

THE ARGYLE CASE

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The Argyle Case by Arthur Hornblow

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ARTHUR HORNBLLOW

**THE
ARGYLE CASE**



"HERE ARE HER EIGHT FINGER-PRINTS. GET BUSY, JOE! SEE
IF YOU CAN GET THE THUMBS UNDER THE EDGE THERE"

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THE
ARGYLE CASE

BY
ARTHUR HORNBLow

FOUNDED ON THE PLAY
BY HARRIET FORD AND
HARVEY J. O'HIGGINS

WRITTEN IN COÖPERATION WITH
DETECTIVE WILLIAM J. BURNS



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CHAPTER I

"NO sir, not a cent! I warned you that I'd have nothing to do with you if you disobeyed me. In spite of all I said you have deliberately defied me by marrying the girl. You must take the consequences. I disown you. You'll never get a penny of my money."

John Argyle, his face purple with rage, his white hair and carefully trimmed whiskers bristling with anger, paced up and down the library of his palatial Fifth Avenue home, while a young man, barely in his twenties, his face pale but with lines of determination about his smooth, sensitive mouth, stood by and listened.

The winter afternoon was drawing to a close, and the rays of the setting sun, streaming through the stained-glass windows, bathed the artistic interior in a glow of rich, warm color. It was a picturesque room, tastefully furnished, with Pompeian red the dominant note. The walls were all lined with books, the shelves and rest of the woodwork of black Flemish oak, and the chairs of the same wood, uphol-

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stered in a red leather. Between the shelves, filled with handsomely bound tomes, was a door which led to the hall. On the other side the books extended as far as a deep bay, opposite which was a large fireplace with dull-brass candelabra on the mantel and huge pine logs throwing out a grateful heat. In a cozy, well-lighted niche was a magnificently carved teakwood table, with telephone and nouveau art reading-lamp. On the opposite side another table was covered with a fabric so exquisite and costly that it might well have graced the collection of some connoisseur. On it was a confused litter of books, newspapers, and cigar-boxes. Several large, comfortable arm-chairs were scattered about, and on the floor one trod on a large, richly woven silk rug of a shade to harmonize with the general color scheme of the room. Conspicuous over the door was a large framed portrait of John Argyle. A truly beautiful room, conducive to reverie or study; but to-day its only occupants were too much excited to take particular heed of their surroundings.

The situation was tense. A spark at any moment might bring about an explosion. There was a difference of forty years and more between the two men, and it needed only a glance to see that they were father and son. When the elder had ceased his choleric tirade and relapsed into a sulky silence, interrupted only at intervals by a series of angry snorts that sounded like petty explosions, the younger man said, respectfully:

"I don't ask you for money. I merely asked for what is mine. If I could get now some of the money

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my grandfather left me, it would help me to get a start in life. It is hard that I should have to wait until I'm thirty. I don't suppose I'll ever be able to earn enough with my art work. I intend to give up my studio. I want to go into business. I have an opportunity to buy a small interest in a Detroit automobile plant. They offer me a salaried position if I can furnish a little capital which will be amply secured. I have investigated the thing, and I'm anxious to get into it. I shall only be too glad to get away from New York." Bitterly he added: "Incidentally, it will relieve you of my unwelcome presence in this house."

The elder man had continued pacing the floor like an infuriated lion, apparently paying not the slightest attention to what his son was saying. The young man's closing sentence, however, had the unfortunate effect of adding fresh fuel to the already raging fire. Stopping short and turning quickly, he shook his clenched fist in his son's face and thundered:

"If you are no longer *persona grata* under this roof, whose is the fault? You have no one to blame but yourself. How have you repaid all I have done for you? I gave you every advantage. You've had a good education, a luxurious home, everything you could wish for. What return did you make for all this? You have taken pleasure—yes, sir, deliberate pleasure, in thwarting me at every turn. I asked only one thing—you knew well that my heart was set on it. It was the dearest, most cherished wish of my life. For twenty years, while you and Mary have been growing up side by side, it was my fondest

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hope that you would one day marry. Instead of sympathizing with these plans, you have deliberately scorned them and set me at defiance by contracting a secret marriage."

Bruce shrugged his shoulders as he replied, calmly: "You asked the impossible. You wanted me to marry Mary, but it was too late even had I loved her. My word was already given to another. Would you have had me throw Nan unceremoniously overboard just to further my own selfish ends? Besides, Mary has never cared enough for me to marry me. We've been brother and sister—nothing more. The idea of anything else never entered my head or hers. She has known all along how fond I am of Nan. When you first suggested the matter Nan and I were already engaged. Surely you wouldn't have had your son play the part of a welsher."

The argument was unanswerable, and Argyle, Sr., knew it, but all his life he had been accustomed to make laws for others, never to have them laid down for himself. What cared he about sentimental boy and girl promises when his heart had been set on seeing his only son marry the orphan of his old comrade, a girl he had adopted as his daughter? When poor Masuret, deserted by his faithless wife, died some fifteen years ago and left little Mary in his care, he had promised him that one day she should marry Bruce. That anything else could happen had never entered his head. The idea that young folks should take their future into their own hands and arrange it to suit themselves was rank rebellion, deserving of fitting punishment. Unable to find words, he merely spluttered: