

# Colliers

Saturday, May 16, 1908



Cover Design . . . . .	Drawn by <i>Blanche Greer</i>	
Atlas Holding Up the Sky. <i>Frontispiece</i> . . . . .	Painted by <i>Maxfield Parrish</i>	6
Editorials . . . . .		7
A Statesman's Paradise . . . . .	Cartoon by <i>Boardman Robinson</i>	9
The American Saloon . . . . .	<i>Will Irwin</i>	9
<i>VI—The Motel License League</i>		
The Centennial Celebration of the Establishment of the Catholic Diocese of New York. <i>Photographs</i> . . . . .		11
Atlantic City on Parade . . . . .	<i>Wallace Irwin</i>	12
<i>Illustrated by George Brink</i>		
The Bureau of Destiny. <i>Story</i> . . . . .	<i>Brymond Macdonald Alden</i>	13
<i>Illustrated by Henry Boleigh</i>		
Plays and Players . . . . .	<i>Arthur Ruhl</i>	16
<i>Illustrated with Photographs</i>		
The Saloons' Welcome to the Fleet . . . . .	<i>J. E. White</i>	17
Nelson's Gavel for Evans . . . . .		17
<i>Illustrated with a Photograph</i>		
The Crisis Japan Faces . . . . .		17
Letters of a Japanese Schoolboy . . . . .	<i>Hashimura Togo</i>	18
<i>XXII—The Hon. Bomb</i>		
<i>Illustrated by Rollin Kirby</i>		
Snapshots of Current History. <i>Photographs</i> . . . . .		19
An American Whip in England. <i>Photograph</i> . . . . .		20
What the World is Doing . . . . .		20

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Volume XL1 Number 8

# The Bureau of Destiny

Fleming Finds the Matrimonial Department "On the Job"

By RAYMOND MACDONALD ALDEN



ITTING on a bench in the park, where a great magnolia tree shielded him from the afternoon sun, and a flaming poinsettia held his gaze by its tropical splendor, Fleming let the minutes go by him with an indifference which amused him when he occasionally realized it.

"Those people that go by at such a pace," he said once, almost aloud, "don't know how good it seems to just sit still, during the warm part of the day especially. They've never tried it, I suppose. If they had, they'd never do anything else."

At this moment a young man came by, distributing cards, and pressed one of them into Fleming's unresisting hand. He held it a moment with indifference, then lifted it and read it slowly.

## THE BUREAU OF DESTINY.

SCHOOL OF PHRENOLOGY AND ASTRONOMY,  
AND MATRIMONIAL AGENCY.

Character and Fate charted by the most reliable  
Scientists on the Pacific Coast.

Business Prospects Ascertained and Discovered.

## MARRIAGES ARRANGED

for persons of any age, sex, or social position,  
positively to their satisfaction.

1740 South Broadway.

On the reverse side were some details concerning fees. "Good!" said Fleming, as he finished it. "Just what I need, to a T. Business prospects are always worth looking into, and as for matrimony, I've proved incapable of looking after that for myself. I'm not so sure that I care to have any light thrown on my character, but they might find something I haven't spotted that it would do no harm to know. When I have nothing better to do, I guess I'll give 'em a call."

He sat there in the same idle fashion until the shade of the tree began to be undesirable, with the approach of evening and the springing up of an ocean breeze. Then he strolled about for a time, and at last made his way in the direction of supper. It was not until seven o'clock or thereabouts that he found himself on South Broadway, his hunger satisfied, but a desire for something to do growing upon him. The name of the street reminded him of the card in his pocket, and he began deliberately looking for No. 1740. Ten minutes later he had entered the Bureau of Destiny.

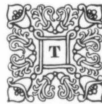
It was a dingy room on the second floor of an old building which had once been a residence, but was now, as the city's business had grown that way, rented for various offices used by tenants on the border-line of re-

spectability. On the walls hung charts of mystical character—some showing human heads divided into squared sections with labels indicating their phrenological significance, others representing hands similarly outlined, and still others bearing the signs of the zodiac set in a map of the heavens. Two mottoes, "Know Thyself!" and "Know Thy Fate," completed the decoration of the walls. A girl sat at a desk near the door, copying a paper on a low-priced typewriter, and in the centre of the room stood a smooth-faced, spectacled man, wearing a black skull cap which suggested, but did not reveal, baldness. He came forward as Fleming entered, saying: "Good evening, sir. Is there something I can do for you?" "I thought I'd take a look at your shop," drawled Fleming. "Your runner gave me your card this afternoon, and I had nothing better to do to-night."

"Very good, very good. You might be interested in these charts—some have come long distances to see them. And perhaps we could give you a reading? We have a special offer this week—twenty-five per cent off on all first readings. You are a stranger in the city?" Fleming nodded.

"Would it be on the lines of health, business, or matrimony that you would be particularly interested?"

"Well," said the new client, "my health prospects are all right, business ones only fair to middling, matrimonial ones very bad."



HE manager smiled with unaffected delight. "You have come to the right place," he said. "There may be others in the city who can do well enough for ordinary readings of the head and hand, but in the matrimonial line—not simply for readings, but for following them up and arranging the whole thing—we claim to be specialists without rival."

"Good," said Fleming. "But suppose one doesn't even know whether he wants to get married?"

"Then the case is more interesting, but not exceptionally difficult. To deal with the mystery of mind—to discover motives, desires, aspirations, which are hidden even from those in whom they occur—this, my dear sir, is one of the chief joys of my life-work."

Fleming looked at him with some real admiration. "You talk well," he said coolly.

"Talk!" said the other. "Talk is nothing. Action is everything. But the most important action can not be seen." He touched his forehead significantly. "Take a seat, Mr.—"

"Fleming."

"Mr. Fleming. Thank you. My name is Parsons—Ezra Parsons, D. M. S."

"What is D. M. S. for?"

"Doctor of Mental Science—the only science really worthy of the name. Now let me tell you, Mr. Fleming, something of the advantages in our method of treating the matrimonial problem. Most persons leave it wholly to chance. Could anything be more foolish?"

Fleming assented vaguely. "Of course, I do not speak of those who make it a mere business affair—a matter of avarice. They are beneath consideration."

"You don't believe in marrying for money?"

"Ah, that depends. Not in the ordinary sense of the term, sir. It may be quite possible that pecuniary efficiency is precisely one of the traits required for the mate of certain persons. But if so, it should be discovered by science. And with those who think they marry for love, everything is usually based on a mere whim—what may be a delusion of the moment."

"You're right there," said Fleming.

"Not that I deny the reality of love; far from it. On the contrary, our science magnifies its importance as nothing else does. Love is a fact, sir—not a mere feeling; it is an attraction residing in the very fibres of your body, and in the still more numerous fibres of the spirit. It is a part of your destiny, determined before you were born and registered in the heavens as well as in yourself."

Dr. Parsons gestured as he grew enthusiastic, and

Fleming's interest increased, despite his amusement. "You don't say!" was his only reply at present. "And there is something more than all this," the doctor pursued, "that gives us special opportunities in the lines I speak of. Here in Los Angeles all the different types of human nature come together—they converge here from all parts of the country. The atmosphere is a composite—not distorted or one-sided, like that of most towns. It doesn't matter what sort of a temperament or a hobby is inherited for a man, to fit his own perfectly, it can be found right here."

"Well," said Fleming, "I don't know as I have anything more than a kind of scientific interest in what you're saying, but I'm willing to be experimented on. We'll begin with my hand, set, or hands?"

"Your hand, please," said the doctor, and he immediately began to scan Fleming's palm. His client felt the awkwardness of the situation.

"Can you tell whether I've used Peers' Soap?" he asked irreverently. Dr. Parsons did not deign to reply. Presently he looked up wisely.

"You have already been disappointed in love," he said.

Fleming blushed a little. "I—eh—suppose you might say so, in a way."

"That's all right," said the doctor encouragingly. "It doesn't in the least prevent our trying again. It was simply one of those times I spoke of, when you mistake a passing feeling for the real thing."

To this his client said nothing. He was casting furtive glances toward the desk, to see if the girl sitting there was listening.

"She's my secretary," said Dr. Parsons, noting the fact. "And a very competent scientist herself. I always take her into my confidence, and she frequently does good work for us in those matrimonial matters. Now, let me take down the time of your birth, so that we can look up your horoscope."

Fleming gave it, while the doctor made various memoranda in his notebook.

"That's all at present, then, Mr. Fleming," he said presently. "Unless you should particularly want a hand reading also. They are not so much favored by our purpose as I can have the horoscope made out, and some preliminary advice for you, based on it, by ten A. M. to-morrow. Would you care now to make a deposit of a nominal sum—say fifty cents?"

"Sure," said Fleming. "I'll call by noon, anyway."

"And I will go to work instantly on the horoscope," said the doctor, "before I am stopped by any one else coming in. You can pay the money to Miss Sloss." So saying, he disappeared into an inner room.

Miss Sloss rose from her desk, and changed a gold piece for Fleming. She had a pleasant, thoughtful, far from beautiful face, surmounted by a cheerful pompadour. Her blue eyes seemed not so much those of a psychic as of one possessed of fair common sense, and they looked forth with frank and amiable amiability, which was not unreturned.

"Are you wanting to get married?" she asked.

He blushed again. "Oh, I don't know. I'm just loafing around here, trying to find something to do, and your place looks interesting. I don't know just what kind of a guy this Dr. Parsons is, but—"

He looked around abruptly, lest he might have been overheard.

"Oh, he's all right," said Miss Sloss. "And I am, though a trifle—"for that kind of work. I don't handle the psychical and astrological part, except to write from his dictation and copy readings. But I've done some good work in the matrimonial line—made some real good matches. A woman always has something of a knack that way, you know."

Her manner invited confidence and he yielded to it. "Well, I wanted to get married all right, until about a week ago. I got turned down pretty bad. That was in the East. So I dropped everything and came right out here for a new start. I could go by land. And now if I was to get married it would be just—"

"For spite?" she suggested cheerfully. "Perhaps you might call it so," he admitted. "To kind of show that I don't care."

Miss Sloss nodded. "That's all right, if you find just the right substitute. It wouldn't be a good reason for taking one that you didn't want. You come in to-morrow, anyway, and I'll have a talk with Dr. Parsons about it."

At that instant another visitor was entering the office, and Fleming made his departure.

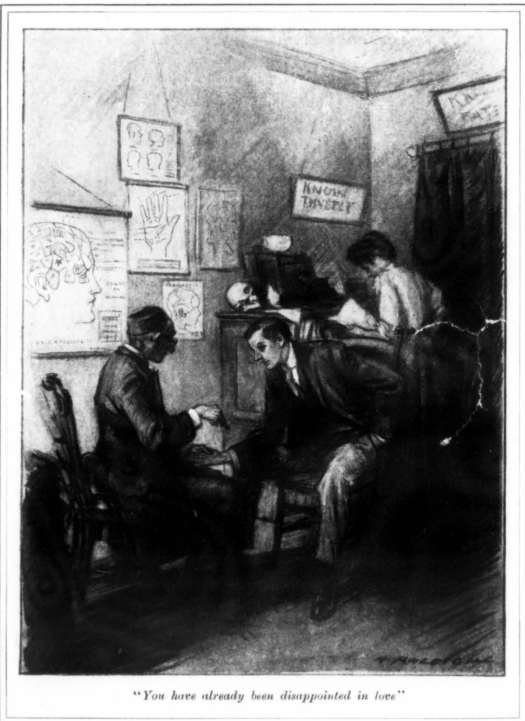
It was surprising how his thoughts dwelt that night on the Bureau of Destiny, its occult suggestions of the divining of human fate and the cheerful Miss Sloss. Perhaps it was that everything else to think West with him the savings of two or three years' hard work, and the appearance of this strange new city was so much one of perpetual playtime that he had not yet been able to think of looking for employment. Any day he might be called to work, and his thoughts, was now a relief from this unaccustomed leisure. It must

have been for some such reason that he presented himself at the Bureau of Destiny on the following morning, within fifteen minutes after the clock had struck ten.



DR. PARSONS was out, but he had left the results of his studies on Fleming's palm and horoscope, and Miss Sloss explained them skillfully. The auguries were favorable; everything looked well for his future, particularly in the direction of marriage. But one thing, it appeared, was important; he must marry one who had been born under the constellation of Aries, and—if possible—when the moon was in Libra. This was precisely the combination required, so Dr. Parsons believed, for perfect harmony of spirit.

Fleming was properly interested. The constellations



"You have already been disappointed in love"

were new institutions to him, but Miss Sloss explained them, not so eloquently, but probably rather more clearly than Dr. Parsons himself could have done. She showed him a book of tables in which were the calendars of all the years from 1800 to 1950, with the dominant constellations and other astrological data for every day.

"Let me find August, 1885," he said presently. "The fifteenth. How about that Aries business?"

She found the place promptly. "The sun in Aries—moon in Libra. Just your combination. Those birthday is that, Mr. Fleming? Not hers?"

He nodded. "That is very interesting," said Miss Sloss. "Dr. Parsons would say it shows that your liking for her was not altogether a whim, after all, but had a real scientific basis."

"Then why didn't she have a liking for me?" "Oh—that's too hard for me to answer, especially without having seen her. But this makes it seem more hopeful. Perhaps you had better try again."

He shook his head very positively. "When I do that the constellations will be out on new patterns," he said. "Very well, then we will try other plans. And having got the scientific part of it settled, I want you to tell me some things of another kind. What kind of a looking girl would you be willing to marry? Have you any definite idea?"

"Brown eyes," he answered instantly. "Are you sure?"

"Yes—not very dark, but a nutty kind. That's the only color for a woman's eyes—and hair, too, for that matter."

He had not noticed those belonging to Miss Sloss, or he would have been more polite.

"And is there anything else?" "I don't know for is there—is that I could specify. If I had her picture I'd show you, but I threw it away."

"I suppose she must be a good housekeeper?" "Oh, kind of. I guess I can always afford to keep a girl; she doesn't have to be an expert."

"What is your business?" "I'm an electrician, when I'm working. Just now I'm having a good loaf."

"You don't look as if you had any very bad bad habits," said Miss Sloss, surveying him critically. "You see, we have to be able to do some recommending on both sides."

"Well, I guess you don't need any references, with all that the doctor here finds out from my hands and things. I gathered he could look right inside my head if he wanted to."

She laughed lightly. "He and I each get our own points in our own way," she said. "So I shan't promise not to ask you any questions. But I know a girl that I think might suit you, if you wish to. She is sitting at a restaurant down here on Fifth Street. If you should care to go there for your lunch, you could have a good look at her without any trouble."

"Was she born under Aries?" Fleming asked in a businesslike manner.

"Yes, she was. I know her birthday in fact, I know her pretty well all round. Dr. Parsons hasn't seen her yet, but he thought from what I told him she might be just the one."

"All right. It's easy to take lunch there, anyhow." He took out a pencil to note the address. "Anybody else?" he asked.

"Don't you think one at a time is enough?" "I don't see any reason why we shouldn't save time by going right ahead with as many as there are on the list."

"Well," said Miss Sloss slowly. "Dr. Parsons has some one in mind himself, and of course, he ought to be a better judge than I. It's one of his clients that he thinks a good deal of, and he says the astrological conditions point to her quite strongly. She keeps a hair store on Spring Street."

"It wouldn't be so easy to get a good look at her, then?"

"Not unless you went for a treatment. She gives shampoos and everything to gentlemen as well as ladies, and does it very finely."

"All right—no harm in that." And he added the address of the hair store. "They both have fortunate birthdays," said Miss Sloss. "For you see if you should be interested, you could go right on seeing either one of them and get quite well acquainted, without their suspecting anything."

He thanked her and made his way into the street. As he descended the stairs he was saying to himself:

"I had no idea there was such fun as this to be had for the money. And it looks as if you could make it last just about as long as you like."



HATE luncheon at the Fifth Street restaurant, choosing a table where he could get a good view of the cashier. She had hair of almost the right color, and was not bad looking—distinctly prettier, for example, than Miss Sloss. But there were things about her that did not appeal to him.

For one she chewed gum; not in a conspicuous, defiant fashion, but slyly, and so that he could not see her self chewed gum, when he felt like it, but had unresonable prejudices as to young ladies doing it—at least in public. The cashier's voice was also too loud, as appeared when she occasionally answered the telephone or gave directions to a messenger. These things were not pleasing; still, Fleming reflected, one could not hope to find everything combined in one person—more than once in a lifetime.

In paying for his meal he produced a five-dollar bill, although he had plenty of small change, because he had discovered that on the Pacific Coast paper money was likely to provoke comment. There was now a lull at the cashier's desk, and she could give him undivided attention. She fingered the bill carefully.

"Oh, it's all right," said Fleming. "We use them every day in the United States." The girl chewed placidly while she counted out the change. Then, dexterously adapting her mouth to unimpeded speech—

"You ain't been out here very long, I guess?"

"About three weeks," Fleming answered. "Well, you'll learn where the United States is before you've been here a week. Nine-tenths of it is tumbling over itself to be annexed to Los Angeles. Sixty-five, seventy-five, one, two, three, four, five."

She laid the four huge dollars before him. "You don't furnish me to carry these, do you?" he said, as he picked them up.

"No, but if you're too feeble we put something in your coffee to help you lump yourself. Have a tooth-pick? They're free to those that pay with paper money."

"Much obliged, but I always use my jack-knife," said Fleming promptly, and he moved on toward the door. The cashier laughed explosively and resumed her chewing. She was evidently good company; Fleming reflected that he might come again. He enjoyed people who stirred him to say to carry these, do you? But as to relating her—he chuckled deeply at the suggestion.

THE afternoon held plans along other than matrimonial lines. It was therefore not till the next day that he found opportunity to hunt up the hair store. It was a small establishment with a display of various wigs on wax heads in the window, and notices to the effect that both ladies and gentlemen would find relief within for all ailments and deficiencies of scalp or hair. Fleming never before had seen such a place, but that only added zest to the experience.

He explained that his hair had been coming out considerably of late—a statement with some small basis of fact—and that he was willing to make any reasonable sacrifice to have the process arrested. At first he was doubtful whether the lady behind the counter was Miss Tarpey whose name had been given him at the Bureau of Destiny; but her complete assumption of authority soon convinced him that it was she. In this case, Dr. Parsons being the mentor, due heed had not been given to Fleming's own specifications; Miss Tarpey's eyes, to be sure, might be called brown, and her hair had perhaps once been so, but it was now dyed to a ghastly color which color had none, besides being curled and piled into enormous billowy masses. Her voice, however, was far more melodious than the cashier's and her manners were unexceptionable.

Fleming presently found himself seated behind a curtain, while the dexterous fingers of Miss Tarpey went through his hair. It was a strange situation, and he again felt enriched by the new experience.

"You wouldn't care for mental treatment at the same time?" Miss Tarpey asked presently, while she mixed a shampoo.

"How do you mean?"  
 "Why, I often give silent mental treatment while I'm dressing the hair. It occupies the time profitably, and I have had great success. It is vibrations, you know, that go through the whole system; I can turn them in the direction of health, or success, or spiritual force, or whatever line you wish. It's only a dollar extra, and well worth the money."

"I think I'll wait," said Fleming. "It would kind of make me nervous to have the two things going at once, and I should think you'd be likely to get mixed yourself. If you should hit me on the outside with one of those vibrations, instead of sending it through, wouldn't it make my hair come out more?"

Miss Tarpey assured him that such an error was impossible, and went on to discuss the forces of the spirit world in a style which led Fleming to decide that she was either a pupil or a fellow of Dr. Parsons. Her voice, together with the friction on his scalp, proved a singularly soothing, and he actually found himself falling into a doze out of which he roused himself shamefacedly.

The next day he presented himself at the Bureau of Destiny to report on his observations. "Yes," he said to Miss Sloss. "I've seen them both, but there's nothing doing."

"What's the trouble?" she asked. "Aren't they pretty enough?"

"Oh, yes, either one does pretty well for looks, except for that hair of Miss Tarpey. It's a good ad, I suppose, but not what you want on a human head, you know. However, that's not the chief trouble with her; it's her vibrations and all that. I couldn't stand having such things around the outside of my head as I will want to see in this present world."

"I told Dr. Parsons you wouldn't like that," said Miss Sloss. "But, of course, he's so wrapped up in such things himself that he couldn't realize it. But what's the trouble with the others?"

"Is she the restaurant cashier?"

"Yes."  
 "Well, nothing particular—unless it's her gum. I never went much with girls that chewed gum. It's all right, but no objection to it; but I don't care to see it, that's all."

"She might give that up, if she knew how you felt," suggested Miss Sloss.

"I wouldn't like to ask her," he said, in a manner evidently intended to dismiss Miss Sellers from further consideration.

"I'm afraid you're hard to suit," said Miss Sloss. "Would you mind telling me some more about the other young lady, so that I could have something else to go by?" "You said she was an Eastern girl, didn't you?"

"Yes. She came where I came from, in Chester County, Pennsylvania."

"You don't say? My mother's folks came from there, too. Did you know of the Luckenbills?"

"I've heard the name."

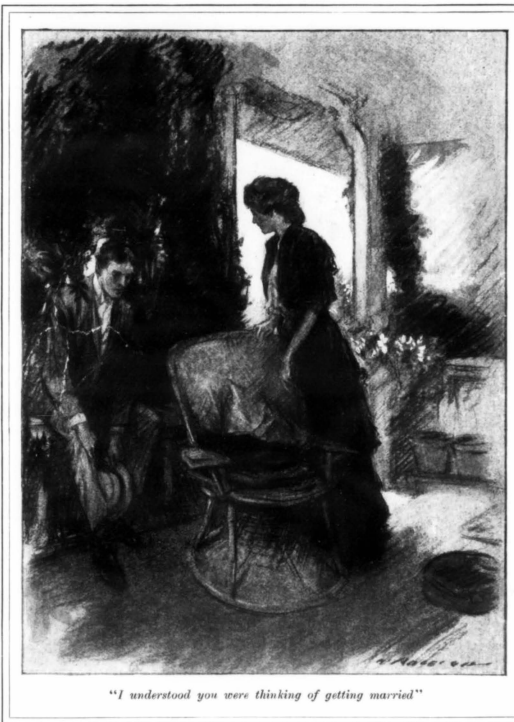
"What's her name?"

"I don't know as I said, but it was Morehouse—Hazel Morehouse. Ever hear of them? They lived just out of West Chester, on the turnpike."

more about her, except that she's just all right. She has all the good points of a city girl and a country girl put together, if you know what that means. I told you I threw away her picture, or I'd show it to you."

"What did you do that for?"  
 "Because she threw me away. What's the use of talking about her, anyway? Oh, I like it all right, but it's time I got over it. You see I'm just having some fun with your Bureau while I'm in town, for lack of anything better. You don't mind my saying so, do you? But you'd have hard work to find anybody in this province that I'll look at twice, Aries or no Aries."

"That's all right," said Miss Sloss with her usual cheerfulness. "As long as you give us a fair chance, that is all we ask. It will be a strange thing, if you really want to get married, and we can't find any-



"I understood you were thinking of getting married"

body in Los Angeles to suit you. You see there's every kind of person here."

"Well, we won't worry, then," said Fleming. He began to have an uncomfortable feeling that he had unbosomed himself somewhat excessively, and reached for his hat. "The longer we keep looking, the more fun we'll get out of it, and I don't suppose the doctor cares if we go slow, as long as I plunk down a dollar every now and then."

WHEN he had disappeared downstairs, Dr. Parsons emerged from the inner office, a benevolent smile on his face. "I didn't come out," he said, "because you and our client appeared to be getting on so well."

"Not particularly," said Miss Sloss. "He didn't care for either of the ladies."

"Perhaps he likes you better," said the doctor meaningly.

"Perhaps he does," she rejoined promptly. "But I wasn't born in Aries."

He scrutinized her face to see how far she was in earnest. "Nature sometimes takes things into her own hands," he said, "in spite of science. If you should be—at all interested, Miss Sloss, don't hesitate to give me a hint, and I'll make another horsepate to see if we can not find some encouraging signs that I had overlooked before."

"Oh, don't meddle with the stars any," said Miss Sloss, rather more pettishly than was natural to her, "or they may turn against you."

And with that she turned decisively to her desk and began a letter on the low-priced typewriter.

Some four weeks later Fleming entered the Bureau of Destiny, late one afternoon. During the interval he had continued to call irregularly, and to make a show of following the suggestions of Dr. Parsons and his assistant, paying occasional fees with great cheerfulness. No tangible progress seemed to have been made as a result; yet he had now called so often that

he found himself more at home in that dingy office, with its charts of heads and constellations—about which he knew little more than on his first entrance there than in any other spot in this great city of strangers.

"Is the doctor in?" he asked at once, as he came up to Miss Sloss's desk.

"No," she said. "He went home about half an hour ago."

"That's why I came so late," said Fleming. "I thought he'd be gone."

"I'm very glad to see you," said Miss Sloss. "In fact, I was going to drop you a card asking you to stop in. I have something to tell you."

"So I have to tell you," he seated himself by her desk. "What would you say if I should ask you to marry me?" The color left her face, but she sat rigid in her chair.

"What do you mean?" she said. "Oh, mean I've been doing a lot of thinking—for me. I believe it would be a real good thing."

"I haven't got brown eyes," she said, looking straight at the wall.

"No, that's true. You're not like her, but that's nothing to me. You're you. I'm square about this—you know I haven't been hanging around here flirting with you. We've just got to be first-rate friends, and I've begun to think maybe that's enough; I don't believe the other kind of thing hits a man but once in his life, anyway. So it's my opinion, if you like me well enough to try it, that we'd get on real happy together. I—"

"Wait," she said. "You haven't asked me yet. Don't do it now. I'd rather you'd take a few days before you say anything more. Will you?"

"Why, certainly," he said with some hesitation.

"And do what I tell you, first. Are you taking your meals at any regular place now?"

"No, I mostly go to any restaurant that happens."

"Well, I know a real good place for you to try for a while. It's a Mrs. Adams, a friend of mine, that rents rooms and takes in table boarders, too. I wish you'd try it. You won't have to stay on if you don't want to."

"I've no objection," he said, "if she has anything good to eat. But what's the point another experiment?"

"Oh, nothing—only I'd like you to get acquainted with Mrs. Adams and her people. Here's her address on a card. You tell her you're a friend of mine, and she will make a place for you."

SHE said this, Miss Sloss closed her desk and reached for her hat that hung above it like a man's. They went together down the steps, and Fleming put her on her car; then, looking at his watch, he saw that it was within something less than an hour of dinner-time, and his appetite had been aroused by the mention of Mrs. Adams and her mysteriously desirable boarding-house, and as usual, he was impatient to act on his new impulse. Why not go there at once? He bent his steps in the direction of the address on the card.

Mrs. Adams's house was behind a large palm tree on which hung a sign saying: "Rooms, with and without Board." At the right of the entrance was a generous porch, shaded by drooping vines, and here sat a young woman, Miss Fleming came up to the door—doubtless one of the boarders awaiting the dinner hour. He was about to touch the bell when some movement on the part of this young person made him turn toward her more particularly, and his hand dropped abruptly.

"She was clearly no less surprised, but controlled herself decorously as she rose to answer him. She might almost have been a brow-bird there behind the drooping vines, for her dress was of the same color as her hair and eyes.

"What under the heavens are you doing out here?" he asked, as he came nearer.

"Nothing," she said with a little laugh. "I came out on a trip with Cousin Sarah. We've only been here since yesterday."

"And you are staying here at Mrs. Adams's?"

"Yes. Cousin Sarah is downtown, but I am expecting her back every minute."

He paused, trying in an inward whirl to put things together.

"Do you—know—Miss Sloss?" he asked slowly.

"Not exactly. But her family come from West Chester. We asked her about rooms and she found this place for us."

"Did she tell you I was here—in Los Angeles?" The girl hesitated for barely a second before she raised her eyes frankly. "She mentioned it when she first wrote—several weeks ago. I did not know whether you were here still."

Fleming strode past her and took a seat on the porch railing, pulling a bowler from one of the vines and tearing it to pieces as he spoke.

"I don't understand this," he said. "It's all very  
 (Continued on page 25)

## The Bureau of Destiny

(Continued from page 15)

queer—it's that Bureau of Destiny, I suppose. But she knew you had turned me down. Why didn't—" He broke off and began again. "I suppose you thought Los Angeles was big enough for us both to be in, without my bothering you. But it's kind of mean—just as I was beginning—"

"Beginning, what?"

"Not to think quite so much about you all the time."

"Do you mean that I ought not to have come here?"

"No, I meant she ought not to have sent me around. Yet I never would have forgiven her if she hadn't."

"I understood you were thinking of getting married." She tried to say it sweetly and naturally, but it sounded somewhat stiff and cold.

"Married? She—told you?"

The girl nodded.

He threw the remains of the flower away viciously. "Well," he said, "perhaps I was. When I came away from home I would have married anybody, or killed anybody—anything for a change. I told her I'd like to marry some one for spite."

Hazel came a step nearer and grasped the back of the chair in which she had been sitting when he came. "Do you

mean," she said, "that there was no one in particular?"

"In particular? I should think not. Oh—wait a minute. Nobody, unless it was Miss Sloss herself, and that isn't what she told you about. The last time I saw her I told her I believed she and I had better get married. We've got to be good friends, and are lonesome. But as for being in love, that's another matter. She told me to wait till I'd been to Mrs. Adams's to dinner—no, she didn't tell me that, but I see now what she meant."

"Meant—what?"

"Meant you. She knew me better than I did myself—that when I'd seen you again—"

He paused desperately.

"You still care for me, then?" she said softly.

He did not answer, but sat staring up into her face, incapable of anything but the effort to read her eyes. She pushed the chair away, and, stooping, touched his forehead with her lips. The vines drooped low between them and the street, and the shades were drawn at the windows.

"Now, tell me some more," he said presently, "about how you happened to come to California."

"Miss Sloss," she said with a gurgling laugh. "It was all her doing. She wrote—do you want to see her letter?"