" Kent summoned a feeble, wheedling laugh.

Dawson lifted his water-soaked hat with difficulty, but with elegance.

"Good morning, Mr. Kent," he responded pleasantly as he struck off down the road.

“But I won’t have it — I tell you I won’t have it,” cried Kent to Dawson’s retreating back. Dawson gave every indication of considering the conversation closed. “Oh, well,” flung Kent, picking up the empty pail with violence. “Print it and be damned!”

“Thank you for your kind permission,” acknowledged Dawson sweetly from over his shoulder.

Kent strode into the sleeping-tent with choler in his bosom that wilted the flower in his breast pocket. Butler, his wireless telegraph operator, sat on the edge of the air mattress pulling on his shoes with early morning languor.

“I tell you, Butler, I won’t stand it!” Kent sat down on the top of a trunk with emphasis.

“Well, wha’smatter now?” inquired Butler sleepily.

“Matter? Do you think you’d get any keen pleasure in having your picture scattered over the country in *these*? Heroic garb for a man who calls himself a scientist, is it not? ‘Kent taking the Kneipp cure,’ I suppose they’ll label it, or ‘the aviator at off moments,’ or—”

“Good Lord!” broke in Butler, sitting up, “did they get you that way? — ‘With a rose in his buttonhole’—” he sang.

Kent snatched the wilted blossom from his pocket. “You may be able to find some humor in the affair, Butler, but I swear I don’t. Came out to this forlorn old prairie to escape the press and experiment in peace. Very first morning when I arise with the birds — how could you sleep through their clatter, Butler? — and saunter out to the spring with a yearning to get near to nature, and without the formality of dressing, behind the bushes at 5 a. m. lurks one of those rascally reporters—”

“Good heavens, Kent, you’re as fussy as the old lady Godiva. Didst pluck out the eyes of the varmint?”

Kent grinned. “No, but I dashed cold water on any hopes he may have entertained — nice, clear, cold water from the spring. But, I say, Butler, I’m going to outwit those chaps somehow, I don’t propose to be dogged to death about this thing we’re working on now. I won’t give up a word about that till I’m good-and-ready, if they line up four deep around here.” Kent’s jaw took on the expression that had inspired the *Sun* to speak of “the fighting face of the man who had flown from ocean to ocean, waging constant battle with the crafty elements.”

“By George, Butler,” he exclaimed after a minute’s thought, “let’s disappear!”

“I’m on,” said Butler, succinctly.

And so they did. Two mornings after the *Daily Sun* made extended mention of it.

“Fletcher Kent, with Albert Butler, wireless expert, has suddenly left Plainville where he had gone to conduct experiments along an entirely new line, the nature of which have not as yet been disclosed. There is some mystery about their disappearance, as, although their camping outfit is gone, as well as the famous Flying Scarab, inquiry of the Plainville station agent established the fact that no shipment had been made from the village for several days. Friends of the aviator know nothing of his whereabouts and some concern is felt,” etc., etc.

## 2

“Gad, if I were a poet!” breathed Fletcher Kent. Above him, a cloudless, fathomless blue; below him a swift flowing sea of verdure, the fields like golden crests on the emerald waves of the luxurious country. Now and again a farmhouse appeared for a moment like a bit of bark

riding the undulating hills ; here and there a river gleamed like a silver-moted moonbeam. The Flying Scarab was the only aerial craft navigating the pathless waste for miles around.

Although he spent most of his waking hours in the air, Kent never failed to experience an exhilarating sense of power, mingled with awe, when he realized that he was coursing through long-forbidden and unexplored areas, where only the birds might question his right of way. The day was perfect. The upper currents of air were steady, the lower just breathed on the tree tops, stirring them gently.

Being unfamiliar with that section of the country, Kent dipped his elevating plane slightly and dropped several hundred feet to sight the land marks he had noted. Presently what had seemed a black snake, emitting a vapory breath, and winding through the green, he knew to be a long train of cars, and soon the cliff-fringed eye of Polar Lake was beneath him. Across its placid surface he skimmed, headed for the cliff whose steep sides reared their wooded crests high above the surrounding shore line.

While still above the lake Kent shut off his power and glided easily to the plateau-like clearing at the summit of the cliff. So well had he gauged his descent that the wheels beneath the machine scarcely made a single revolution after touching the ground. Kent leaped from his seat. Then he clutched a lever and leaned against a sustainer for support. Before him stood an angel, or a dream, or a dryad priestess, or some such divinity. Angels, he reflected, were not in the habit of displaying round, brown ankles beneath snug fitting tailored skirts, and above trim brown shoes. Dreams, as he recalled them, were pale and pasty affairs, showing none of the tanned detail of the plump arms, and hands clasped in wonderment before him, like a child's. A dryad priestess would scarcely wear her hair in a red-brown braid swung over a bosom that rose and fell excitedly beneath a soft shirt with a turn-down collar.

By this process of elimination it would seem that it might be a real girl standing before him here on a cliff of Polar Lake, miles, as he had supposed, from any habitation. Then the brown of her little feet, and the gold glint of her wind-blown hair, against the fluttering foliage, made him think of autumn leaves and the elusive swaying of slim branches.

"Might you be Miss Daphne?" he asked finally, not at all certain of his mythology.

"Might *you* be Mr. Mercury?" she inquired in return.

"This *might* be Mount Olympus," he affirmed decisively, including in his admiring glance the lake like a sapphire far beneath, the woods behind like a huge velvet throne against a curtain of turquoise — and the girl like a wood nymph startled by a faun.

"It is the Seventh Heaven," the girl stated simply.

"It is," Kent agreed devoutly.

"Have you a passport, Mr. Mercury?" she demanded demurely.

Kent racked his scientific brain for a poetic response. Mythology and poesy failed him. But strategy came to his aid.

"I have not, Miss Daphne. I'll go back at once to get one." He made as if to resume his seat in the Flying Scarab. "Careless of Jove to send me off like that. I beg your pardon for my intrusion—" he was manipulating a couple of levers industriously.

The girl laughed, and put a tanned little hand on the white stretch of the elevator.

"Please, Mr. Mercury — would you mind not being a divinity for a little while? You see, I've never seen an aeroplane. I know that's queer, in this day and age — but I haven't been out of the village for a year, since I came back from school. I'd — I'd like to ask a few questions if — if—"

Kent interrupted her with a magnificent wave of his hand toward the passenger's seat of the Flying Scarab.

"If the high priestess of the Seventh Heaven will deign to seat herself on Mercury's winged steed — or was it his feet that were winged?— oh, hang the ancients, I'm getting all balled up. If you'll allow me, my name is—"

"Mr. Mercury will do very well," put in the girl coolly, as she smilingly seated herself in the seat he had pointed out, and began to examine with interest the levers and instruments.

Kent was grateful that he had not been permitted impulsively to divulge his name. "Perhaps it will be better, Miss Daphne," he acquiesced. The girl turned to look at him a bit sharply. "And I'm going to ask you if you will please not mention in the village the fact that a strange bird lit in your Seventh Heaven. You see, my assistant and myself have grave reasons for wishing to remain undiscovered as long as possible. It's not an easy thing to do with a white flyer like this on one's hands. We've pitched camp down the side of the bluff a ways — I had the deuce of a time getting up in the air this morning, too. I may depend upon you not to betray us, Miss Daphne?"

"But you might be flying from justice or jail or something," she objected.

"As a matter of fact, we are flying from the pen," he punned back recklessly. "The pitiless pen of the press. It's this way, Miss Daphne," he went on for the sole purpose of keeping a pair of laughing eyes upturned to his, "I'm working out a very delicate experiment, which may mean something tremendous — or may fail absolutely," he added with modesty, but with a total lack of conviction. "My assistant and I thought we'd try disappearing, so we could conduct our final tests in peace, without being pestered into premature statements by zealous reporters. This place being about five miles from the village — isn't it—," the girl nodded, "and the village being without a railroad seemed to furnish as safe a retreat as any."

"But even in this out-of-the-way place you can't expect to remain very long undiscovered," the girl suggested.

"No. But it's only a matter of a few days before I'll be ready to give out a statement, I think. I've a good notion to make 'em tramp from the village up here to the heights — those pesky newspaper men — with your permission, Miss Daphne." The girl seemed highly amused at the picture of a reportorial squad kicking up five miles of desert dust and clambering up to the Seventh Heaven.

Kent looked at her suddenly with curiosity. "But you — how do you—" he began.

The girl pointed to a narrow trail scarcely discernable in the thick woods behind her. "At the end of that path down near the road," she replied, "is tethered my prehistoric steed. It's got pedals and rubber tires and a handle bar."

"A bicycle, by Jove!" cried Kent as though she had spoken of riding a pterodactyl.

"Have you seen the village yet?" she asked abruptly.

"No."

"If you ever do, you'll understand why I call this the Seventh Heaven. I'd die if I couldn't pedal out here every day, that's all."

"That's almost too good to be true," said Kent, beaming. The girl raised her eyebrows in haughty inquiry. Kent sensed the delicacy of the situation. "Won't you let me drop in on you occasionally up here in your Seventh Heaven?" he pleaded tactfully.

She ignored the question. "And when you want to go up you turn the planes this way?" she inquired, having discovered that a light push on the lever operated the planes.

Kent explained in detail the workings of the machine and of the wireless telegraph and telephone. He was amazed at the quick comprehension of the girl and the intelligence with which she questioned him. He sighed for more theories to expound.

Presently she glanced up at the sun with speculating eye. "O, I must be getting back. Thank you so much for your kindness in explaining things to me," she said simply, as she turned toward the little trail that led through the woods.

"But — but you will come tomorrow?" stammered the eminent scientist and aviator, not daring to follow her, but in a panic for fear he might not see her again.

"It is *my* Seventh Heaven," she reminded him.

"Which I'm going to construe as a promise," he replied. "And, Miss Daphne, you won't let fall a word, you know — you can't ever tell about those reporters — they're liable—"

"You needn't worry, Mr. Mercury. I'll do my best to keep them away from you," she called over her shoulder as she pushed back a low hanging bough across her path, which swung back into place again, hiding her from the eager eyes of Fletcher Kent.

### 3

"Good afternoon, Miss Daphne."

"Good afternoon, Mr. Mercury." The girl raised her eyes for a moment from the book she was reading; then settled herself more comfortably in the low tree crotch that formed a natural seat, and turned a page with strict attention to the performance thereof.

Kent fussed with his engine; clicked out a few wireless messages; sternly inspected the propellers and the planes and then sat down in the seat of the Scarab and ruefully inspected the silent young sphinx in the tree crotch.

After a time, when the pink in her cheeks had mounted to the roots of her red-brown hair, she glanced down at Kent as though quite unconscious of his maneuvers and inquired, "Would you please tell me if you can use the smallest stop with bulb exposures? I've just been given a camera and I'm reading up on how to use it."

Kent bounded from the Scarab, unstrapping his own camera from its position in front of the swinging seat beneath the machine, flung himself on the grass beside the tree in which she was sitting, and launched forthwith into the rules and rudiments of plain and fancy photography.

The girl's austere formality vanished by degrees. Eventually she slipped down from her leaf shaded seat and sat beside him on the grass.

"I don't happen to have any films to load this up," he was saying, "but you see you set this for the exposure, and have the shutter so — and now you are all ready to take a picture — if it is properly loaded, of course."

"Seems simple, doesn't it?" said the girl, peering into the finder. "Oh, dear, Mr. Mercury, there goes my handkerchief — it's dreadfully windy today, isn't it — there, over there by that ash — oh, it has blown down the cliff? Don't bother — please."

But Kent, having started in pursuit of the elusive, dainty square, plunged down the side of the cliff and was some little time recovering it. When he appeared again the girl was still diligently gazing into the finder with the camera focused on the Scarab.

"Thank you very much. Now, if I wanted to snap the aeroplane — see, but I can't get it all in. And of course the seat shouldn't be in the exact center, 'cording to art, should it? Do

please sit in it and wave your handkerchief so I can tell where the center is, anyway.” Kent did solemnly as he was directed. “I can see that all right,” she laughed. “Now I should set this, press the bulb so” — click! — “and what a pity it isn’t loaded!” she finished, as he arose.

Kent grinned grimly. “I’m afraid I shouldn’t have been quite so docile if it had been,” he said.

The girl tripped about, trying to focus the camera on the picturesque views disclosed on every side, Kent offering profound suggestions at her elbow.

“What a magnificent view it would be from down there on that little point, looking up toward the cliff,” she cried excitedly. “You see I’m turning into a camera fiend.”

“As long as it isn’t a laurel bush, it’s all right, Miss Daphne,” returned Kent, fatuously, as they plunged down the cliff to the spot she had indicated. “You can just see our camp from here,” Kent pointed out, “down there in that clearing. If you would care to walk down, I’d like to show you our telephone station and some other apparatus—” he began tentatively.

“Oh, I should so like to see them,” the girl agreed enthusiastically.

So they clambered down the rugged cliff, catching at sturdy shoots and bits of rock to keep from slipping on the treacherous sand. Very often Kent leaped ahead of her and extended a steady hand in lieu of the swaying shoots, which she grasped occasionally with strict impartiality.

Before the tent which they came upon soon, sat Butler. He was unable to conceal his surprise at the sudden appearance of the two. He stared at the girl as though she were a sprite whom Kent in his aerial wanderings had plucked from another world.

“Miss Daphne,” said Kent, “let me present Mr. Butler — my wizard of the wireless,” he added laughingly.

“Miss Daffney,” acknowledged Butler stupidly.

The girl smiled at him winningly. “You’ve no idea how picturesque you looked just now, Mr. Butler, sitting there with the tent and the wood there and all. Mr. Mercury” — with a mischievous little giggle — “Mr. Mercury has been letting me use his camera for a sort of dress rehearsal, you see, because I just got one and I don’t know the first thing about using it.” She reached for the camera tucked under Kent’s arm. “Do let me see what a stunning picture that would make,” she begged, stepping back a few steps to focus on the tent. “Oh, I could almost get both of you in. Do stand just a little bit nearer.” She cast imploring eyes at Kent. Butler looked at Kent oddly.

“It isn’t loaded,” Kent reassured him, smiling, as he complied amiably.

“No, isn’t it a pity?” she babbled on. “I’d just have to push this and poke this and squeeze this, and there you’d be!”

“I told Miss Daphne I’d show her the workings of some of our instruments,” Kent explained presently. “The wireless is right back of the tent here.” — “Lives in the village — doesn’t know an induction coil from a hairpin. What’s the matter with you?” he found the chance to whisper into the ear of Butler who had made no attempt to conceal his surliness. He stood by impatiently while Kent answered the girl’s flood of questions as he sparked off messages for her on the little wireless instrument. After a time Butler sauntered over to a rough table near by that was littered with various experimental apparatus — Leyden jars — intricate tracings of copper wire on wooden framework — metal wheels that revolved at every degree of speed — dynamometers and a series of peculiar indicators, which he examined closely.

The girl, happening to glance up as Butler was scowlingly scrutinizing the last of these, saw him suddenly bend close, stare intently at the indicator, then raise his head with a wonderful light in his eyes.

“Kent!” he called, “Kent, come here!” His voice was not quite steady.

Kent was beside him at one bound, examining the indicator with suppressed excitement. In a moment he turned to Butler, and putting a hand that trampled upon his shoulder he said hoarsely, “We’ve got it, old boy — we’ve got it!”

## 4

Click! — Kent’s hand fell to his side. Both men turned about quickly. They had forgotten the girl. She was bending over Kent’s camera concernedly. “Oh, I don’t know what I’ve done, Mr. Mercury. I do hope I haven’t broken anything,” she cried contritely. “I was trying to operate the shutter — this is the shutter, isn’t it? — and this little screw thing snapped. How careless of me!”

“Doesn’t make a particle of difference,” Kent assured her exuberantly, “not a particle. Nothing matters — nothing in the world. By Jove, it’s wonderful — it’s marvelous! You’ll think I’m crazy, Miss Daphne — but you see, I’ve won out. I can do it — what I’ve been working at for years.” His face was alight with the first brief glow of attainment, his eyes rested on the little indicator on the rough table.

The girl saw the unconscious twitch of his fingers, impatient to be at the work he loved — the longing in his eyes to go over each step that had led to the result he had attained.

“You will have work to do,” she said at once. “I must return. It is getting late.”

He insisted that he should accompany her to the Seventh Heaven. As they started up the sandy path again Butler followed them with his eyes, an odd impression on his serious face. They had gone but a little way beyond his ken, when the girl who had kept well in the lead, paused until Kent reached her side. “Mr. Mercury,” she said, with a sudden charming shyness, “will you please go on until you reach that maple up there — then look straight west till I — till I get there.”

He turned to look at her, puzzled. “No turning into oak trees or laurel bushes,” he warned.

“It’s my shoes and stockings,” she said. “I’ve simply got to get the sand out.”

When she joined him at the big maple he noticed for the first time that she was still carrying his camera. He was quite overcome with chagrin that in the blind exuberance of his spirits he had failed to relieve her of it before.

As they reached the great green velvet throne of the Seventh Heaven she turned to him suddenly. “Thank you so much for your kindness. You’ve been kinder to me than you know. I — I shan’t get to the Seventh Heaven again.”

Kent stared at her stupidly. “But — but, Miss Daphne —” he could think of no overwhelming reason to submit for her coming. “Oh, see here,” he cried with a sudden inspiration, “aren’t you at all interested in this — this discovery of mine?”

“Interested? I’m dying of curiosity! I supposed you didn’t wish to—”

“If you should happen to show up here tomorrow I believe I can show you something that will amaze you — that will make those big eyes—”

She frowned. "I should very much like to witness any phenomena you might produce," she said with crushing formality, though her lashes flickered imperceptibly, "if you would be good enough to explain them to me."

Kent regretted that he had obtruded the little personality. He was properly contrite, and begged her to come the next day, when he would tell her himself of the discovery which would shortly be the world's property. He was immensely flattered by the parting remark she trilled back at him as the low-hanging branch swung back into place: "You really couldn't keep me away."

"Say, Kent," said Butler that night abruptly, "are you blamed sure that camera wasn't loaded?"

"What if it was?" Kent returned. But he picked up the camera from where he had laid it when he returned from the Seventh Heaven, and opened the back of it. There were no films in it. "You're crazy, Butler," he said shortly.

## 5

The girl sat in the tree crotch swinging her brown shod feet nervously and twisting the end of the braid that hung over her shoulder into a great curl that shone like copper when the sunlight filtered through the trees.

Not a sail skimmed the surface of the placid lake — not a bird winged its way across the brilliant blue of the sky. It was very warm and breathless. The girl noticed that a slim little shoot quite at the edge of the cliff where vagrant breezes might be enticed, seemed perfectly motionless. She scanned the horizon anxiously. There was not a fleck of cloud or the shadow of a bird that might be mistaken for the Flying Scarab. She took a book from a hollow in the tree, which seemed to hold other articles, too, and began to read. She had read all of a paragraph, when suddenly she thrust the book back into the recess, slid to the ground and sat down, Turk-fashion, close to the edge of the cliff.

The white speck that she had discerned moving quickly across the sky like a tiny pilot balloon in a gust of wind, was now taking form. The girl appreciated the aptness of the name which the aeroplane had been given. It looked like a huge scarab with silken wings outspread and metal body gleaming. She remembered that to the Egyptians the scarab was the symbol of immortality. There was something fitting about that, too. In what had man's infinity been so demonstrated as in this century-old effort to touch upon the very shores of infinity?

Straight toward the Seventh Heaven the Scarab was heading. Its shadow streaked the lake with a wavering line of indigo. But instead of the aviator dipping his elevators to glide down to the clearing as the girl had expected, he shut off the rear propellor engines, and starting up the motor of the helicopter-sustainer, hovered perhaps a hundred feet above the cliff.

"Watch that little sprig," shouted Kent presently to the girl who was almost beneath him. She turned her eyes to the lone little shoot she had noticed before at the very edge of the cliff, outlined scrawny and straight against the blue of lake and sky. Every leaf seemed still. As she looked, wondering at Kent's purpose, a great butterfly poised itself for a moment and then settled on a leaf.

"Watch!" Kent called again.



She watched. And in a moment she thought a breeze must have sprung up suddenly. The leaves stirred. The gorgeous wings of the butterfly swayed. Then the girl uttered a startled little cry. As though a blight had fallen upon it from the sky, or as though an invisible hand had stripped from it in sudden fury its sturdy new leaves, the little shoot stood barren against the vivid background of blue. The butterfly lay lifeless among the fallen, shriveled leaves. The twigs and slender branches drooped, and the whole skeleton of the shoot seemed about to crumple into nothingness.

The girl turned an awe-struck face up to the man in the Flying Scarab. She thought of stories she had read about Hindu magic and wonder-workers. She wondered if she had been hypnotized. In another moment the Scarab had descended and Kent, scarcely waiting for the wheels to strike the earth, leaped from his seat and ran to her side.

"You saw it?" he cried excitedly, "the butterfly and all—? Isn't it amazing — isn't it wonderful, girl?" The girl sat down limply on the grass.

"I tell you it will revolutionize warfare — it will revolutionize civilization. It is stupendous — it is inconceivable! Do you grasp the importance of it?" he asked her, almost roughly.

"Yes — yes, I think I do," she said faintly. "But how — the principle — the—"

Kent, succumbing to a boyish abandon of enthusiasm, flung himself on the grass beside her and explained as best he could to an unscientific mind the theory of the phenomena she had just witnessed. He drew rough diagrams for her on scraps of paper and the backs of envelopes. He outlined briefly the principles of the X-ray and also of the Hertzian waves as their activities are disclosed by the wireless telegraph. He tried to make it clear to her how he had fused the underlying elements of those two forces — how he had been able to focus etheric wave lengths into an invisible beam so powerful that all forms of life were destroyed when subjected to its rays.

"And this is only the beginning," he said. "It is like comparing a sling shot to a Gatling gun to compare what you have seen with what experiments will develop. A whole country can be devastated — a whole army cut down by this invisible force—"

"But, oh," began the girl, "what a hideous, barbarous—"

"So hideous and so barbarous," he interrupted, "that the dogs of war will be kept muzzled — and muzzled tight. The more barbarous we make war the less we're going to have of it."

"And it is you who will tighten up the muzzle to the last notch. What a famous man you are going to be, Mr. Mercury!"

Kent smiled. He couldn't tell her that fame was already much of a bore to him.

"Not till tomorrow, anyhow," he replied. "I'm not giving it out to the press until this afternoon. I think there are four reporters down at camp now waiting for me." He grinned boyishly. "We got ahead of 'em on this trip — they were all up in the air till Butler saw fit to let them know where we were."

The girl had arisen suddenly. "I must be going on," she said hurriedly. "I have been here longer than I intended. You have been so good and patient about explaining things to me. Good-bye, Mr. Mercury. Good luck."

"But see here — you can't go like this, you know. Can't you tell me where I may see you again — may I — won't you—"

She interrupted his stammering petition with an odd little laugh. "Mr. Kent" — he remembered afterward that she had called him Kent — "Mr. Kent, I'll let you know in the morning!"

"Really?" he exclaimed delightedly.

“Really.” She traced a cross above her heart with the tip of her finger.

“I’ll be here!” he assured her with enthusiasm, as she started down the little path to the road. A ripple of merry, tantalizing laughter came back to him through the dense foliage of the trees.

## 6

The next morning, when Butler sauntered into camp, having walked to the village and back for some copper wire, shaving soap, and coffee, he stopped short before Kent, who was lying before the tent smoking, and regarded him with fine scorn. “Stung!” he said briefly.

“Huh?” inquired Kent indifferently.

Butler removed a sheet of the *Daily Sun* from his pocket and thrust it beneath Kent’s nose. Kent gazed down the Roman ridge of it and sat up suddenly. “How the devil — how the dev—”

Most of the front sheet of the *Sun* was devoted to an account, fully illustrated, of “Kent’s Discovery of Death-dealing Rays; Mystery of Disappearance Explained; Perhaps Most Notable Scientific Achievement of Century.”

There was a picture of Kent seated in the Scarab; there was another of Butler and Kent before the tent of their camp, and also a most remarkable one showing Kent at the culminating moment of achievement, standing by the table where lay his apparatus, with his hand grasping Butler’s shoulder in unconcealed joy.

“Stung!” repeated Butler, emphatically. “And by a petticoat!”

Kent paid no attention to the other’s disgusted remarks. He was reading the story carefully.

“By George, Butler,” he cried, when he had finished, “do you know that’s mighty well done — and what a scoop! Those fellows yesterday were all on the evening papers. By the way, it’s kind of queer the fellows from the other morning editions didn’t show up. What a scoop — Good Lord!” Then he laughed long and loud until Butler was goaded into throwing a large neat pile of quilts at him. “But, Butler,” he roared, “she used my own camera — I stood around meek as Moses while she snapped to her heart’s content. — Oh, Lord! — I insisted upon carefully explaining everything under the shining sun. I implored her to permit me to demonstrate the thing. Butler, that girl’s a wonder — she’s a wonder, I tell you.”

“I had my suspicions,” remarked Butler. “If you had listened to me—”

“Oh, hang it all, Butler, what’s the odds? I’m glad the girl got the scoop. By the way, I’m going back to town tomorrow. Yep. I’ve got a little business to transact with the *Daily Sun*.”

When he strolled into the outer office of that newspaper the next afternoon the small boy behind the pink sheet behind the desk was overcome to the point of speechlessness upon recognizing the aviator.

“I wish to see the young woman who wrote that story about me yesterday,” Kent repeated slowly. “No, not the editor, Miss — Miss—” he hesitated strategically.

“Mis’ Dawson? Yessir. I’ll fetch her right ’way, sir,” the boy finally responded, darting into the inner rooms. He returned shortly to say that “She was in the library, room 403, right there, sir, yessir, thank you, sir.”

Kent found the girl in the library room looking through the files on the high table.

“Miss Daphne,” he said softly.

She raised her eyes, shadowed now by the masses of red-brown hair piled high on her head.

“Oh, Mr. Kent,” she cried earnestly, “I want you to know that I *hated* doing it — how I hated doing it. There is no excuse. I know there is none. But somebody had to get it eventually. I hadn’t been here very long — and I wasn’t making good. My father wrote me that when he was sailing one day he noticed that somebody had set up camp just below my Seventh Heaven. I seemed to be sure at once that it was you — I don’t know why. I had to make good, or lose my position. So I tracked you down. And I so nearly lost as it was. You didn’t give me quite time enough” — she smiled deprecatingly — “I had to bribe father to meet the Morning men at the railroad and drive them to the Seventh Heaven by the thirty-mile route. Of course when it got too late to turn in copy for yesterday, they went back to the village, and found that the evening men had returned with the story. It was reprehensible — it was—”

“But, my dear Miss Dawson, I’m not in the least put out. I liked it, I assure you. Liked it immensely. And I want to tell you you’re the aptest pupil I ever had.”

Constance Dawson laughed happily.

“Oh, but you should have seen the dreadful books I had poked away in the crotch of that old tree, along with — cameras and films and things,” she added, “in case of emergency.”

“You can’t say that I wasn’t perfectly tractable,” he laughed back. “Simply delighted in putting my neck in the noose — head in the lion’s mouth, as it were. I hope in view of my past amiability, Miss Dawson, you will let me call upon you tonight, where we can take the matter up in greater detail?”

The girl looked up at him startled. Then she said quietly, “I’m sure we should be delighted to have you. We live at the Albermarle. I am — you know I am Dawson’s wife.”

Dawson? Dawson? The name seemed oddly familiar, but he couldn’t quite place it. Then, suddenly, he remembered.