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"Then we'll start with a little more thumbscrew," remarked Peterson, strolling over to the desk and opening a drawer. "An astonishingly effective implement, as you can see if you look at your thumb." He stood in front of the quivering man, balancing the instrument in his hands. "It was under its influence you gave us the first signature, which we so regrettably lost. I think we'll try it again. . . ."

The American gave a strangled cry of terror, and then the unexpected happened. There was a crash as a pane of glass splintered and fell to the floor close beside Lakington; and with an oath he sprang aside and looked up.

"Peep-bo," came a well-known voice from the skylight. "Clip him one over the jaw, Potts, my boy; but don't you sign."

CHAPTER VIII.

In Which He Goes to Paris for a Night.

ONE.

Drummond had acted on the spur of the moment. It would have been manifestly impossible for any man, certainly one of his caliber, to have watched the American being tortured without doing something to try to help him. At the same time the last thing he had wanted to do was to give away his presence on the roof. The information he had obtained that night was of such vital importance that it was absolutely essential for him to get away with it somehow; and, at the moment, his chances of so doing did not appear particularly bright. It looked as if it was only a question of time before they must get him.

He watched Lakington dart from the room, followed more slowly by Peterson, and then occurred one of those strokes of luck on which the incorrigible soldier always depended. The girl left the room as well.

She kissed her hand toward him, and then she smiled.

"You intrigue me, ugly one," she remarked, looking up, "intrigue me vastly. I am now going out to get a really good view of the Kill."

And the next moment Potts was alone. He was staring up at the skylight, apparently bewildered by the



"I Am Now Going Over to Get a Really Good View of the Kill."

sudden turn of events, and then he heard the voice of the man above speaking clearly and insistently.

"Go out of the room. Turn to the right. Open the front door. You'll see a house, through some trees. Go to it. When you get there, stand on the lawn and call 'Phyllis.' Do you get me?"

The American nodded dazedly; then he made a great effort to pull himself together, as the voice continued:

"Go at once. It's your only chance. Tell her I'm on the roof here."

With a sigh of relief he saw the millionaire leave the room; then he straightened himself up, and proceeded to reconnoiter his own position. There was a bare chance that the American would get through, and if he did, everything might yet be well. If he didn't—Hugh shrugged his shoulders grimly and laughed.

It had become quite light, and after a moment's indecision Drummond took a running jump, and caught the ridge of the sloping roof on the side nearest the road. From where he was he could not see The Larches, and so he did not know what luck the American had had. But he realized that it was long odds against his getting through, and that his chief hope lay in himself. It occurred to him that far too few unbiased people knew where he was; it further occurred to him that it was a state of affairs which was likely to continue unless he remedied it himself. And so, just as Peterson came strolling around a corner of the house followed by several men and a long ladder, Hugh commenced to sing. He shouted, he roared at the top of his very powerful voice, and all the time he watched the men below with a wary eye.

It was just as two laborers came in to investigate the hideous din that Peterson's party discovered the ladder was too short by several yards.

Then with great rapidity the audience grew. A passing milkman; two commercial travelers, a gentleman of slightly inebriated aspect, whose trousers left much to the imagination; and finally more farm laborers. Never had such a tit-bit of gossip for the local alehouse been seen in the neighborhood; it would furnish a topic of conversation for weeks to come. And still Hugh sang and Peterson cursed; and still the audience grew. Then, at last, there came the police with notebook all complete, and the singer stopped singing to laugh.

The next moment the laugh froze on his lips. Standing by the skylight, with his revolver raised, was Lakington, and Hugh knew by the expression of his face that his finger was trembling on the trigger. Out of view of the crowd below he did not know of its existence, and, in a flash, Hugh realized his danger.

"Good morrow, Henry," he said quietly. "I wouldn't fire if I were you. We are observed, as they say in melodrama. If you don't believe me," his voice grew a little tense, "just wait while I talk to Peterson, who is at present deep in converse with the village constable and several farm laborers."

It is doubtful whether any action in Hugh Drummond's life ever cost him such an effort of will as the turning of his back on the man standing two yards below him, but he did it apparently without thought. He gave one last glance at the face convulsed with rage, and then with a smile he looked down at the crowd below.

"Peterson," he called out affably, "there's a pal of yours up here—dear old Henry. And he's very annoyed at my concert. Would you just speak to him, or would you like me to be more explicit? He is so annoyed that there might be an accident at any moment, and I see that the police have arrived. So—er——"

Even at that distance he could see Peterson's eyes of fury, and he chuckled softly to himself. But when the leader spoke, his voice was as suave as ever; the eternal cigar glowed evenly at its normal rate.

"Are you up on the roof, Lakington?" The words came clearly through the still summer air.

"Your turn, Henry," said Drummond. "Prompter's voice off—'yes, dear Peterson, I am here, even upon the roof, with a liver of hideous aspect.'"

With a mighty effort Lakington controlled himself, and his voice, when he answered, was calm.

"Yes, I'm here. What's the matter?"

"Nothing," cried Peterson, "but we've got quite a large and appreciative audience down here, attracted by our friend's charming concert, and I've just sent for a large ladder by which he can come down and join us. So there is nothing that you can do—nothing." He repeated the word with a faint emphasis, and Hugh smiled genially.

"I'm interested in quite a number of things, Captain Drummond," said Lakington slowly, "but they all count as nothing beside one—getting even with you. And when I do . . ." He dropped the revolver into his coat pocket, and stood motionless, staring at the soldier.

The next instant he opened a door in the skylight which Hugh had failed to discover during the night, and, climbing down a ladder inside the room, disappeared from view.

"Hullo, old bean!" A cheerful shout from the ground made Hugh look down. There, ranged round Peterson, in an effective group, were Peter Darrell, Algy Longworth, and Jerry Seymour. "Bird's-nestin'?"

"Peter, old soul," cried Hugh joyfully, "I never thought the day would come when I should be pleased to see your face, but it has!"

"Ted and his pal, Hugh, have toddled off in your car," said Peter, "so that only leaves us four and Toby."

For a moment Hugh stared at him blankly, while he did some rapid mental arithmetic. He even neglected to descend at once by the ladder which had at last been placed in position. "Ted and us four and Toby" made six—and six was the strength of the party as it had arrived. Adding the pal made seven; so who the deuce was the pal?

The matter was settled just as he reached the ground. Lakington, wild-eyed and almost incoherent, rushed from the house, and, drawing Peterson on one side, spoke rapidly in a whisper.

"It's all right," muttered Algy rapidly. "They're half-way to London by now, and going like h— if I know Ted."

It was then that Hugh started to laugh. He laughed till the tears poured down his face, and Peterson's livid face of fury made him laugh still more.

"Oh you priceless pair!" he sobbed. "Right under your bally noses. Stole away! Yoicks!" There was another interlude for further hilarity. "Give it up, you two old dears, and take to knitting. Well, au revoir. Doubtless we shall meet again quite soon. And, above all, Carl, don't do anything in Paris which you would be ashamed of my knowing."

With a friendly wave he turned on his heel and strolled off, followed by the other three. The humor of the situation was irresistible; the absolute powerlessness of the whole assembled gang to lift a finger to stop them in front of the audience, which as yet showed no signs of departing, tickled him to death. In fact, the last thing Hugh saw, before a corner of the house hid them from sight, was the majesty of the law moistening his indelible pencil in the time-honored method, and advancing on Peterson with his notebook at the ready.

"One brief interlude, my dear old warriors," announced Hugh, "and then we must get gay. Where's Toby?"

"Having his breakfast with your girl," chuckled Algy. "We thought we'd better leave someone on guard, and she seemed to love him best."

"Repulsive hound!" cried Hugh. "Incidentally, boys, how did you manage to roll up this morning?"

"We all bedded down at your girl's place last night," said Peter, "and then this morning, who should come and sing carols outside but our one and only Potts. Then we heard your deafening din on the roof, and blew along."

TWO.

"Go away," said Toby, looking up as the door opened and Hugh strolled in. "Your presence is unnecessary and uncalled for, and we're not pleased. Are we, Miss Benton?"

"Can you bear him, Phyllis?" remarked Hugh, with a grin. "I mean lying about the house all day?"

"What's the notion, old son?" Toby Sinclair stood up, looking slightly puzzled.

"I want you to stop here, Toby," said Hugh, "and not let Miss Benton out of your sight. Also keep your eye skinned on The Elms, and let me know by 'phone to Half Moon street anything that happens. Do you get me?"

"I get you," answered the other.

With a resigned sigh he rose and walked to the door.

"I've got five minutes, little girl," whispered Hugh, taking her into his arms as the door closed. "Five minutes of heaven. . . By Jove! But you look great—simply great."

The girl smiled at him.

"Tell me what's happened, boy," she said eagerly.

"Quite a crowded night." With a reminiscent smile he lit a cigarette. And then quite briefly he told her of the events of the past twelve hours, being, as is the manner of a man, more interested in watching the sweet color which stained her cheeks from time to time, and noticing her quickened breathing when he told her of his fight with the gorilla, and his ascent of the murderous staircase.

When he had finished, and pitched the stump of his cigarette into the grate, falteringly she tried to dissuade him. With her hands on his coat, and



With Her Hands on His Coat and Her Big Eyes Misty With Her Fears for Him, She Begged Him to Give It All Up.

her big eyes misty with her fears for him, she begged him to give it all up. And even as she spoke, she gloried in the fact that she knew it was quite useless. Which made her plead all the harder, as is the way of a woman with her man.

Then, quite suddenly, he bent and kissed her.

"I must go, little girl," he whispered. "I've got to be in Paris tonight. Take care of yourself."

The next moment he was gone.

THREE.

"Have you got him all right, Ted?" Hugh flung the question eagerly at Ted Jerningham, who was lounging in a chair at Half Moon street, with his feet on the mantelpiece.

"I've got him right enough," answered that worthy, "but he doesn't strike me as being Number One value. He's gone off the boil. Become quite gugga again."

"H—l!" said Hugh, "I thought we might get something out of him. I'll go and have a look at the bird."

He left the room, and went along the passage to inspect the American. Unfortunately Jerningham was only too right: The effects of last night's injection had worn off completely, and the wretched man was sitting motionless in a chair, staring dazedly in front of him.

Thoughtfully Hugh stood in front of the millionaire, trying in vain to catch some gleam of sense in the vacant eyes.

"What luck?" Jerningham looked up as he came back into the other room.

"Dam' all, as they say in the vernacular. Have you blighters finished the beer?"

(To Be Continued.)

Women may not be logical, but who wants them to be and how many men are?

JOHN T. CARTER, Pres. S. E. HIGNUTT, Cashier

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