

THE PURPLE STOCKINGS

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The Purple Stockings by Edward Salisbury Field

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EDWARD SALISBURY FIELD

**THE PURPLE
STOCKINGS**



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STOCKINGS

by

EDWARD
SALISBURY
FIELD

Author of

A SIX-
CYLINDER
COURTSHIP

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CHAPTER I

MR. WILLIAM BETTS was pretending to study the articles displayed behind one of the huge plate-glass windows of Parker and Munn's Department Store on Twenty-third Street. It was only pretense, for, suddenly realizing the nature of the display, Mr. Betts blushed and moved hastily to another window, and so to the main entrance of the store, where he stood for some time, irresolute and ill at ease, hoping vainly that among the many feminine patrons entering and leaving Parker and

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Munn's he might spy an acquaintance, preferably some woman of discreet years and ready good nature. Convinced at last that he must rely on himself in the matter that had brought him to this singularly alarming neighborhood, he squared his shoulders, and, setting his hat more firmly on his head, marched past the doorman, to find himself in a strange and forbidding city whose narrow, aisle-like streets were thronged with women. There was, however, one man in sight, a hatless, pleasing person in a frock-coat, who waved a graceful hand now and then. Toward him Mr. Betts made his way.

"Something you wished, sir?" asked the man.

"I'm looking for—" Mr. Betts began.
"I'm looking for—"

"Yes?"

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"For stockings," said Mr. Betts hoarsely.

"Ladies' or gents'?"

"Er—ladies'."

"Ladies' hosiery department, third aisle to your left."

"He needn't have said it so loud," thought Mr. Betts, conscious of the amused glances of several women who happened to be standing near. "Third aisle to the left; this must be it."

It was a very long aisle, and the shelves behind the counters on either side seemed to contain everything in the world except stockings: silks, laces, gloves, and—and—ah, there it was! But, hang it all, half the women in New York were buying stockings! It was uncommonly thoughtless of Rosalie to burden him with so awkward an errand.

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Deciding to wait for a lull in the stocking trade, Mr. Betts continued down the aisle, pausing at last before a harmless-looking counter that displayed an endless variety of articles—combs, buttons, hooks and eyes, needles, pins. This wasn't so bad; here one could keep an eye on the hosiery department, and at the same time grow accustomed to one's surroundings. Then, too, the young woman behind the counter looked rather friendly. Seating himself on a little plush-covered stool, Mr. Betts replied gravely, in answer to the young woman's question as to how she could serve him, that he would like to look at some pins.

"Any particular kind of pins?"

"No," said Mr. Betts; "just pins."

It proved remarkably easy to buy pins. Who would have imagined that one could