

The Feminine Metamorphosis

by DAVID H. KELLER M.D.





The Feminine Metamorphosis

Written by

David H. Keller

Published 1929 in Science Wonder Stories, Vol. 01, No. 3

Transcription: Yan Viana

Published in: www.atomicvintage.com.br

Email: atomicvintage10@gmail.com

CHAPTER I - A Woman Protests

“I CANNOT understand why I was not promoted!” protested the speaker. “I am more competent than the man you appointed to that position, and you ought to know that I have been in full charge of the department during the illness of the late occupant.”

“You were not promoted because you were a woman,” replied the man on the opposite side of the table. “I am willing to admit that you are capable and also that you have been filling the position for over a year. But there are certain places in this company that have always been filled by men and always will be filled by men. It is the policy of the company. We feel that we cannot compete with our opponents in business unless these places of trust are filled by men. So, you will have to be satisfied with an increase in salary, and your usual place in the office.”

The protesting woman flushed angrily as she cried:

“It is not fair to discriminate against me because I am a woman!”

“The question of fairness does not enter into it. We are in business to make money. I have been elected by the Directors as the President of this company. We expect to make a profit. The Directors believe that certain offices have to be filled by men. You have gone up in this company rather quickly, but you have reached the limit. If you want to stay, we shall be glad to have you, but you will have to be content with your present position.”

There was no doubt about the fact that both the president of the company and the most brilliant woman who had ever worked for it were thoroughly mad. They were so mad that the interview came to an abrupt ending by the woman’s leaving the room.

A few minutes later, when the man realized the necessity of keeping her, he wrote her a nice letter to the effect that from that time on her salary would be \$15,000 a year instead of \$12,000, and he sent it to her by special messenger. He thought that the increase would end all the hard feelings.

The next day Miss Martha Belzer seemed to be in her usual good humor. She was as capable as ever, in fact, the letters and reports that she dictated fairly sparkled with intelligent and shrewd conclusions. John Buchanon, the President of Aviation Consolidated, reading over some of her reports, perceived their value, and smilingly told himself that a few thousand extra was worth more to a woman than her pride, and at once forgot the incident.

That afternoon, after office hours, Martha Belzer took her portable Corona into her private office and locked the door. Several times during the night she sent the watchman out to get her a bite to eat. When she finally emerged it was one in the morning. During those long hours she had written nine letters to nine of her intimate friends—business women all over the United States—and these letters she personally mailed from a sub-station, sending them registered, receipt required.

The next morning she was at her desk as usual, opening and answering the mail and tending to the thousand and one details of the department, many of which should have been looked after by the new head of that department. However, he had been in a poker game that night with other heads of departments; so he was not able to begin work till after his luncheon. When he did arrive at the office, he made a great pretense of business and efficient direction, but as all the work had been done by that time, he soon relaxed, and made arrangements for a golf game. Life, at \$30,000 a year, looked rather pleasant to him. He had worked

hard to secure the position, that he now held, and, with such a capable assistant as Miss Belzer, he did not see any reason for killing himself with too great attention to little details that she could attend to just as well as he. The fact that she had taught him all that he knew about the business of that department and that the business of the company would suffer without her services, irritated him, but he felt that he could forget such unpleasant matters.

The humiliation of Martha Belzer was not an isolated one, by any means. Similar occurrences were happening every day in the large concerns of the United States. During the World War the feminine sex had tasted the sweetness of responsibility with increasing incomes, so that at the close of the war they were reluctant to return to their former humble positions. Well educated, capable, and hard working women were striving to occupy positions on a par with men, and the situation had become so acute that many corporations had passed regulations, strictly limiting the advancement of women in their employ. The stand that Aviation Consolidated had taken was by no means unique in the industrial life of the nation.

The result had not been a happy one. More and more women were preparing themselves for positions of trust and large salaries. Every phase of business activity, especially those requiring brain power, was being handled by the members of the fair sex, who, by their constant application to work,

their ability to look after the smallest details, and their one-track minds, were far more capable of holding positions of trust than was the average business man.

There were women in the House of Representatives. It was rumored that a western state was preparing to place a female Senator in Washington. Several states had elected women as Governors. The legal and medical profession were gradually surrendering to the demand of the feminine portion of society for a chance to compete on equal terms. Entire banks were officered by women. Only in the priesthood had men dared to entirely exclude the opposite sex.

More and more women were refusing to stay in the home. It was a common thing for a well-paid woman to have bachelor apartments down town where her comfort was well cared for by capable servants.

A Rich Man Dies

WOMEN in positions of responsibility easily made from twenty-five to fifty thousand dollars a year. A large number were in business for themselves. Naturally, they could not handicap themselves with husbands or cripple their earning capacity by child-bearing. They had their social life. Some married, but retained their maiden names, lived on in their own apartments and breakfasted or dined with their husbands three times a week.

But, up to the present time, they had only been able to nibble at the crusts of finance. No woman had been elected to the Presidency of a large concern. Not a single one was drawing the large salaries, as high as several million a year, paid to the big men of industrial America. While the brainy women knew that they were as capable as men of doing the great things of life, the men, so far, had been very careful to see that they did not have a chance to show this ability.

And, so far, there had never been a really rich self-made woman in the United States. The few wealthy ones had inherited their property and were content to leave the directing of it to their husbands. A few women, mainly those who owned their own business, reached the millionaire class, but the great wealth of the nation still rested in the control of the male sex. And there seemed to be no way that it could be taken from them.

The fact of the matter was that the men of the United States who owned the greatest part of the wealth of the nation were afraid. They did not fear the election of a Democratic president, or a change in the tariff, or even a lowering of the immigration bars. What they were afraid of was the possibility of feminine control of the great corporations of the nation. And they were endeavoring to prevent this in the most logical manner that occurred to them. They believed that the best thing was not to allow the women to start securing that power. Unless they did start, they would never succeed. So, the word passed from the President of one great concern to the chief executive of the next that under no circumstances should a woman be promoted to certain positions in these companies, and it was the following of this rule that had prevented Miss Martha Belzer from securing the promotion which she and everyone else knew that she was entitled to.

Miss Belzer nourished her indignation.

But she was not the only woman who was resentful.

In the hearts of the business women of America seethed revolt.

It was an interesting coincidence that in the week following the date of Martha Belzer's great disappointment, Patrick Powers, the richest man in America, died. He was not responsible for this occurrence, or for the fact that his only child was a daughter. He had lived as long as he could and had tried his best to change the destinies of his family. But, eventually, the end came, and at his bedside was neither kith nor kin save the fifty year old daughter, who was single and, to say the least, peculiar.

For some years the rich man had been growing more and more obstinate. It had finally become an impossibility to do business with him. Efforts to influence him, to aid him in arriving at decisions only served to make him more hard-headed and more stubborn than ever before. As he grew older he kept his own council and thanked others to do the same. The truth of the matter was that he was basically a miser and in his old age developed paranoiac ideas that others were trying to rob him of his hard-earned wealth. Consequently, he resisted all efforts made to influence him in drawing up a will and left every cent of his enormous estate to his daughter.

For some weeks she gave no indication as to what disposition she intended to make of this property. Finally, it was learned by several magnates that the only thing that she was really acquainted

with was cash and Government bonds and that she intended to sell all of the stocks, bonds and interests that her father had owned and that she was going to sell them to the highest bidder for cash.

Patrick Powers had held the controlling interests in a dozen of the largest corporations in America. The purchaser of these stocks would acquire this power. Half a dozen interests had been waiting for just this opportunity and were more than willing to bid against each other.

As a commercial event, it was not nearly as spectacular as it might have been. Miss Patricia Powers held it in her home. She invited a dozen financiers to attend. The certificates, stocks and bonds were actually there, in great brass bound boxes, neatly arranged on the parlor floor, and securely guarded by a silent group of well-armed private detectives. The stock was put up, block after block, and auctioned off. When a sale was made, the fortunate man was asked to come up to the central table and deposit a certified check. He carried the package of stock back with him for deposit in his own brass bound box, to be guarded there by his own private detectives.

The sale lasted several days. The prices secured were high. In some instances the shares sold for well over the value Powers had set. The auction was conducted in a quiet, dignified manner, but when it was over, Miss Patricia Powers was the owner of over three billion dollars worth of certified checks, good for gold when presented to the proper banks.

There was one interesting feature about this sale. No one commented on it, even if he did happen to notice it. The auctioneer, the clerks, the book-keepers who conducted this sale were all women.

After it was over, Miss Powers went into conference—with women.

CHAPTER II - Taine Gets A Commission

Taine, of the Secret Service, was spending a few days at home. He had just returned to San Francisco from a rather trying trip to New York, where he had rendered great service to that city. Always shy, he had refused to set any specific value on this service, but the check given him was enough to keep him comfortable for the rest of his life. As soon as he could do so, he had given ten percent to his wife, who was in the habit of giving this extra cash to the Woman's Missionary Society of her church. However, the ten percent in this instance was so large that she held back a part of it to buy a year's supply of clothes for herself and her two daughters. She also bought a scarf pin for her husband. She

was rather proud of his appearance, and his refusal to buy himself an appropriate scarf pin was a source of much sorrow to her. The one that she selected, a large question mark of platinum, with an equally large diamond at the bottom, seemed singularly appropriate, as she remarked to the pastor's wife, who had accompanied her on this special shopping trip.

“My husband makes a very fine living, solving unusual questions for other people who are too stupid to solve those questions for themselves. So, this question mark will not only represent his profession, but will also serve as an advertisement. You know, Dearie, that he draws a regular salary from the government, but this is so small that we should really suffer were it not for his extras. So I think that I could not do better than to buy this special pin for him.”

“But do you think he will wear it? Has he ties that will go with it?”

“Certainly, he will wear it That reminds me. I must buy some new ties for him. He thinks my selections in such things remarkable. Don't you think red ties with a black polka dot would go well with this pin?”

So, that evening Mrs. Taine presented the pin and the six new ties, and her husband kissed her and thanked her and put every one of the new ties in a special drawer and the pin with the rest of his jewelry. He was really a very remarkable man. The next morning his daughters observed that he wore the black bow tie as usual, and commented on it, but he simply said that he was going down to the city headquarters and he did not want the Chief to think that he had grafted too much in New York. His wife was busy cooking waffles on the new electric waffle iron, that had a red signal to tell when to put the batter in and a blue signal to indicate when the waffle was done, so she did not notice what kind of a tie he had on. So, blithely calling his little black puppy to follow him, Taine walked slowly down to Headquarters.

The day before, the Chief had told him to take a week's vacation. Taine had replied that he would do this with pleasure, as the Arbor Vitae hedge around his house needed trimming badly. Yet, the Chief had sent for him today by special messenger, and Taine knew by past experience what that meant. Reaching the building that housed the Secret Service of the Queen City of the West, Taine put the puppy to sleep in one of his overcoat pockets and walked in to see what all the trouble was.

The Chief welcomed him, at the same time apologizing for breaking into his vacation.

“Sorry, Taine, but the Government wants to send a man to China, and I made up my mind that you were the one to go.”

“But I do not want to go.” The little man was almost indignant as he said it. “The very idea of me going to China, when you said I could go off duty for a week—the very idea—and my wife just giving me a fine scarf pin with a diamond in it and six new red neckties with large black polka dots in them—the very idea! You know as well as I do that a real detective could not wear such ties — in China. She will feel disappointed if I do not wear them. China? Why, naturally, you had to send for me to go. I am about the only man on the force that can go to the Orient as a Chinaman and get back alive—when is the next boat?”

“I thought you refused to go.”

“I ought to. But, if it is something special, I guess I had better leave my vacation go for a while. I suppose there will be a special bonus of some kind—that will make my wife more kindly towards the idea of my leaving right away. You see, she gets ten percent and that goes to the Missionary Society. So, give me the details, and I will go home and pack up.”

“That’s the way to talk. I knew you would go. I really do not know what the work is. All I can tell you is that I received a wireless from the Department in Washington, asking me to have my best operator report at once to Washington Headquarters for instructions. The wireless specified a man who was well acquainted with China, of course, I thought of you at once, and I thought you would have no objection to going. That New York trip gave you some publicity among our profession and I am sure that you will get a promotion if you keep on.”

Taine stood up and stuck his hand in his overcoat pocket.

“I can tell you what I will get if I have another trip like that New York one. I’ll get killed. That is what I’ll get. This here little dog I have sleeping in my pocket, he and I almost got killed in New York. I hate to go to China, Chief. You remember the last time I was there I made Ming Foo awfully mad at me. Still, my wife won’t like it if I continue to ignore her presents, and—did you ever see a red tie with big, black polka dots all over it? Honest, Chief, I would rather drink tea with Ming Foo than wear that kind of a tie down-town—might look all right when I was just out clipping the hedge, in the back yard. Guess I had better go to China. Send a good man up to clean the yard and cut the hedge for

me, will you? Do I get transportation to Washington from you? Suppose I have the wife send you a few of those ties? Well, the little dog is restless, so, off we go to China—if anything happens, see that the Mrs. and the girls get the pension and anything else that is due them.” So, he put the little black dog down on the floor, and the man and the dog trotted off.

Taine Goes to China

AS SOON as possible Taine reported to the Chief of the Secret Service at Washington. That official greeted the San Francisco man as a long lost friend. He remembered only too well the danger that had threatened New York and the part that Taine had played practically single handed in destroying that danger. In fact, he had urged Taine to sever his connection with the Secret Service of the western city and come to Washington. Taine had refused to do this, pleading a long residence in the city of the Golden Gate and the fact that his wife enjoyed her position as President of the Missionary Society.

“Come right in,” he said to Taine, “we will shut the door and start right in to business. Have a segar ?”

“No, thank you. I used to smoke, but I found that the tobacco was bad for the delicate enamel of my teeth, and once that is destroyed, it is never replaced.”

The Washington Chief laughed.

“I remember hearing about that delicate enamel when you were in New York. You had a narrow escape there, Taine, but that is nothing new for you. I understand you had a good deal of service in China. You ought to go into private work. If I only had the nerve, we would go into business together, but, after a man becomes accustomed to office work, it is hard to go on the road again. Do you want to go out to China for me?”

“Not very much. There is a man over there, Ming Foo, who is not very friendly to. me.”

“Never heard of him. But you will go?”

“Guess I shall have to. You see, my wife gave me some neckties—”

“Let’s talk about the ties later on. There is a peculiar situation over there. About two years ago some doctors went over there and started a charity hospital. For a while, there was nothing very extraordinary about it. Then things began to break loose, and at the present time, affairs are all sixes

and sevens in that part of China, and no one seems to be able to tell what the trouble really is. All the doctors in this hospital are women, and the State Department, not wanting them killed, asked them to come down to the coast and bring their hospital with them, and these young fools at once refused. It is a singular fact that the Chinese Government in power in that part of China wants the hospital to stay there, and we cannot understand why. To complicate matters, a revolutionary party is trying to capture the city—and swears that it will control this hospital. Everybody seems to want the hospital to stay there, yet, they all are fighting among themselves in regard to it. Meantime, the young fools are operating day and night and seem to have all the work to do that they can handle.”

Taine looked annoyed,

“I can see it all now,” he sighed. “You want me to dress up like a Chink and go over there and be operated on so you can find what those girls are really up to.”

“That is it exactly.”

“And if I take my black dog over with me, I get operated on and he gets into the stew. You better send a real Chink over, Chief. I can give you the names of a few good ones out home. They would not mind being operated on by a white girl. Personally, I object. I have too great an imagination.”

“But they would not operate on your imagination.”

“I know but I just don’t want to go. Every time I mix up with women I get into trouble.”

The Chief paid no attention to him.

“You can get your letters of credit and other credentials fixed up today. You have unlimited funds at your control. The only thing you are not strong in is our support. Of course, we will help you all you will let us—up to a certain point—but that is a wild country—lots of bandits. If anything goes wrong, we will take care of your family. I have a lot of recommendations in this envelope. This evening we will put you on board the Mayflower and transfer you later on to one of our cruisers that we are sending to China for just one purpose—and that is to carry you. Only a few know who you are and just two of us know why you are going on that cruiser. The Captain will see that you are royally entertained. Can you arrange to leave tonight?”

Taine thought of those six red neckties with the black polka dots—he thought of Ming Foo, waiting to kill him in a very honorable way—he remembered that he always became seasick, never really liked the ocean—and, after thinking of all these things, he sighed, as he replied.

“Guess I might as well go. Send a Chink from the department over with me so I can practice talking the language on the voyage. I used to do rather well at it, but since my teeth went bad, I may have trouble. You look after the family, Chief, if I don’t come back—tell my wife that my last request was to have those neckties distributed among my friends—and you can have the diamond scarf-pin. You would like it, Chief.”

Under the friendly nonsense and banter was a strange air of constraint, for both men realized that there was danger on the other side of the world, danger, and perhaps death for the little operator from San Francisco.

CHAPTER III - Taine Returns with a Tale

EXACTLY six months and three days later Taine silently re-entered the private office of the Chief of the Government Secret Service. He looked about as healthy as when he left, though, perhaps, he was underweight. During those six months and three days he had not sent a single work of a report. He had simply gone to China, disappeared, and reappeared in Washington in due course of time. The Chief was delighted to see him, for more reasons than one. He was also almost bursting with curiosity as to what had actually happened. Enthusiastically greeting Taine, he demanded an immediate report.

Before answering, Taine took a little black dog out of his pocket and put him down on the floor. The Washington man looked at the dog in astonishment.

“You don’t mean to tell me that you still have that dog?”

Taine shook his head in a peculiar gesture of sorrow and amusement,

“No. This is the same breed of dog, only this is a she dog. That little dog I took to China looked just like this dog, but that dog was a he dog. I got into a place where the men were not very popular; so, I had to change dogs.”

“If you were anyone else, I would say you had gone insane!”

“I know, but facts are facts. Part of the trip was dull and then parts were lively. All my life the women have kept me busy and they did not miss it this time. However, I settled with Ming Foo. He will not bother me anymore. That was one of the satisfactory parts of the trip. In fact, I helped operate on him.”

The Washington Chief forced Taine down into an easy chair. He pulled an automatic out of a drawer and pointed it at Taine,

“You tell me what happened, and if you leave out anything of interest, I am going to shoot you.”

“Don’t shoot, Chief. You might hurt the delicate enamel of my teeth. Well, I arrived in Shanghai, and wandered around the country and finally came to the city where these girls were operating. I was disguised as a Priest for a while, and then later on I dressed up as a flower girl—I suppose you know what they are in China. Well, when I came near the hospital, I put a lot of my cash into real jewelry and hired a lot of Chinks to chase me into the compound of the hospital. It looked just like a scene from the movies. There was the poor girl running as fast as she could from the Chinamen who wanted to capture her and ruin her life in an opium den, and just in time the Marines dashed out through the opening gate and the girl just managed to get inside in time. They led me to the Captain of the Marines, and I told him my story, how I was really a rich man’s daughter but run away from home because my father wanted me to marry an old man that had three wives already. Then this Marine, filled with pity, took me in to see the Chief Surgeon, and I told her the same story, only I proved it to her by showing her my jewels, and I told her that I learned to speak English in London, having had ideas of becoming a doctor, but my father brought me home before I could complete my education. Naturally, she and the other lady doctors were very sympathetic and they promised to keep me, and perhaps after a while I could work in the operating room as an orderly. That looked like a hard life, because, even though I have a very soft white beard, it meant shaving three times a day, but the only way I saw to get in there and find out what was going on was to go in as a woman. They were all females except the Marines.

“It was a peculiar situation. The Marines were guarding the hospital and the Government was guarding the hospital, and outside the city the bandits were guarding the hospital, and everybody was

trying to capture the hospital so, he could run it better and protect it more efficiently. It looked like a peculiar state of affairs, and I was there over a month before I could make anything out of it.

“We were just as busy as could be. They had five doctors there, and they just kept a regular line of patients going into that operating room. I never saw a lot of Chinamen that were so anxious to be operated on. Finally, I tumbled to it. Those girls were paying the Chinks for the operations. Every Chinaman got a hundred dollars in gold when he left the hospital, and all his hospital expenses thrown in. But just as soon as he left the hospital, the High Mogul of the city picked fifty dollars of that gold and the Little Mogul took another twentyfive; so, all the poor devil who was operated on got out of it was a little twenty-five. But that was a fortune to most of them, and there was always a long line waiting for a chance to get in. As far as the Government was concerned and also the lesser officials, it was a sweet piece of graft, and there is no telling how many of them divided that gold. That was the reason why they wanted that hospital to stay there. And that was the reason the bandits wanted to capture the city. There was just a steady stream of gold going out of that operating room, and whoever held the city could grab a big piece of it. The Marines were there to see that nothing stopped those girls from operating; so, they did not care who was in power, so long as the supply of Chinamen held out.

“Of course, I am acquainted with women, being a married man with two daughters, to say nothing of the third one who is married and whose clothes are bought by another man—so, you might say I know a little about females. But I never in all my life saw women like those Doctors. They just did two things besides eating and sleeping. They operated on those Chinamen and talked about equal rights for women. To listen to them talk, you would think that man was just a worm and that their chief delight was to step on him. They even seemed to take a great pleasure in their operating—brag about it—the different doctors would boast as to the number of Chinks they had operated on.

Strange Happenings

IT BECAME a great favorite with them. In fact, some of those lady doctors became quite fond of me. Of course, you must not let on to my wife about that—she would not understand—but those women doctors sure did like me, and thinking all the time I was a little Chinese girl; they thought I was

cute—and I let them think so—and I studied hard and, by and by, they let me sort of help with the operations.

“There was one of those girls, she was a chemist of some kind. I suppose she might be called a biological chemist. Anyway, she did not have anything to do with the operating, but she would take the glands into her laboratory and work with them. I used to go in and see her work—she liked me—I taught her to say some words in Chinese—and when she finished with her work, she would have a little clear liquid that she called ampules which she put into glass tubes. It must have been delicate work, because there were whole parts of it that she said could not be trusted to anyone else. Every week or so a special agent of the Express Company came out from Shanghai with an army of Chinese soldiers to guard him, and he would take a box of these little ampules for shipment to some place in Paris. Of course, all this cost a lot of money, but those girls seemed to have enough and to spare. Someone is putting up a world of gold on this proposition.

“I did not have any textbooks and, to be sure, the Doctors were close-mouthed about it all, and the chemist, she was even worse than the Doctors. But the way I figured it out, those girls were cutting something out of those chinks and making some kind of a medicine out of it and shipping it to Paris, and it must have been awfully valuable, judging from the cash they were getting and spending. Every operation cost a hundred, to say nothing of the cost of running the hospital and taking care of the patients till they were able to leave, and besides that, there must have been over a million spent to soothe the really big people in China—perhaps several million or more.

“Of course, they got the money from somewhere—gold in that amount does not grow on bushes—but where they got it from is not as interesting to me as what they were doing it for, and why there were only women in it. Perhaps it was some kind of beauty culture treatment—you know women in Paris and New York will pay anything to be made good-looking.

“But I do not believe it was beauty they were after. I helped, at the last of my stay there, with a few of the operations, and I do not think they were after beauty. It must be something different from that—anyway, I finally got the best of Ming Foo. I do not think he will bother me anymore. You know you gave me unlimited credit; well, I spent some of it in bribery, and the first thing Ming Foo knew he had been drugged by some of his men and brought to the hospital. He was a big, handsome brute, and

the doctors thought he was one of the finest specimens they had found. They liked his heavy beard; most of the chinks did not have so very much hair on their faces; so, they did a bilateral operation on him—most of them they just operated on one side, and when Ming Foo came out of the ether and finally recovered from his dope to realize what had happened to him, he was real provoked—we had to keep him tied down for a while, and even the fact that they gave him two hundred dollars instead of one hundred did not seem to relieve his feelings. Finally, he became so raw in his actions that the Marines had to kick him out of the hospital. He had his men attack the city the next week, and it looked for a while as though he was going to get us, marines or no marines, but they finally drove him off. I think he recognized me as he was dragged out of the hospital by the marines; at least, he said some horrible language to me—but I think the operation took away a lot of his pep.

“It was soon after that that the hospital broke up. The last night I was there I managed to see the records. They must have done a lot of those operations. It seems that they had been working night and day for months. Anyway, they quit. The hospital was turned over to the Government as a present, and the girls all went to Shanghai. I gave some of the doctors presents of my jewelry. They were sort of keen about jewelry, even if they were ranting all the time about the equality of the sexes. Then I left the country by the quickest route and came back by way of Europe. I spent a little time in Paris; in fact, I grew a little beard on my way back—I was so tired of shaving three times a day that it was a relief not to have to shave at all. But I suppose I will have to cut it off before I go west; my wife likes a smooth-shaven husband, and, of course, you know, I am a married man, very much of a married man, though I feel that I have almost forgotten the fact for a minute or two during the last half year.”

The Chief of the Secret Service of the United States slowly replaced his revolver in the desk, as he sighed,

“You are a remarkable operator, Taine. I do not know of anyone just like you. You are so peculiarly matter of fact. You either have no nerves or you are too dumb to know what danger is. You go over to China and lead that life for a half year—you impersonate a rich Chinese girl; you even go right into that hospital and finally help them operate on your most dangerous enemy in that heluva land, and then you come back and tell about it all just as the average man would tell about a trip to Coney Island. You tell me all about it—about those girls, as you call them, and you do not even intimate that

your curiosity was aroused. Personally, I am a rather self-possessed man, but I had all I could do to keep from interrupting you. What were they doing it for? Where did they get all that money? Who was in back of it? And, by the Seven Sacred Beasts! what did they cut out of those poor chinks? You calmly sit there and tell all about it, and you have not told me a single thing I want to know except that the girls are gone and the hospital is being run by men and that they sent some kind of dope to Paris in bottles. 'Pon my word, man, have you no imagination? No curiosity? What did you come back for before you learned the whole story. Something big there. You might become famous! And you sit there and tell about giving jewelry to women. Bah! You ought to be kicked off the force."

"I wish I were," sighed Taine. "This little female dog looks like my old buddy, but she is not half as bright as he was. That's the way with all the women. You ought to have heard the doctors talk in that hospital. Do you know something? I believe there is a secret society of women, something like the Masons. I could sort of feel it, but I have not a single fact to prove it. Now, if there was such a society, that might account for part of it. I believe that I just nibbled at one corner of a Brazil nut—like a blooming mouse. It is bigger than we think, Chief; something is going on, and that hospital was just a little piece of it. Now, in regard to the operation: I learned a little about that in Paris. What those girls did was to perform an operation called gonadectomy."

The Chief turned red,

"You think you're smart, don't you. Springing a new word like that on a man, just to show how smart you are. What did they do to those men? You tell me or I will have a stroke of apoplexy."

"Don't get excited. Chief," replied Taine, as he put the little black dog back in his pocket. "You would not believe me if I told you—you would not believe half of it, not even a little bit of it. If I told you all that I really think about this, you would accuse me of having become an opium smoker. I had that happen to me once. Remember when the Circle Internationale exploded? Well, I started in one night to tell my Chief out in San Francisco about it, and before I got half way through he called me a liar. I don't want you to do that. Here is a written report and the vouchers for my expenses. Of course, I had to spend some money, but I think it will be worth it to somebody. In fact, I think that you are going to call me back to Washington before long, and perhaps when you do I will nibble a little more at that same nut; maybe we shall find it rather rotten. Some of my imaginations about that affair are

certainly peculiar. Oh! I forgot to tell you. There is a new College for Women in the suburbs of Paris. Very exclusive, and all that sort of thing. They tell me a lot of American women have been going there for the last two years. Some kind of a finishing school. Women come and go, and there is a high wall around the whole property. No men admitted. Does that sound peculiar to you? Sort of like a Convent. Now, just one thing more, Chief. Those girls in China were shipping all that dope in the little glass bottles to that address in Paris. That is why I looked it up. That is about the only reason I had for going to Paris. Does that mean anything to you? You think about it for a while. Use your imagination.”

CHAPTER IV - A Silent Revolution

PERHAPS something might have come out of Taine’s trip to China at once had it not been predestined otherwise. The Washington Chief read the lengthy report that night and made up his mind that something ought to be done about it. But then that very night trouble broke loose from the I. W. W., and for the next six weeks every government operator was busy, and, as a result, the report that Taine made was lost sight of. When it was remembered, its importance was underestimated, and many valuable months passed.

Slowly the masculine minds of America, the great Captains of Industry, became worried over a peculiar state of affairs. The control of many of the leading companies of the nation was passing over into the hands of a new financial group. Many of the banks were being directed by members of the same group. Already they had charge of a great Trans-Continental railroad. Aviation Consolidated was slowly coming under their power, and even Radio and Television Associated Companies, one of the wealthiest of all the new financial giants, was being undermined by their active efforts to secure fifty per cent of the Directorate.

It had just been a few years when the entire charge of these basic industries had been securely in the hands of men between forty-five and seventy, big, two-fisted, go-getters, who knew what they wanted, were willing to pay the price, and who never ceased fighting till they won their objective. Most of them were college graduates, many of them had been, in their undergraduate days, great athletes. Every one of them, even the old men, still loved the open air, golf, and some of them still hoped to live in Paris when they died.

It took them a long time to realize that anything out of the usual was taking place. Even after they realized it and began to resent it, they were uncertain as to the proper action to take. They were big men, but, after all, it took big men to look at a great sociological movement, from a national standpoint; and this thing that was happening was affecting the entire nation.

It was something that was slowly, insidiously, pervading the business life of every State. For some reason, it was hard to analyze, difficult to comprehend; but there was no problem in realizing that the economic supremacy of the giant group of go-getters was being directly challenged.

After all, it was not the fact that their rule was being contested by a new group that bothered them. Had it been just that, they would have been willing to effect some kind of a working compromise and divide the spoils. It was the personality of their opponents that aroused their ire and constant resentment.

In the first place, the new leaders were young men who were hard workers and did not seem to know the value of recreation. They simply seemed determined to drive themselves and all the subordinates under them till the day's work was done and a good part of the next day's work done in addition. They were not only hard workers, but they were efficient, and when they started in to accomplish a task, they usually stayed at it till they won out. Of course, the go-getters, the old timers, had the same determination, but the old men used clubs and bludgeons to accomplish their purpose, and all these young men were smooth; and when they won a financial victory, they did so before their opponents realized what was happening to them. They were smooth, suave, and remarkably clever.

Another irritating quality was their ability to dress well. The old timers spent a lot of money on their clothes, but, for some reason, they never looked well dressed, while these younger men had the peculiar ability of always being just a little ahead of the prevailing masculine fashion. It was not long before the tailors had to admit that they were being dictated to and that these youthful financiers were really telling the tailors what the styles of the next six months would be. Their clothing was masculine, but, at the same time, it had a dash of color to it, a peculiar something that was different. When one of this group walked down Fifth Avenue, his general appearance was such as to make passing women, and men also, turn to look again at him.

Without exception, they were well groomed, took wonderful care of themselves, shaved twice daily, and avoided, in every way, the breath of scandal. In a quiet way, they participated in all forms of civic improvements, and it seemed that everything that they had a hand in succeeded. They seemed to carry around them an atmosphere of success. They seemed to have resources to begin with, and, without exception, they all appeared able to make money.

Socially, they did not fraternize with the old timers. They made no effort to join the ancient clubs that had always been considered the heights of fame. Instead, they established, in every large city, clubs of their own, which, for exclusiveness and fashionableness, seemed in every way to completely eclipse the established social centers of the rich men of the land. It was this very exclusiveness, this tendency to act as though they considered themselves better in some way, that worried the older men. Why the young upstarts would not even accept their invitations to play golf with them!

And, finally, affairs reached such a point that something had to be done, politics became upset. The Millionaires' Club in the Senate at Washington was invaded. And, eventually, one of those sleek young men actually had the nerve to suggest that he run for President, and advanced many excellent reasons why he should be permitted to do so. With that the battle was on!

Yet, even then, no one seemed to have a clear idea of what all the stifled excitement was about. It was all very well to whisper, but what was the use of either whispering or shouting, when there was really nothing to say? Besides, there were just a lot of people who were not backward in stating that the country might be better off in the control of these younger men, and it was all the more credit to them if they were a little particular in their dress and reserved in their manner. At least they were hard workers and could almost always be found in their offices instead of being "in conference" or out on the golf links.

More Mysteries for Taine

THE old business group became uneasy; then they became more uneasy. They finally reached the point at which they actually grew nervous. There had been several raids on Wall Street, gigantic, underground attacks on the multi-millionaires, that increased their anxiety. And finally, they decided that something must be done about it. They had conferences and special investigations, and nothing

happened; they were just as ignorant, just as much at sea as they ever had been. Then one day, in utter desperation, one of the big men of the group (a man so big that he sat with a few others in a back room in a hotel and sent word to a Republican Convention whom they should nominate for president) went to Washington, saw the President, and secured from him a written and signed order to the effect that the Secret Service Department should render such aid as was in their power.

Naturally, the rich man saw the Chief of the Secret Service.

After listening to the story of the man from New York, the Chief secretly thought that he was listening to a paranoiac chaser of moon-beams.

“I really do not know what you want my department to do, Mr. Johnson,” he finally answered. “It seems that you are afraid of something and yet cannot give me any definite idea of what it is. Certainly you do not fear these men in a business sense. Our department cannot protect you against superior brains of financial opponents. This is a free country. And, with the past success of the group that you represent, you certainly ought to feel competent to deal with them on the stock exchange.” That kind of an answer made Johnson mad. He was not accustomed to it. Yet, at the same time, he realized that it was a well-deserved criticism. He started to answer it, stuttered, stopped, started again, and finally blurted out,

“One of the things that makes us so tarnation mad is the fact that those upstarts are playing bridge all the time, and when we ask them to join us in a real he-man’s game, like golf, they always cut us cold—say they are too busy. Yet, they have the crust to put up a twenty-five million dollar clubhouse, the finest in New York, and call it the Bridge Club, and, so far, not one of the men that I know has been invited to join.”

“Now that,” replied the Chief, “is real news. If you only had a dozen more facts like that, we might have some idea of what the trouble was.”

“Well, I am no detective. I thought that was your business.”

“It is; but, at the same time, we have to have something to start with. We cannot raid the biggest private club in New York just because some of you gentlemen are sore because you are not invited to join.”

“We don’t want to join them, but, all the same, the way they act makes us sore. Pretending they are so much better than we are. Won’t join us in any of our deals—just won’t have anything to do with us—and all the time trying to knife us, secure control of our corporations—why, they even think they should have a voice in who is to be President.”

The more Johnson talked, the more positive the Secret Service Chief was that the New Yorker was simply sore and trying to secure revenge for fancied slights or actual financial losses. The Chief was a busy man, and had all he could do with counterfeiters and patriotic citizens who were trying to smuggle jewelry into the country. At the same time, he was a politician. He knew that this man could not be handled brusquely. So, he shut his eyes, leaned back in his chair, and passed into an attitude of deep thought. Meantime, the moneyking savagely chewed his pipe stem.

“I think that the best thing to do,” finally announced the Chief, “is for you to go out to San Francisco and see Taine, a detective connected with the Department out there. I will give you a letter to his Chief that will help you. He is a wonderful man, a real detective, and he has imagination.”

“Why not have him come to New York and see me?”

“I do not think he would do that. He won’t work for you at all unless he really wants to. He is temperamental. Yes! That is the thing for you to do. If Taine wants to, he will get to the bottom of this mystery.”

Johnson slowly shook himself out of the chair, “Guess I will go. Some one has to get to the bottom of it, or those up-start, bridge-playing fools will take our clothes away from us. Write your letter, and I will get the next train west. Wish I could travel in a plane, but I am too old for it.

CHAPTER V - A Ring Turns Up

FOR a few years Taine had been having the time of his life. That meant hunting a few murderers of the common variety, running down some opium importations, and even doing a little political work on the side. His monthly salary was not large, but he had some extra cash in the bank, and his living expenses were not great. Three years had passed since his trip to China. Life had become very ordinary, almost commonplace. He was nearly on the point of believing that not much could happen. Then, within a week, a number of unusual circumstances called his attention to the fact that there were several lines

of investigation that needed a real detective to work on them. Secretly, Taine thought that he was a great man; in fact, he believed that he was as good a detective as there was in America; at times he even went beyond that and included England and the Continent.

What happened was this: A little fire destroyed the Presbyterian Church and parsonage that was the delight and religious consolation of his wife. Immediate plans were made for their rebuilding, but the heavy part of this financial burden would fall on the Missionary Society, of which Mrs. Taine had been president for many years. She felt that she should lead in raising the money. She always gave the ten percent of her husband's income, but for the last few years this had not amounted to very much. So, after spending an afternoon with the building committee, she calmly told her husband that she would just have to give the Society one hundred thousand dollars or resign from the presidency. She even cried a little, and the little black female dog howled, and the daughters were sure that papa had done something horrible. Taine told his wife to go ahead with her plans, for, after all, one hundred thousand was ten percent of only one million and he could earn that in no time. Then he took an old envelope out of his pocket and a stub of a pencil and figured out that he was worth, including real estate and insurance, exactly eleven thousand dollars. The next day he wore a troubled look.

That look was deepened by the news that his wife had fainted while washing dishes. She was nearing the thirty-ninth year, but on the three previous times that she had fainted, washing dishes, she had later on presented her adoring husband with a girl baby. Taine had three daughters and was not sure that he wanted any more. So, he rushed home (his wife was all right when he arrived) and insisted that she go at once and see a doctor.

That night all she coul'd talk about was the New Doctor that she had called on. He was such a perfect gentleman, so kind and sympathetic, and had such a sympathetic understanding of her difficulties. There was no addition to the family in sight, but the Doctor had told her that for a few years she would be in a nervous state and should be careful not to be disappointed in any way. He had said that if her husband really loved her, he would see that every desire of her life was granted. Taine promised her that he would see to it that this was the case, and silently he promised himself that he would see this wonderful physician and give him a pointer or two as to how to handle women.

He called on the physician that evening, and gave, as his excuse, a troublesome cough. He found Dr. Williamson all that Mrs. Taine had pictured him—and he found something else. As the Doctor took his history, and later on, as he percussed Taine’s chest, the detective saw a rather old Chinese ring on the left hand little finger. He thought that he knew that ring. He was sure that he had seen it somewhere; in an odd way he was also sure that he had seen Dr. Williamson before. All that night he tried to connect the ring and the man and the past, and, when morning came, the solution came with it. That ring was one of the pieces of jewelry that he had carried with him into the Chinese hospital. He had given it to one of the Doctors, and, now, that he concentrated on it, he realized that the lady Doctor in China and Dr. Williamson were very much alike—

Only the one was a woman and the other was a man.

They looked enough alike to be brother and sister.

Perhaps that was the solution.

Or perhaps it was not the same ring after all!

The next day one of the operators started to joke with him in the office.

“Nothing singular about all your children being girls, Taine. You were just a little ahead of the fashion. Did you see the report from the National Department of Vital Statistics? Last year there were three times as many girls as boys born in the United States. They are not shouting about it, but they are doing all they can to find the reason. If that keeps up for a few years, this will be a sure enough female country.”

“Well,” replied Taine. “There must be some reason for it. Everything has to have a reason. Now, we had these three girls because my wife is partial to girls, and I guess they are easier to raise than boys are. Of course, three girls to one boy is all wrong. If that keeps on—well, I guess I will go out and find some more opium!”

And that very evening Taine read in the papers about another raid on Wall Street. It seems that Johnson had been away from the Stock Exchange for a few days and his enemies had taken advantage of his absence. Taine read that item out loud to his wife, and even when he was reading it, one of the daughters answered the doorbell and in walked Johnson of New York. He introduced himself, he shook

hands with the detective and with Mrs. Taine and with the Misses Taine. He acted like a god, condescending to visit a human habitation, and determined to make the humans like him.

“Have a cigar, Mr. Taine? I presume your wife will excuse us if we smoke?”

“Thanks, but I do not smoke,” the detective replied. “Long ago I found that the nicotine was bad for the delicate enamel of the teeth, and once that is’ destroyed, the teeth soon follow. Now, you go ahead and smoke all you want to, because Mrs. Taine has no objections to it. Girls, you had better go to the nursery and study your lessons. Mr. Johnson may have something to say to us privately.”

“I want to talk to you privately, Mr. Taine, if your wife will excuse you?”

“Oh! You can talk in front of my wife. Especially if it is professional business. She is really very wonderful in offering suggestions. In fact, she is my chief inspiration. More than once I have left home and gone to the far off places of the earth for more than a year at a time, and she was my only inspiration to do so. So, go ahead with your problem.”

Johnson looked at the little man sitting on the worn haircloth sofa. He shook his head doubtfully,

“The Chief in Washington said you were the only man that would be able to help me. I guess he made a mistake. I am afraid that the problem is too enormous for you.”

Mrs. Taine looked up from her sewing,

“You say that because you do not know my husband’s ability.”

“As a matter of fact,” added Taine, “in my best moments I feel that no one fully understands what I am capable of. I am small, weigh about one hundred pounds, and, yet, you can believe me or not, there are times when I seem to be inspired, endowed with superhuman power. I had a medium tell me once that I was a dual personality, and, of course, if that is true, it is a very wonderful asset. I think, if I might be bold enough to advise you, Mr. Johnson, that you can accept me as being just as capable as the Washington Chief says I am. Now tell me your troubles?”

Taine Gets A Commission

JOHNSON surrendered. For over an hour he poured out his story, which grew more and more bitter as he recited it. Taine acted most of the time as though he were asleep, but Mrs. Taine listened with the most intent expression. Finally, she could not contain herself any longer,

“Why, those mean men!” she exclaimed. “They act just like a lot of catty women.”

Taine stiffened in his chair, and began to breathe a little fast. Finally, Johnson finished. The little detective sighed deeply,

“I can help you. Sir, but it is going to be a rather dangerous affair. There is all the evidence of a big things happening, and when big things happen, human life does not count for much, especially not the life of a human such as I am. They would kill me just as they would squash a potato bug. But I will go into it and give you a report when I finish, and I won’t stop till I am either through or dead.”

“You don’t mean to say that you have a clue?” demanded Johnson.

“There are a lot of scattered threads. If I told you what each one was, you would not believe me. I believe I see something. Enough to make me want to investigate. I will begin at once, just as soon as you show your good faith by paying me one-half of my fee; the other half can be paid when I make my final report.”

Johnson smiled. He saw the threadbare furniture, the “GOD BLESS OUR HOME” and “A GOOD WIFE IS THE NOBLEST WORK OF GOD” signs on the wall, and without hesitancy, he pulled out his checkbook and fountain pen and said smilingly,

“How much?”

“One million dollars for the first payment,” and Taine said it without blinking an eyelash. His wife sank back in her chair and closed her eyes. Johnson looked at the man in front of him. Suddenly the New Yorker smiled,

“I will write it at once. Any man that can do that to Johnson can get away with murder. —Here is the check. If you ever make your mind up to go into business in New York, you come and see me. I would rather have, you as a partner than an enemy. Now, get busy. I must get back to New York. They are raising Cain with the stock market in my absence. Goodnight, Taine! Good-night, Mrs. Taine! I congratulate you on your having such a husband,” and he was out of the house before they could realize it.

“You are wonderful, dear,” whispered Mrs. Taine. “Now, I can stay in as president of the Missionary Society. Won’t we be proud to see the new church that was built so largely through your efforts?”

Taine refused to smile, as he replied,

“You save enough out of that hundred thousand to put in a Memorial Tablet for your departed husband, because I have an uneasy feeling that when I finish this, it will finish me. I am sure enough scared of those people.”

“But you always have been able to take care of yourself?”

“Yes—so far—but then I always had men to work against.”

“But I thought Mr. Johnson said these were men ?”

“Yes—that is what he said—”

The next day Taine left San Francisco. He did not even take the little black dog with him.

CHAPTER VI - Taine Goes to Work

THERE was no doubt as to the exclusiveness of the Bridge Club of New York city. It was rumored to have cost twenty-five million but that, no doubt, was an exaggeration. It was said to be very elegant in all of its furnishings, and that also was open to question, for no one except the members ever entered its doors, and they were rather shy about whom they invited to go with them as guests. Rumor said that it was really the headquarters of the new business group, that the name was just a cover for other more formidable activities, but no one could either prove or disprove this.

It had been built rapidly but soundly. Its walls were thick and sound-proof; even the best of inventors would have encountered the greatest difficulties in detecting the sounds originating in some of those rooms. The problem of finding out what was happening in that building was thoroughly discussed in Washington between Taine and some other interested gentlemen, and it was finally decided that the only way to secure this information was to go in and secure it; and this was more easily said than done.

Taine had all kinds of ideas. Some he talked about freely with anyone that would listen to him. Others he whispered to himself at the dead of midnight in his bed, and some of them he did not even

dare to whisper. After the conference in Washington, he decided that the only way to do a thing was to do it; so, he started in to do it in the only way that seemed practical to him. A thousand wild, foolish plans occurred to him, but always he came back to the same idea—the only way to find out what was going on in the Bridge Club was to go inside and find out. He was confident that the solution to the entire problem was inside that building—in combination with what was inside of his brain.

Careful investigation in New York disclosed one thing. Every servant working in the Bridge Club was a carefully selected, highly intelligent person. The next interesting thing was that all of the employees were women. That was so very opposite to the rule that, in itself, it constituted a very interesting fact. Here was a club of men, highly moral, very rich and sedate business men, many of whom lived at the Club, and all of the servants were women!

Taine had been a woman in China. He did not like it very much—this idea of masquerading as one of the opposite sex—but he had done it and he could do it again. For a few days he just watched the women come and go through the back entrance of the Club. Finally, he selected one who looked just a little like Taine, about the same height and age, and this little woman had red hair. The detective studied her on the street, in the subway and finally in her boarding house. By the end of a week he had a very accurate idea of her habits. Then he secured a room in a boarding house near-by; an introduction was effected in a neighboring church, and in no time at all Taine was courting the red-haired lady, who turned out to be a telephone operator at the Club.

She was rather flattered to have such a distinguished looking man pay attention to her. Of course, Taine was really rather commonplace, but his manners were elegant, and he had lots of money to spend, and he was so sympathetic, and kind. At the end of another week the red-haired girl was beginning to dream, and even talk a little about her ambitions. Then one night she left in a drawing room for the West, heavily guarded by several determined women. Her room in the boarding house was occupied as usual by a red-haired woman, who spent some hours of the early morning in preparing an elaborate make-up. That morning at eight, Minnie Smith, the telephone operator for the eight hour day shift, passed with other female employees into the rear entrance of the Bridge Club. Once again Taine had accomplished the apparently impossible.

For a week the little detective, in a red wig and a rather gay dress, worked eight hours a day as a telephone operator. He found out a great many things about the Bridge Club. To be exact, he found out about one-millionth part of what he wanted to discover. To say that he was discouraged was a rather mild way of expressing his disappointment. The mystery that he was trying to solve was all around him, in fact, he was able to feel part of it, but nothing happened to make it possible for him to come closer to it. He watched the members of the Club pass in and out, he heard their voices over the telephone, very occasionally one spoke to him as the opportunity presented—otherwise, his time was wasted.

He worked at the switchboard in a rather automatic manner, his past work having enabled him to have eyes in the back of his head and ears all over. Between calls he thought, and, finally, he was satisfied that he was thinking in a circle, ending where he began and producing no results. In reality, his subconscious mind was working far faster and to better effect than his conscious mind, but, of course, he was not aware of that comforting fact.

In final despair, he decided to leave and start all over again, but the night before he did this he had a dream—not much of a dream, but interesting. A number of cats were tormenting a man, attacking and biting him in every possible way, and just as he awoke he heard his wife say,

“They just act like a lot of catty women!”

He remembered the dream when he awoke. In fact, he wrote it on a piece of paper. Then he began to put some of the threads together—the hospital in China, the Doctor in San Francisco who wore a ring that he had given to a woman in China, the fact that all these people played bridge, the clothing that they wore, the resentment which they aroused in the golf-playing money-men of America.

For a week Taine worked hard. As a redheaded telephone operator he put in his eight hours a day. During the rest of the sixteen hours he received strange callers in his small boarding house room. Scientists, psychiatrists, college professors came from all parts of the East to see him, and from each of them he gathered the special little piece of information that they possessed and that he needed. They were well paid for their trouble by orders on the multi-millionaire Johnson. They thought that they were dealing with some mild form of insane crank, but Taine simply kept his colorless personality and found out what he wanted to know; and at the end of an exhausting week the little man had more threads gathered together.

Then, to his delight, he was promoted to attend to the telephone in the Manager's office. He had an idea that there he might have an opportunity to learn something about the real meaning of the Club. He found, to his great pleasure, that from that office ran private wires to all parts of the United States, and that the so called Manager often spent hours in conversation with men of importance all over the country. These calls were all handled by the red-haired operator, and he lost no time in making a list of those who had possession of the other ends of these long-distance wires. He even listened in on some of the conversations, and gathered what he felt was partial evidence, which proved that some of his surmises were correct.

He was sure that in a short time he would have all of the threads gathered together into a real rope of evidence.

Then one day he was kept busy for several hours, connecting the Manager with a dozen of the big men. It seemed that they had been called to New York for a conference. That meeting was to be held at 9 P. M. that evening in the Manager's office. Taine made up his mind that he would be there. No matter what happened, he just had to be there. He knew that in that conference there would be disclosures of the greatest importance. The telephone conversations had indicated that something great, gigantic, stupendous was brewing in the steaming pot of destiny, stirred by these financial giants. All that afternoon as he worked he cast glances around the office. Where could he hide?

The Big Meeting

THE meeting was held that evening as arranged.

It was a peculiar gathering. Probably never, in the history of the world, had there been one like it. At the head of the table, as was her due, sat Miss Patricia Powers, now nearly sixty years old. When her father died, she had been the richest woman in America. Now, she was probably the richest woman in the world. During those years, following her father's death, her financial life had been interesting on account of the fact that every investment that she had made had been directed by another woman. Not a single dollar had been under the control of the masculine sex.

The greatly increased financial ability of the feminine world was shown by the fact that during all those years not a dollar had been lost; every investment had been wisely planned and had brought a

rich reward, and the women who had worked thus for Miss Patricia Powers had received, as their reward, the hearty and generous support of this rich woman in all their plans. Thus, she was entitled to a place at the head of the table. She was a rather ugly woman, and her elaborate costume, her garish display of jewelry, her peculiar taste in regard to cosmetics but accentuated this ugliness. Gossip stated that no man had ever offered to marry her. It may easily be seen that this neglect had been a large factor in her conduct during the past ten years.

At the other end sat Miss Martha Belzer, not the one who became so incensed years before because Aviation Consolidated had refused her a promotion which she knew that her ability merited. That Martha Belzer had gone to Europe on a vacation, news had come of her death in the Alps, her body had never been located; this person was a capable looking, well dressed, carefully shaved, financial giant, by the name of Mark Bonds. He had come over from France some years ago, well recommended, and by sheer ability had become a leader in the financial circles of America.

Years before, Miss Martha Belzer had spent a night writing to nine of her friends. Like her, those friends had all met tragic deaths, by fire or water, but always in some out of the way part of the world where their bodies could not be found. Those nine business women had also undergone a metamorphosis.

The twelfth place was occupied by a physician. She was, without question, the greatest biologist of hers, or any other age of history. She and Miss Patricia Powers were women, dressed as women. The other ten persons at the table were the leaders in the new financial movement that was threatening the economic life of the group of old-timers.

Miss Powers started to open the meeting.

The telephone rang, and Mark Bonds answered it from his seat.

After listening intently, he curtly replied in a deep, masculine voice:

“Bring her up.”

And looking around, he remarked:

“You know that little red-headed telephone operator? Well, she is raising Hell downstairs and says she has to see us right away. Says she has news that is vital to our interests.

“Do you mean Dorris Bahnes, the one just promoted to be our private operator?” asked Miss Powers.

“That’s the one,” answered the Manager, smiling as he spoke. Then he went to the door and opened it. In rushed the red haired girl, breathless, her dress torn, her shoes muddy. Gasping, she almost fell to the floor. The great physician personally helped her to a seat and saw that she was given a stimulant. At last she was calm enough to tell her story.

“I know that you are going to punish me,” she faltered, I know I done wrong, but how was I to know? About three or four weeks ago I met a man in our church. He treated me swell, and made love to me and then one night when I was on my way home from the Club I was caught by three big women and put in a taxi, and before I could say a word we were on our way to California. They would not tell me a word, would not even talk to me. Everytime I tried to escape, they beat me. Out there I was chained to a bed in a shack on the desert. I thought I would die there. Finally, I got away. The Salvation Army helped me, and I finally reached New York. When I went to the boarding house, the landlady abused me. She said I was a liar, that I had been in New York all the time, and had paid my board regular, and even while we were talking a red haired girl came out of my room with some of my clothes on and tried to catch me, and I ran as fast as I could to the Club for help, and when I heard that you were all here, I was bound to tell you, because something is wrong about it. Has there been a red-haired girl here? In my place?”

The Manager nodded, yes. Then he said kindly:

“You have had a terrible experience, my dear girl. No doubt about some rascal trying to harm you in some way. You sit near me till we get through this meeting and then we will take up your case. In the meantime, I will have our private detectives go to your boarding house and try to find this other woman or whoever it is that is masquerading in your clothing. Your conduct shows how loyal you are to our movement, so, we will have no hesitancy in discussing matters freely with you. Tomorrow I want you to dictate the exact details to one of our private stenographers. It was certainly a most unusual experience. Now, Miss Powers, suppose we start with our meeting. Miss Bahnes, you just rest. No one is going to harm you now since you have reached us.

“I am so glad,” murmured the little girl.

Miss Powers began to speak.

“As President of our Association, I have called this meeting to make a careful survey of what has been done so far, and decide on a course of action in the future. I believe that the time has arrived for our more ambitious plans to start. Dr. Hamilton, will you give us a brief account of your invaluable work for us?”

A Revelation

THE wonderful biologist smiled as she replied:

“My work has really been interesting. When, years ago, you asked me for suggestions that would enable you to finally assume control of all America and perhaps the entire world, I had already done some very beautiful work, but, of course, I was handicapped by lack of funds and material. Your organization supplied both. You felt that it was necessary, for a few years at least, to place your financial campaign in the hands of five thousand brilliant, well trained, financiers and business executives. These had to be men on account of the inability of women to even secure a finger-hold on the important positions. You asked me to solve that problem. I did. I asked you for a list of five thousand brilliant young unmarried women, well versed in the business management of great enterprises, who were willing to sacrifice their lives to the accomplishment of our great idea. You furnished me with that list, headed with the names of ten of the most remarkable feminine minds that the world had ever produced. At the top of that list was the name of the brains and originator of the movement, Miss Martha Belzer.

“We built up an organization and went to China. There we secured material for twenty-five thousand ampules of male gonadal solution, highly concentrated and of uniform strength. We purchased our so-called College in France and there, after all forms of imaginary deaths, our five thousand heroines came. First, they were thoroughly treated with radium and the X-ray to produce bodies that were natural, as far as sexual characteristics were concerned, and, after that, each one was given five doses of the substance that I was able to isolate and which, for convenience, I called MALEFINE XXX. In a remarkably short time, these heroines experienced the desired physical changes, their voices deepened, became wonderfully masculine; they developed such growths of hair on the face that they had to begin shaving once a day. There was also a rather typical change in certain deposits of subcutaneous fat. But

why go into all these details? It is sufficient to say that five thousand well educated, rather beautiful women entered our French laboratory and five thousand persons who looked like well-bred cultured men left it. What those five thousand did in the financial world can best be told by some one else.

“That was our first great task. Of course, this had to be done only once, because we felt that by the time that our new men grew old the women would be in complete control, without the necessity of such substitutes. In fact, it may be possible to reverse the process and change some of these heroines back into their original bodies.

“Our next important point of attack was to begin turning the human race into a feminine one. As you know, the relation between the number of male and female babies is very close. For centuries scientists have been trying to influence the sex of the unborn child. The problem was attacked from every possible angle. I was fortunate enough to arrive at what seems to be the correct solution. As you know, we patented a Modified Maternity Food for Expectant Mothers. It was a good food, and, as we sold it at cost and extensively advertised it, it was used by millions of mothers. As a result, last year there were three times as many girl babies as boy babies born in the United States. If we can continue this rate or increase it, we will soon have a feminine nation.

“That brings me to my final dream of a manless world. I feel that our organization can easily be spread over the entire globe. We do not want two sexes in this fair world of ours, not as long as one sex can run it so efficiently. But, of course, that sex has to continue on in its existence; we do not plan to destroy humanity. What I have in mind is the perfecting of parthenogenesis. By that I mean the reproduction by virgin females of eggs which develop without being fertilized by the male principle, or sperm cell. This is an actual fact at the present time in certain insects, worms and crustaceans, the most familiar example being that of the aphid, in which a number of parthenogenetically produced generations occur entirely composed of females.

“If worms and crabs can do that, the human female can; and the time is near at hand when we will. Later on, we will consider the production of females from ovamaters in the laboratory and thus save our mature females the time and suffering of bearing their young. The growth of the young female, from the egg up to the second or third year of life, will be provided for in our Government laboratories and nurseries. I am at work on these problems now, and, just as soon as we feel strong enough to take

over the government, I shall be able to present a perfect plan for the development of future feminine generations that will in no way have the curse of masculine associations.

“As I know you are well aware of our plans, it is useless for me to go into details. Enough for me to say that when the time comes you will not find my department lagging behind in our effort to make this world perfect by the complete extermination of the hated male element of our population. In all this I have had your hearty support and cooperation.”

CHAPTER VI - Mistaken Identity

THE eleven persons around the table heartily applauded the great biologist. Even the awestruck, red-headed, telephone girl timidly clapped her hands.

“Now, Martha, how about your end of it?” asked the wealthy woman, whose enthusiasm and wealth had made all this possible. The person at the other end of the table, Mark Bond, elegantly attired in the height of fashionable clothing, stood up and smiled.

“We financiers have done well. At this moment we are planning an attack, which, if it succeeds, will put the entire wealth of the States in our hands. There were only five thousand of us who willingly sacrificed our sex to conquer womanhood for the purpose of climbing to success. Five thousand, but what a wonderful group that was! Their names will be engraved in letters of gold in the Memorial that we are thinking of building for them in Washington. The men of the financial world have been but toys in our hands. We have played with them, as a child with his teddy bear, a cat with a mouse. All we have to do is to go onward toward the final glory. For a generation men can stay as messenger boys. Then we hope for a wonderful manless America.”

And again the eager listeners applauded one of their greatest heroines.

Miss Patricia Powers smiled. That only made her uglier.

“It seems to me,” she said, “that we are going ahead nicely with our plans. I have carefully gone over your reports with the Manager of the Bridge Club. Everything is working out as we want it to come out, but I am sorry to report that quite a few of our brave five thousand are in private hospitals, suffering from a form of nervous exhaustion. Fortunately, we are in complete charge of these hospitals, and, so far, have been able to keep this news from becoming public. I am having a special investigation made

of this unfortunate break in our health. We are unfortunate not to have a welltrained psychiatrist in our organization, and we do not feel that it is safe to refer these cases to a man. Otherwise, all is going well. Tomorrow we will start our final attack on Wall Street. Juliette, as Manager of our organization, have you any remarks to make?”

Juliette, known as James Jones, Manager of the Bridge Club, stood up, as he started to answer the inquiry.

“I am sure that anything I can say will be of interest to you. We are certainly fortunate in finding our little red-haired stenographer. Her conduct proves the loyalty of our organization, the high ideals of even the smallest member of the movement. I think that this brave girl should be rewarded. A thousand dollars would not be too much—”

“Oh! Please do not give me anything,” murmured Dorris Bahnes. “I only did my duty, and I am sorry it happened, because that bad man might have found out some of your secrets. If you think it safe, I would like to go back to the boarding house and go to bed. I am so tired.”

“We will see that you are well guarded,” the Manager assured her, and he pressed the button at his desk. A messenger girl answered the summons.

“Any news?” the Manager asked.

“Yes, Sir, your private detectives have a redhaired woman down stairs, and they want to bring her up as soon as you let them.”

“Send them up. That was quick work! It did not take them long to catch that female impersonator, did it?”

In a few minutes, three determined women walked in. There was something in their manner that conveyed the impression that they could be rather hard boiled if they came in conflict with a criminal. With them was a red-headed girl. They were not holding her, but anyone could see that they were not going to let her get away. Except for the fact that she was a little better dressed, more carefully rouged, she was the exact duplicate of the red-haired girl, who sat at the table with the Directors of the Bridge Club.

“Now, this is very interesting,” began the Manager. “Here by my side is Dorris Bahnes, who has just arrived in town, having escaped from her kidnappers, and there in front of us is a person who

looks like Dorris, who has been staying in her room and doing her work at the telephone exchange, and, in reality, all the time she was a detective. Our private detectives tell us that this person is none other than Taine, the great operator from San Francisco, paid by Johnson and his crowd to find out what we are doing in this Club.”

She walked over to the girl who was now held on either side by one of the detectives.

“What did you do it for, Taine? How much were you going to get out of it ?”

The red-haired girl did not answer.

“How do you like to wear a red wig, Taine?”

No answer.

“Suppose I take it off?”

Silence.

The Manager took off the girl’s cap, and then grabbed the mass of red hair. It stuck. The girl cried in pain.

“Bless me!” exclaimed the Manager. “It’s real hair. I am sorry that I hurt you, Dorris, if you are Dorris. But if you are, how did you get here and where have you been?”

“What do you want me to tell? Everything?” asked the girl whose hair had just been pulled.

“Yes, come over to the table and tell us all about it.”

“You see,” said the girl, rather nervously, “this man was good to me and so I reported it to you as our instructions were, and so when he had me kidnapped, why, of course, you knew it all the time. His women took me out to a shack somewhere in the California desert and it was not long before a dozen of our women came out there and over-powered his women and some of them stayed there to guard the three women and the rest brought me back to New York. I have been in New York for about a week, and all of that time I have been in one of the private rooms in the Club. Of course, as soon as I arrived I told the Manager all about what happened; I had to in order to keep my vows to the Organization. That is all I have to say. I am sure that I have done nothing wrong.”

“No. You have acted in a wonderful way, Dorris. We are proud of you.”

He turned to his fellow members of the Directorate.

“Some of you have been in my confidence during these last few weeks, others know of this for the first time. Johnson, with the group of men he represents, was determined to learn our secrets. They engaged one of the most brilliant detectives in America, a man by the name of Taine. We knew when this enemy of ours went to Washington and when he went to San Francisco. We were informed when Taine arrived in New York. Every time he turned around we had a report of it. We played with him—like a cat plays with a mouse. He had one of our girls kidnapped and she has just told you what happened. Then we made it possible for him to attend this meeting—and he did. He is here now. Of course, we wanted him to know all that he had taken such pains to learn; so, we went right on with the meeting, and I hope you have enjoyed it, Mr. Taine.” Here the Manager looked right at the red-headed girl by his side.

Confusion!

THE red-haired girl whom he had called Mr. Taine looked at him and smiled.

“I guess I might as well own up, Mr. Manager. I am not Mr. Taine. I am Flossie Ruffles from the Lyric. My specialty is impersonations. For a week I have been trying to duplicate a red-haired girl, and, for some reason, she gave me five thousand to come here tonight and put on this act. I am sorry if I worried you, but I really needed the money and I thought you would not care. I believe from what you have said that it must have been Mr. Taine, the detective, who gave me the five thousand, though why he should have wanted me to do it, I cannot say.”

The Manager looked first at one of the red-haired girls and then at the other. Both seemed genuine. They were as much alike as though they were identical twins. She even went and examined the hair of the girl who had first entered the room. It was as genuine as the other girl’s was.

The Manager sat down. For what seemed hours she sat there, her eyes covered with her right hand. Suddenly she jumped up and leaned excitedly over the table.

“That man Taine is in this room!” she cried. “There are twelve of us here at the table, these two girls and the three detectives. One of us is Taine. I know that I am not, and I can vouch for Miss Powers, and I am also sure of Dr. Hamilton and Mark Bond. But how about the others? Dr. Hamilton, I am

going to ask you to examine these Directors. Everyone of them, you know, should be a woman. But I am sure that one of them is a man, and that man is Taine.”

The men seated around the table looked at each other. One drummed on the polished surface with his finger tips. Tap-tap-rappity-tap-tap. On his hand glowed a wonderful Chinese ring. It was the San Francisco physician. He suddenly stood up,

“Suppose I say that I am Taine, Juliette? If I say that, will you spare these friends of ours the humiliation of your proposal—of showing their real sex by your inspection of their bodies?”

The Manager looked across the table at the Doctor—she looked long and piercingly. Then she shook her head—

“No. Lucy, old girl. You are not Taine. I could swear that you are Lucy, the girl that went to China and helped Dr. Hamilton with her work there. Why, I have seen that ring a hundred times.”

“But I insist that I am Taine. Let’s put an end to the melodrama. These women here may be insane in their ideas, but they are, at least, women. I do not want them undressed—not here. I would rather tell you right now that we have come to the end of the play.”

Miss Powers started to laugh, a high pitched, hysterical laugh.

“But suppose he is telling the truth, my dears. For God’s sake! stop the acting and get down to business. If he is Taine, let’s be sure of it. If it is Lucy, it just means that one more of the poor girls has gone mad. Can’t one of you tell? Please find out in some way. If something is not done soon, I shall scream!”

Several went to her to quiet her. One by one the Directors seemed, to draw away from the San Francisco man, the physician whom they called in such a familiar fashion, “Lucy.” He seemed undisturbed, and yet, at the same time, he glanced in an uneasy manner from one side to another, and both of his hands were now in his Tuxedo pockets.

Finally, the room became quiet. Dr. Hamilton looked at Lucy.

“Where did you get that ring?” he asked.

“Oh! That was my ring one time in China. Do you remember that little Chinese girl whom you saved and thought so much of in the hospital? She gave you all a piece of expensive jewelry. She gave you a piece of jade, Dr. Hamilton, and she gave the doctor whom you call Lucy this ring. Lucy thought

the little China girl rather nice. Well, to make a long story short, I was that little girl. I lived in the hospital with you for some months. The Government sent me over to find out what you girls were doing there. I had some ideas then and during all these years those ideas have been slowly working into definite form. I suspected some of the things you spoke of tonight, yet, at the same time, you went a lot further than I thought sensible people would go. I know a lot about women, but I cannot understand what's the matter with you—unless you really are insane.”

Dr. Hamilton shook her head gravely.

“I guess he is right, girls. I remember that little Chinese girl, and he did give me the jade. He would not have known about that unless he had been there. I have heard about him, but I had no idea that he was so damn clever. But is he clever?

To get the best of Lucy and come here dressed to impersonate her? And then this chorus girl.

Well, he says he is Taine, and I really do not think he has harmed Lucy—just locked her up somewhere.

So, the best thing we can do with him is to kill him right away. He knows too much—we can handle this chorus girl, but this man—the only way to keep him quiet is to kill him. I hate to commit murder, but I have been working on this plan for years and I am not going to have it go to pieces just on account of a man.”

Miss Patricia Powers agreed with the Doctor.

“You are right, Hamilton,” she said. “He knows too much. If he is dead, we will put through our financial coup, and in a week it will not make any difference if they do find out he died here at the Club.”

Suddenly the San Francisco doctor, Lucy, who was really Taine, seemed to change. His face grew hard, and his hands, within his coat pockets, twitched.

“Now, you sit down, ladies, and listen to me talk. You are not going to kill me or anybody tonight. There are about five hundred policemen around this building. If I am not out safely by midnight, they are going to find out why. No one is going to leave. You women have played a great game, but it was a selfish, inhuman sort of a game, and you are going to lose out and it's not your fault or my fault, but just one of those happenings that make me believe in predestination. You want to run this world,

and have all the men die off and make it a female Paradise, and you forgot there was a God and that He man just the same as He made woman. I admit that some men are rather bad sort of fools, but some of us are really rather good sorts—take me, for example. My wife thinks I am wonderful—of course, all my boys are girls, but, at the same time, she would have been tickled had the last one been a boy. You go and change your bodies, and try and make men out of yourselves, and all the rest of what you call your programme, and now you think that you are going to win out by killing me. If it were not for the Missus and the kids, I would not mind much if you did, but even if you were able to, what good would it do you?

“I think your Dr. Hamilton is a rather bright expert. I always shall be indebted to her for operating on Ming Foo. She had a wonderful plan and she has worked it out in a wonderful way—but she did not know the Chinese people—not the way I do. I have lived with them and slept with them and I know a little more about them than you would think, just by looking at me. During these last two weeks I have been having long talks with scientists from all over the East. Perhaps your detectives know who they were, though they could not tell what we talked about. But I wanted to learn all I could about that medicine Dr. Hamilton prepared in that hospital, and these men told me. I said so and so and they agreed with me that my idea might be right. What you have said tonight convinces me that I was right.

Taine Explains

YOU went on with your plans, but you forgot God. He had certain plans for the human race, and it was no part of His plan that women should live on, century after century, without men, as you were preparing them to do. So, this is what happened. For thousands of years, over in China, they have had a deadly disease. They have had it so long that by this time practically the entire nation has it without knowing it or without having many signs of it. They have just become accustomed to it, so that it is a very mild disease—but, at the same time, it is all through their bodies. Once in a while a white man contracts that disease, and then he dies a rather unpleasant death in a few years. Most of them become insane before they die. Now, when you girls operated on those poor Chinks for so many pieces of gold, you were operating on men who had that disease. Every ampule of medicine you prepared from their glands had the germs of that disease in it. You took five thousand of your smartest women, the

ones you were counting on to lead in this feminine revolt, and you injected this disease into their blood. You gave them what you called male characteristics, but you gave them something else. You infected every one of them with this disease. Dr. Hamilton flirted with this idea—she even went so far as to test each Chink with a Wasserman test, but she did not know that the disease was so mild in the yellow people that it does not show a Wasserman. So, she lost sight of the danger. Of course, she realizes it now. She is not a specialist in mental diseases, but she sees now that your comrades who are going insane have paresis. I suspected all this—I have talked about all this to the specialists—and tonight I find, by your own statements, that I am right. Ladies, the harvest you planted ten years ago is just beginning. Inside of another year everyone of your brilliant five thousand financial leaders will be insane. Your movement will fail because there will be no brains left to carry the gospel of what you call feminine supremacy to the nation.

“One of the great men I talked to a few nights ago said that you had performed a feminine metamorphosis. He told me that meant changing a woman into a man. You did better than that. You took five thousand of our best women, girls who would have made loving wives and wonderful mothers if they had been well advised—you took the best that we have bred, and, through your desires to rule, you have changed them into five thousand insane women.

“There is no need of Johnson’s trying to fight you. There is no need of his ever knowing what happened. I am ashamed to tell him—ashamed to tell anyone, because you belong to the same sex that my mother and wife and daughters belong to.

I did not think women could be so—peculiar. I really thought women liked us men—my women folks are wild about me—you ought to see the neckties my wife selects for me and the scarf-pin. I am not going to say a word about this to anyone. I will just tell Johnson that he need not worry—and my advice is to give those poor girls some of the new arsenic preparations that sometimes works so well in these mental cases. Now, I am going to take my chorus girl and leave, and please be sensible and do not try to stop us, because, if you do, there are going to be a lot of us get hurt, and you, poor fools, are hurt bad enough as it is, if you believe what I tell you, and I guess you do—you look as if you did. You need not worry about Lucy. I will send her back just as soon as I am safe.”

So, Taine and Flossie Ruffles walked out of the room and out of the Club, and out into the realities of little old New York.

That same night Taine called on Johnson.

“You owe me,” he said to that worthy, “twentyseven thousand dollars expense money. That is in addition to the money you had to pay those college professors. Me—you don’t owe me anything except this expense money. I have your million and that is enough. The work is done. It was being done before I started. You need not worry about those people at the Bridge Club. In another year there won’t be one of them that will know the minimum requirements for the dealer to bid one club. You can just take my word for it that they are through. But, at the same time, don’t gamble on the stock exchange for a week or two, because they may try to get you.”

Johnson looked at the little man in amazement.

“I suppose,” he said, “that you will give me a full report?”

“No,” replied Taine. “No use. You would not believe me if I did.”