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THE SIREN OF THE COLEMAN HOUSE.

A Nest of Eager Gamblers; a Big Broadway Hotel as a Screen and a Clever Woman as the "Capper."

TO ENSNARE NELLIE BLY.

The Wiles and Tricks of a Skilful Adventuress and Schemes to Victimize Women Who Have Money.

MRS. CLEMISHERE; ROOM 312.

The Hushed Mystery of the "Boston Club," and Its Select Membership of Notable Children of Fortune.

PAT SHEEDY, GAMBLER, APPEARS.

His Quick Eye Recognizes Nellie Bly, He Gives the Alarm and Her Dear Friends Suddenly Disappear.

INCIDENTS OF MISS BLY'S ADVENTURE.

And a Word About This Coleman House and Its Distinguished Coterie of Guests and Mysteries.

There is a "club" in the Coleman House—mysterious rooms, with drawn curtains and a colored man inside the door who answers the raps. I came very near getting into the rooms the other night.

There is a woman in the Coleman House whose business it is to catch victims for gambling games, as well as for several other little games on her own hook.

I came near being her victim last week. Only an accident saved me from it.

It happened in this way:

I was told to meet a young man whom I shall designate as Mr. Knight and plan with him some way to make the acquaintance of this clever woman of the Coleman House. This hotel, I suppose everybody knows, is on Broadway, from Twenty-seventh to Twenty-eighth street, in the heart of the "Tenderloin" district. You can always find a crowd of gamblers, bookmakers and sporting men there.

Now, Mr. Knight, being a young man about town, had, in some of his various and vast experiences, met this woman, so it was not difficult to plan a meeting for my benefit.

MEETING THE SIREN.

It came in this way, a natural way one must confess, and one not liable to arouse suspicion. Mr. Knight called upon the clever woman of the Coleman House and, saying he had had no luncheon, invited her down into the restaurant with him. I came into the restaurant a few moments later and walked past their table to one at the other end of the room.

I had not been seated long when Mr. Knight crossed to my table and in a sweet, affable way asked apologetically:

"Am I mistaken, or are you Mrs. Clark?"

"So you've forgotten me!" I exclaimed in a reproachful manner.

"Not now, oh, no, not now," he assured me sweetly. "How are you, and when did you come to town?"

"I'm well, as usual," I reply, "and I've been in town just long enough to be bored. What's going on? I'm dying to have some fun."

"If you are alone," he says, "come over to my table. I'm with a very jolly friend whom I want you to know. You'll like her, I am sure."

This was all said and done of course for the benefit of the clever woman, and I, feeling the way was sufficiently paved, got up and followed him.

EXAMINING HER PROSPECTIVE VICTIM.

"Mrs. Clark," he began solemnly, "I want you to know my friend, Mrs. Clemishere."

Mrs. Clemishere and I shook hands across the table. Then I sat down and devoted my attention to Mr. Knight, while Mrs. Clemishere's sharp eyes estimated the cost, to a penny, I'll wager, of my attire. She may have, and results proved so, thought she estimated the character of the girl, but for once, and for the first time, her sharp eyes and clever wits were led astray.

I had a rapid tongue and I devoted all my conversation to Mr. Knight, as was seemly in such old friends after so long a separation. Occasionally I appealed to Mrs. Clemishere, as one woman will to another when they are sympathetic. And, of course, we were sympathetic, for my aim was to make Mrs. Clemishere believe that I had taken one of the sudden and unaccountable likings for her which sometimes do occur between strangers, [illegible]

Knight, "and where is he? He said the last time I saw him that when I came to New York again he would tell me of a rousing place to go—a place for women to gamble."

"Are you still as crazy on gambling as ever?" Mr. Knight asked in a tone that conveyed utter disapproval of my horrid and shockingly dissipated accomplishments.

"Of course!" I rattled on. "What else is there for a poor girl to do? We women must have some kind of excitement. Don't you think so, Mrs. Clemishere?"

Mrs. Clemishere gives me a sweet and approving smile such as a fond mother bestows upon her dear, darling Tootsie-Wootsie, aged five, when it sings "McGinty" in the key of X for the company.

GETTING POINTS.

"I play Wall street sometimes," she says indifferently. "What do you play?"

"Oh, anything!" I exclaim with an airiness that I regret later on.

"Poker?" she asks mildly.

"Poker and faro and roulette when I get a chance and races in the summer and, in fact, anything that offers any fun and excitement."

Mrs. Clemishere beams on me with delight. I am a very willing victim and she does not find her work hard.

She takes a paper and scribbles all over it in a dreamy and aimless manner. After a while she asks my address and I name the first street number that comes into my mind, which Mr. Knight writes down on a slip of paper for her. Then she tells him to write her address for me, which he does.

I take the paper and on it is written:

Mrs. Allie Clemishere,
Room 312, Coleman House.

Some more aimless scribbling is done by her and then she gives Mr. Knight a tip, which he instantly takes. It is to go away and leave clever Mrs. Clemishere alone with her pliable victim.

Of course I pretend to see and know nothing. Mr. Knight makes his excuses and I am left alone with Mrs. Clemishere.

She leans on the table and looks at me very pleasantly and I seize the opportunity to study her appearance.

THE SIREN.

Mrs. Allie Clemishere is a woman of marked personality. I have met but very few persons that do not in some way, feature, expression or mannerism resemble some one else. Mrs. Lizzie Halliday is one of the few. So is Mrs. Allie Clemishere. She does not look in the faintest like any other woman.

First, she is about five feet six, as closely as I can judge, and generously developed. There is where Mrs. Clemishere's resemblance to other women ceases.

Her face is a striking one, long and thin, the thinness not meaning leanness. Her mouth is small, her lips thin and not noticeable in color. Her teeth are like her face, long and thin. Cruel-looking teeth they are, as a rat's teeth look cruel. Mrs. Clemishere's teeth are not strong, as every one in view bears gold filling.

The nose is long, straight and sharp. The eyes may be the worst or best feature, as different persons may view them. They are a sharp gray with a touch of blue and are large and bright. It is in expression they are faulty. So keen are they, so swiftly do they rise or fall, so shrewdly do they glance around or over one, that they invite suspicion and dislike.

These remarkable blue-gray eyes wear dark rings naturally, but a pencil is always used to darken both lashes and brows. A cautious and knowing use of paint and powder makes a very presentable appearance of what would naturally be a sallow complexion.

IN MOURNING.

This face, so peculiar in its way as to impress one with its power and strength, is set off by an abundance of black and gray hair—hair not black and gray mixed as one always sees it in people, but black on the top of her head to the width of her forehead, with the sides snowy white. It is combed straight back from a very good brow and is gathered in a high knot directly on the top of her head.

Mrs. Clemishire dresses in deep mourning. So much for her appearance.

As she leaned over the table, smiling and confidential, I waited for her to speak.

"Do you really mean what you say about gambling?" she asked hurriedly and with a manner that seemed to suggest that she was going to do one a good turn by telling one something great.

"What? That I like to gamble?" I inquire.

"Yes. Listen!" She glances around and turns back to me. "I do a little of it myself, and when I get a good thing I'll let you in on it."

"How?" I ask densely. "When you find a good place to gamble?"

"No, child," with a smile that said, 'What a great, sweet, charming baby you are!' "I mean in stocks. I do lots of it and I make lots of money. Why, I've made $1,200 in the last month. The next good tip I have I'll let you in on it. You give me $100 and I treble it for you."

TOO EASY A GAME.

I did not wish to bid a fond and final farewell to $100 quite so easily. So I began to shy.

"Wall street is so stupid," I cry wearily. "You put up your money and, presto! it's gone and no excitement for the price. It's like betting on a horse, you know, and having to get the excitement of the race through a sporting extra."

"But I don't lose my money, my dear," she says, winningly; "I make money."

"What's the use of even that unless you have the excitement of the game?" I ask, with the air of one surfeited with enough greenbacks to carpet the Brooklyn Bridge an inch thick.

"Well, I like to make money," she said, pleasantly, "but if you like to play poker I know where you can go."

"Like it? I adore it!" I gasp, with clasped hands.

"I can take you to a place, a regular gambling resort, where you can play all the poker you wish," she assured me.

"I say carelessly, big game? Poker is so stupid unless it's for something big."

"I guess you can lose from five hundred to twenty-five in an hour. Most people consider that quite sufficiently large," she answered, with a slightly sarcastic laugh.

"That's promising," I say: "when will you take me there and where is it?"

She glances around and turning to me says swiftly and distinctly:

"It's right above your head. It's known as the Boston Club."

I do not speak for a moment.

"Meet me here to-morrow," she goes on rapidly, "and I'll take you in. Come at 1.30. I'll be waiting in the parlor for you. Hush, not a word to Mr. Knight."

"I'll be here." I promise her as Mr. Knight reappears and carries me away, and Mrs. Clemishere parts with me with every evidence of cordiality.

THE SECOND VISIT.

I make my appearance at the Coleman House at 2 o'clock the following day. I am purposely a half hour late, for I thought it was more politic to make her anxious than to show anxiety on my own part.

Mrs. Clemishere is waiting for me in the parlor. She rises at my approach and slipping her arm around my shoulder kisses me on the cheek. I do not turn the other.

"How late you are, you bad girl," she says with tender chiding, and I laugh and tell her that I was out lunching.

In truth, I had been spending several hours learning the beautiful game of poker that I had declared was my chief delight. [illegible]

MRS. ALLIE CLEMISHERE—THE SIREN OF THE COLEMAN HOUSE.

norance as soon as I was taken into the gambling room.

I had worked hard at the game, I confess, and had learned all about three of a kind beating two pair, and a "royal flush" and a "bobtail flush" and a "full house." As for "bluffing!" Well, I showed my teacher a trick or two and beat him at the game he was teaching me. He simply said: "You'll do!" in a dry sort of a way, and on that recommendation I went down to the Boston Club in the Coleman House.

But Mrs. Clemishere was not ready for me to leave her clutches just yet. She wanted to see if a disappointment in the game of poker would not send me back to her own game—Wall street, mysterious stocks, &c. Why give me into the hands of card sharps so long as there was a hope of getting everything out of me on her own account?

"I'm so sorry," she said, "but I did not get to see the man that was to take you into the Boston Club. He is one of the proprietors and they've had some big games on and he hasn't been able to come out to talk to me."

"That is too provoking," I answer with a little shrug.

Mrs. Clemishere slips her arm around me again.

"I haven't had my breakfast yet," she says. "Come down and let's eat. I've been waiting for you until this hour."

My old friend Mr. Knight arrives at this moment, and together we all go to the dining-room. Mrs. Clemishere orders luncheon for herself. Mr. Knight takes a drink. I refuse to have anything. I am afraid to trust anybody. I had been told that a "knock-out"—a drug put in food or drink—was one of the weapons employed by such people on their victims, and I had no intention of being caught in such a trap.

WALL STREET AGAIN.

"Go away and leave us alone," Mrs. Clemishere says to Mr. Knight; "I want to say something to my little friend."

Mr. Knight is very affable and obeys.

"I've just heard from my cousin," she begins at once. "He is the one who conducts all my Wall street business. He tells me that he knows of a good thing, and for me to be ready to send him several hundred dollars at three hours' notice. Now, if you want to play, I'll let you put up a hundred dollars."

"What's he going to buy?" I ask innocently.

For a moment she is cornered, but only for a moment. She rallies so quickly and with such an unmoved countenance that I begin to admire her cleverness.

"I never ask what he buys," she says, with charming indifference. "I give him the money and he always sends back a big return for it, and that's all I care."

"What is your cousin's name?" I ask.

"Hartshorn. He is very rich and only goes into Wall street for amusement," she assures me.

"I'm not fond of Wall street," I say again, and this time very decidedly. "I like to play any gambling game where I can get some excitement out of it. Wall street is no fun. Now, I thought I was going to have a good time to-day playing poker or roulette."

"Well, if I'd got to see that man that has the game upstairs, I'd have got you in. I'll see him to-night for sure, though, and if you come in to-morrow at 2 I'll introduce him to you."

Now while we sat there I saw Mrs. Clemishere glancing very frequently towards the hall, and I noticed, though I pretended not to, that several men had been passing in through the Twenty-seventh street entrance out to the office, out the Broadway door and in around the same way again.

They were looking me over and I knew it. Of course Mrs. Clemishere did not speak to or recognize them in any way except in one instance. That time she merely raised her eyes [illegible]

sign that I could detect. Knowing that I would not get into any gambling den that day I made excuses and went away, promising to return the next day.

CLOSETED WITH A VICTIM.

I did so.

At 2.30 the next afternoon I walked into the Coleman House parlor and found Mrs. Clemishere sitting with a young girl near the Broadway window. They had their backs to me, so I sat down and waited. Mrs. Clemishere was talking to the girl in a tender, confiding, sympathetic way—a way in which she is beyond competition.

She asked her where she lived, if she was married, how liberal her husband was with her, if she ever went out on any little secret jaunts, if she liked a jolly time, and all that. She did it beautifully, I confess, in a way that the girl could never suspect she was being cross-questioned.

I interrupted them at last, and Mrs. Clemishere rushed to me with a sweet smile on her lips, clasped me in her arms and kissed me as she had done the day before. Never once did she express the slightest annoyance at my tardiness. Not she! There was nothing but sweet smiles and tender words.

"We don't want to sit in the parlor," she said at once. "Come with me."

She led me down the hall and seated herself beside me on the sill of a window facing Twenty-seventh street.

"Are you going to take me in to gamble to-day?" I asked eagerly.

"The man that I was to see told me everything is closed up at present. He says there is no place to gamble, and he is an all-round sport and knows," she said decidedly.

I am provoked and bored, and I show it. I am at a loss to understand why she is putting me off until I decide that she and her friends are not quite sure of me. They are taking no risks these days.

AFRAID OF SUPT. BYRNES.

It is not easy to escape the eye of Supt. Byrnes, and the gamblers know it.

"I'll fix it all right for you to-morrow, though," Mrs. Clemishere says: "The truth is that I've had a little trouble with the men in there (pointing to the mysterious rooms) and I'm going easy."

"How?" I ask, and am surprised when she tells me.

"It was a misunderstanding," she said, "and since then I hate that man."

"That man" had just come down the hall, passed the parlor, and with a latch-key was letting himself into a door that was half glass and covered with a dotted mull. The man was rather short and had a red mustache.

"Who is he?" I asked.

"His name is Heineman, and he is one of the members of the Boston Club," was the reply. "I knew a man, a real brainy chap—and I do love brains—who knew about the Boston Club. He threatened to have it pulled, so I told them and they think I was in the scheme."

"What scheme?"

"Blackmail," she answered. "He did it to get money out of them and they blamed me with being in with him. But I was not. I told him I would warn them, and I did. The whole thing was settled, but it cost a lot of money and they are sore on me ever since. That's why I intend to introduce you to the head man and let him 'steer' you in to the game. He's coming here to-morrow at 3. I made an appointment for him to meet you. I'll introduce you and leave you to fix it with him to take you into the rooms."

"Who is the man?" I asked.

"A professional gambler—Pat Sheedy!"

I sit in perfect silence while I try to regain my nerve.

"Did you ever hear of Pat Sheedy?" she goes on. "He is a famous gambler."

Do I know Pat Sheedy? Of him, and by sight, most emphatically I do; but I do not tell Mrs. Clemishere this.

"Why, poker is not unlawful," I say guilelessly. "A club may play poker and no one has power to stop it."

"But this is different," she explains. "They have a 'kitty' and they have 'cappers.'"

"What are 'cappers?'"

"Men whose business it is to draw other men into the game, to go out and meet fellows and induce them to come here and play," she says.

THE BOSTON CLUB.

The situation of the rooms could not have been better for a "club." They form a little apartment all to themselves, surrounded on three sides by halls and the fourth side facing Twenty-seventh street. There are eight doors to the rooms—three in the hall where I sat, facing the parlor, one in the back hall and four in the hall above the "Ladies' Entrance."

While I sat there I saw from a dozen to fifteen men go into the rooms, some with latch-keys and others had to knock for admittance. Those carrying keys, although Mrs. Clemishere said she knew them all, never gave her the faintest sign of recognition, but they all watched me closely, and I supposed their frequent trips to and fro were all done to place my appearance in their minds and to judge if I were a safe victim.

Meanwhile Mrs. Clemishere was not losing time. She was "pumping" me, gently, cautiously and cunningly. Unknown to her I was doing the same thing—"pumping"—and she was being "pumped." It may not have been to any very great extent, but at least I gained facts that have been verified, and she got in return an exquisitely beautiful ghost story.

"I imagine you have had trouble with your husband, my dear," she said sweetly. "Am I not right? What was it? Did he object to your having a good time?"

"That he did most emphatically," I answer, with a laugh. "You know how selfish men are? They want all the fun on their own side. I objected."

"Is he rich?"—softly, the steely eyes studying my face.

"What do you suppose I married for?" I ask, laughing again. "What do women marry for these days? Didn't you marry for money?"

"My husband and I both had money," was the evasive reply.

"And you loved him?" I say.

This time she laughs. It is in rather a high key and is not musical.

"When he died I went to my mother and I said, 'Thank God Jack's dead. I'll know where he is now.'

"Why we parted twice before he died. We lived in San Francisco. It was there he got in an accident and I went back to him then and nursed him for a year until he died. He's been dead six years now, thank God!"

"And you still wear deep mourning for a man you never loved?"

"You can bet all your worth I don't. I'm in mourning now for my father. I've been in mourning for eleven years steady. It suits my business, but I'm going out of it. I'm having a gay dress made now."

A SURPRISE.

Mrs. Clemishere had slipped her arm around my waist, and now I felt her hand go creeping towards the pocket in my sealskin jacket, like a live animal with cat's eyes.

I am just thanking my lucky stars that my purse is in my muff when I feel her hand come in contact with something, and she stiffens all over as if she had received a deadly electric shock.

Then I remember! I had a revolver in my pocket! For an instant I am seized with varied emotions. I don't know whether to yield to the laughter that is even then making me shake like a monkey with the ague or to throw up my hands and confess that I was afraid to enter that gambling den unarmed.

Like a woman, I do neither, but turn the subject [illegible] mythical husband.

"You should be quite free now that you have no fear from your husband," I say feelingly: "I wish I was. I would wear mourning, con mucho justo."

"Don't you know where your husband is?" (Her voice is strained, and at the sound of it the old desire to laugh almost upsets me.)

"No!" pushing up my lips scornfully. "He may be in New York for all I know. The last I was told of him he was in Scotland. But I expect to run across him any day, and when I do you'll hear of my having my head shot off. That is, if he's quicker than I."

"Why, what do you mean?" she asks.

"He's threatened if he ever sees me with any one else to shoot on sight," I add. "I've made up my mind to die hard. When I see him, if I'm not alone, I'll shoot first. Wouldn't you?"

"Indeed I would. So you go armed? That is right. I don't blame you. I'd do the same thing." She assures me and I wink the other eye in self-congratulation. I flatter myself I have explained that revolver in my pocket very satisfactorily.

"Do you know any men?" she asks me. "I mean men with money, with more money than brains, though I do love brains. I'm just dying to meet some men with lots of money."

"They generally know how to hold on to it when they have it," I say.

ALWAYS SUCCESSFUL.

"I'd like to see the man I couldn't work for his money," she laughs. "I've never failed yet and I've had men of all kinds, young and old. Why, I have one now—he's in California at present—who is dying to marry me. He has a wife, but he says he'll leave her and get a divorce if I'll marry him. I don't know whether I want to marry or not. Sometimes I think I will marry this one. I told him last week that he could settle $200 a month on his wife and that would take care of her. Then, I said I'd take a flat and he could come and board with me. For I don't care what the world says. The world has never paid me a salary. He wrote back that the thought was heaven and he had decided he couldn't live the old life any longer. So I expect him very soon. If I take a flat within the next ten days, will you come to live with me? You may do just as you wish, paint the place as red as you please, so long as you don't have me put out."

I was beginning to be bored. It was tiresome to sit all the afternoon in that window merely to have the men going in and out of those mysterious rooms to inspect me.

"How do you live?" I asked at last. "Did your husband leave you money?"

"No, he left me poor, but I worked several things until I had $10,000. My brother-in-law's mother-in-law, Mrs. Crawford, had $10,000 and she went in with me to buy a coffee plantation in Guatemala. We had a $45,000 mortgage on it, which we paid off last year. Now it will pay us $50,000 a year apiece. Mrs. Crawford is now in Chicago. She has some business to do there and I had business here."

"What business have you now?"

"Lots of things for my cousin, who is a very rich man. By the way, you must let me make you know him. He's dead in love with me, although he has a wife, and she's awfully jealous of me. I tell you I can work money out of him. He's very liberal. All the men seem to take to me. I'd like to see the one I couldn't get money out of. Pat Sheedy, that you're to meet to-morrow, likes me pretty well, too."

She laughed as if well satisfied with herself and everybody.

At the end of the afternoon session she had little for her trouble. She had named several persons she knew, but had not found any one that I knew.

EAGER FOR VICTIMS.

"Have you no rich friend you can bring around to me?" she asked anxiously. "Some one with lots of money."

"I know one," I replied, "son of a millionaire publisher. I might be able to bring him around."

"And he's got lots of money?"

"Oh, galores of it!"

"Then I'll tell you what to do." (See her clever plan.) "You tell him to call here to see you to-morrow. Tell him to send his card up to my room, 312, and I'll go down to see him. Of course you won't be here. You come at 3, and I'll introduce you to Pat Sheedy, and you two can go off some where and leave me to work Mr. Man. I'll come down and say you went out with a friend, and that you said for him to wait until you came back. Of course you won't come back."

"That's lovely!" I acknowledge. "I'll fix it for you."

"You are sure he has money?" she asks again.

"Proof positive!" I vow gravely.

The afternoon has passed away and I am cold and stiff from sitting in the window. I complain of a heavy feeling in order to get away, and that makes Mrs. Clemishere beg me to go to her room.

"You are looking ill and tired out," she tells me, sorrowfully. "Do come to my room and rest. You can lie down and I'll rub your head. Do come!"

I am afraid to go, so I am proof against all persuasions. I am afraid of those "knock-out" drugs. She says she wants a Manhattan cocktail, and as she never has her purse with her, of which fact she carefully informs me, I tell her to come down to the dining-room and drink at my expense. This she does. I will not take anything.

The next day I met her again at 3, and Mrs. Allie Clemishere is waiting for me in the parlor. She has her bonnet and coat on and does not move to take them off.

"Pat Sheedy could not come this afternoon," she said. "He has a big game on, and he didn't want to leave. But he is going to meet you to-night, and take you where you can play. It's better at night, anyway. Did you make arrangements for your friend to come to see me?"

"Yes; he'll be here at 5," I answer, and she is satisfied.

MR. SHEEDY INTRODUCED.

Once again I buy her a drink and go away.

I go back that night. I am to be there at 9. It is five minutes to 9 when I go upstairs. In a little alcove next to the parlor, barely containing a sofa and two chairs and darkened by heavy portieres, sits Mrs. Clemishere.

A man is with her.

She sees me and rises to her feet. This time she proposed in the afternoon I should be Mrs. Roberts, of Boston, because she doesn't think it necessary that Pat Sheedy should know I am Mrs. Clark, wife of a rich Pittsburger.

I know that is merely told me, but that in reality she tells Pat Sheedy or whoever she introduces to me all she thinks she knows about me. As she kisses me she leads me forward and the man rises awkwardly to his feet.

As I live, it is Pat Sheedy!

"Mr. Sheedy," she says, holding me by the hand, "this is Mrs. Roberts, a friend of mine from Boston."

Pat Sheedy held out his hand and I gave him mine.

"Glad to meet you, Mrs. Roberts," he says, and I reply with a slight inclination of the head and a smile.

We all sit down. Pat Sheedy proposes that we have a bottle of wine, but I am so afraid that I blurt out I really couldn't drink because I haven't had any dinner, and thereby get myself into more trouble. Mrs. Clemishere instantly proposes that we go down together to dinner. I ask Pat Sheedy to go with us.

"Not for $300!" he says, emphatically.

"He never goes downstairs," Mrs. Clemishere explains. "He is always in the house, you know, but he daren't show himself around the dining-room. He spends all his time in the game. Don't you, Mr. Sheedy?"

THE GAMBLER'S CONFIDENCES.

"Some little of it," he confesses cheerfully.

"Who is in there? What sort of people?" I ask curiously.

"Bookmakers, some gamblers, two or three thieves and some youngsters from Boston. They're having a big game in there to-night."

"What are they doing?" I inquire.

"Everybody! That's what I'm doing," he says cordially.

Once again he begins to insist upon having some wine brought, and I am so much in terror of this that I instantly swear I am dying of hunger and must eat.

"Go down then. I'll wait here till you come back. Then we'll have that wine. You'll see my father in the restaurant," he says to me, and then to Mrs. Clemishere: "He went down to eat."

"Am I going to play roulette to-night?" I ask, and Mrs. Clemishere cries quickly:

"We'll see all about that when we come back," and drags me away.

At a table near the window sat a man with a bald head and red-gray mustache. He was inclined to flirt with me, but did not recognize Mrs. Clemishere in any way, although she had been talking with him upstairs a few moments before.

"That is the man Sheedy called his father," she says to me. "Go on and make a mash. He is the only member of the club upstairs that has any money, and they say he's got loads of it. He is a bookmaker. His name is Joe Cotton."

"Why don't you speak to him?" I ask.

"I never speak to any of them," she says. "They all know me and I know them all, but we never recognize each other anywhere. I never even speak to Mr. Sheedy before people. Don't you think he's nice?"

"Very" I answer cordially, and begin my dinner.

We had not proceeded far when Pat Sheedy came in and went over to Joe Cotton's table. Sheedy did not even look at us, although there was no one but the waiters and cashier in the room. He stood there talking earnestly to Cotton, while Cotton looked at me. I made up my mind I'd make Sheedy speak, so I called to him:

"Who gave you more than $300?" I inquired, laughingly.

"What do you mean?" he asked with a smile.

"You said you wouldn't come down here for $300, and here you are," I explain.

Sheedy laughs, and so does Cotton.

"I was sent for," Sheedy explains. "A newspaper editor wanted to see me on a little business."

He mentioned the name of an editor that sent my heart away up in my throat. The editor is, as I know, devoted to roulette, and doubtless dropped in to see Sheedy in connection with it but if he knew how near he was to seeing me there, I fancy there would have been some surprise all the way round.

MR. SHEEDY REAPPEARS.

We followed Sheedy upstairs very shortly. He had gone into the "club" rooms, but Mrs. Clemishere explained how she could get him.

"I do not need even to speak to his valet, Warfield, who is always on duty at the door," she said. "All I have to do when I want Mr. Sheedy is to merely raise my eyebrows. Warfield understands and goes for Mr. Sheedy, who'll quit the biggest game any time to come to me."

She spoke the truth in one respect. Warfield made his appearance at the door to admit a visitor and Mrs. Clemishere never spoke, but almost instantly on Warfield's disappearance Sheedy came walking out.

"We must have that bottle at once," he said; and I said, "None for me."

My determination not to drink put a damper on the crowd. No one felt especially jolly over it.

Mr. Sheedy looked perplexed and thoughtful.

At last, at Sheedy's request, we left our old station in the window in the hall and returned to the alcove.

Hardly had we been seated when we were joined by a tall, thin man with gray hair and close gray whiskers.

He was introduced as Dr. George Dalton.

"I am a horse doctor, ladies; that's the only kind of a doctor I am," he said.

"What is he, really?" I ask, turning to Sheedy.

"Anything," he assures me. "George scuttled two ships and was caught scuttling a third, and he did time for it; didn't you, George?"

George laughs, without seeming to appreciate this frank confidence.

"George is mad to-night. He's one of the partners in there (pointing to the 'club' rooms), and he ordered a lot of baked beans for the boys to-night and Pearson, the hotel proprietor, played a joke on him."

"Is there a big game on to-night?" Mrs. Clemishere asked.

"Yes," says Pat Sheedy; "a pretty big one."

"Am I not to go in?" I plead.

"Not to-night," Mrs. Clemishere answers hastily.

"Why not?" demands George Dalton.

"Because Mr. Sheedy says at present there is no game for women in New York," Mrs. Clemishere says, warningly.

Pat Sheedy says, "No, there isn't," in a way that is not convincing.

"Well, can't I ever peep in to see what they are doing?" I coax, and again George Dalton says, "Why not?"

But the other two are not quite ready. They want me to drink first, and even to get in the rooms I could not take the risk of drinking drugged wine.

"How old are you?" Mrs. Clemishere asked to make conversation when we all grew silent.

"How old do you think?" he demanded.

"Thirty-five or forty," she says.

"If you'd been hangin' since I'm forty-four you'd be pretty stiff," he said with a laugh. "I'm forty-five. I've been all around the world four times. I stubbed my toe first in Boston twenty-seven years ago. Before then I'd walked the streets all night to keep from sleepin' and I'd walk 'em all day to keep from eatin'. Yes, I'm an old man now. I've got two boys and a girl older than this girl (pointing to me). My girl is in a convent. She is goin' to be a nun."

"Have you any business besides this?" I asked.

"I had a gambling-house at No. 45 West Twenty-eighth street, but it's been closed since last July. I'm paying rent right along, and all the fixtures and everything's there just ready, but I daren't play."

"Why? Are you being squeezed for more money?"

"That's it," he says. "Will you come around to see my place?"

The conversation was drifting easily and I felt everything coming my way. Everybody had thawed out and talked unreservedly to me.

RECOGNIZED AS NELLIE BLY.

Suddenly Pat Sheedy cried out in a frightened voice, and with a warning glance at the others:

"My God! You're smart enough to be Nellie Bly!"

That was more than enough. Instantly and at the same moment Mrs. Clemishere and George Dalton sprang to their feet, pale and trembling. George Dalton ran as fast as he could to the gambling room and Mrs. Clemishere ran down the hall. Pat Sheedy did not run, but he went hastily after George Dalton and disappeared in the "club" rooms.

"Well!" I gasped to myself. "And who is Nellie Bly, that her very name should strike terror to the hearts of such fearless people?"

I looked at my watch. It was 11.30.

"Well, my chance for seeing that game is done forever." I sighed.

But, I mused as I left the hotel, what happens to other less fortunate women who are caught in the snares of these people?

NELLIE BLY.

THE DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

A Peep at the Interesting Personality of Some of the Gentlemen Who Are Mentioned by Miss Bly.

Pat Sheedy is probably the best-known gambler in America. He has run faro-banks in nearly all the big cities and also at the swell summer resorts, particularly Long Branch and Saratoga. As proprietor of the Chicago Club in the latter place he was indicted by the Grand Jury of Saratoga County about three years ago in company with Geary Mann, who also had an interest in the game played there. Sheedy's last venture as a proprietor was in the gambling house at Sixth avenue and Twenty-ninth street, which was closed up by the police about two years ago. It is said that owing to Sheedy's peculiar methods in this gambling-house he has been forever debarred from running "banks" in this city.

In later times Sheedy's chief means of subsistence has been in playing stake money against other people's banks. He is one of the handsomest, best-groomed boulevardiers of the Tenderloin district, and his reputation for greatness in his particular line insures him a welcome into the society of young bloods and wealthy strangers who frequent the uptown cafés. Sheedy spends his money with them, dollar for dollar, till the subject of faro is discussed. Then it is quite likely that one or more of the party will ask Sheedy where a game can be found, and Sheedy will be given a roll of crisp greenbacks to play the bank with. If he wins a few hundreds or thousands he gets a generous commission, and if he loses the loss is not from his pocket.

Among sporting men of all classes Sheedy is most popular. He was at one time the backer and manager of Sullivan, when Sullivan was a great fighter, and supplied the brains which directed the blows of the former champion against his adversaries.

"Papa" Joe Cotton is one of the familiar figures of the turf. He has made book for the past fifteen years at all the big tracks and has acquired a considerable fortune. He owns a stable of race-horses, and it was after him that the famous racer Joe Cotton was named. In years gone by "Papa" Joe used to deal faro-bank.

Charley Heineman used to run a bucket shop downtown till that became unpopular and then he put his money into bookmaking. Since the pool-rooms were closed he has been interested with George Dalton in a hand book made in the Coleman House. Dalton used to be in partnership with Ike Thompson in bookmaking. At one time he used to play cards on the ocean steamers.

Mr. Hartshorn does not appear to be very well known among the sports of the Tenderloin. He is "one of the boys," but his antecedents are not well established in Tenderloin circles.

THE COLEMAN HOUSE.

The Coleman House is right in the heart of the Tenderloin District. It is a place of secrets and mysteries, and the time-worn walls could tell many a harrowing tale if only walls could talk. The guests include gamblers, horsemen, bookmakers and gentlemen who live nobody knows just how. Women who come from nobody knows just where register in the big book, are seen with the sports on the Broadway promenade pleasant afternoons and dine or sup with quiet-looking gentlemen at the restaurant in the evening. Soubrettes and footlight favorites make temporary homes for themselves beneath the Coleman House roof and entertain the swells and dudes till all hours.

Alice Cozzens is one of the young strangers who has helped recently to make up the Coleman House history. An unknown girl, without an escort, she applied about midnight for a room there in May last. Emile, the bell boy who showed her to her room, noticed that she was well dressed and pretty and that she had no baggage. This would have seemed strange to some bell-boys, but Emile had worked at the Coleman House a long time and queer things did not bother him. The next morning all he could remember of the incident was that the girl had ordered a milk punch and given him the change from a dollar.

Her body was found on the floor fully dressed that afternoon and there was a pistol wound in her heart. Nobody has ever been able to explain why the girl took her life. She was the daughter of a well-known lawyer and it was known about the Tenderloin that she wanted to go on the stage. She was drawn into the Tenderloin swim, but the Tenderloin never gave up its secret.

The Deadly Mexican Scorpion.

(From a St. Louis Exchange.)

"The principal pest of Mexico," said E. P. Brewer, of Central America, at Hurst's, "is the scorpion. In damp or wet weather he is omnipotent, and in hotels can be seen to run up and down upon the walls. He is only about four to six inches in length, and is not particularly repulsive in appearance, but his sting generally results fatally. I was in a hotel at one time, where two other salesmen stopped in the same room, and as we went to go to bed, I saw the scorpions chasing each other up and down the wall. I called my fellow-travellers' attention to them, but they thought that they could protect themselves, and we all went to bed. I put up a shield, as is common in that country, but my friends were not used to this protection, and in the morning the man who thought he was safe was dead. I never go to bed in Mexico without thoroughly protecting every exposed portion of my body."

Interested.

(From Puck.)

Newsboy—Extra! [illegible]

Policeman—[illegible]