BANNER SERIAL FICTION

She Painted Her Face

A story of love and intrigue . . . by **DORNFORD YATES**

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SYNOPSIS

Richard Exon, a poor young Englishman, befriends elderly Matthew Gering, who at his death, gives him a statement claiming he, Gering, is Rudolph Elbert Virgil, Count of Brief, of ancient Austrian nobility who was betrayed 20 years before by his twin brother, Ferdinand, whose sentence for forgery he himself served. Ferdinand appropriated his title, property and daughter. Before he dies, Gering tells Exon there is a family secret, known only to the head of the house, to be found in the great tower at Brief, by a doorway none can ever find. Exon inherits his uncle's fortune and sets out to right Gering's wrongs. En route he encounters Percy Elbert Virgil, son of the villainous Ferdinand and sees him in conference with Inskip, a diamond merchant. He engages a valet, Winter, who hates Percy and meets by chance at a garage, John Herrick, who is a linguist and who as a youth served as a page at Gering's wedding, and had visited Brief. Herrick, due eventually to fall into an inheritance, is at present unemployed and seeking pleasant work to while away a few months.

CHAPTER II—Continued

—3—

The woman smiled.

"I think you are English," she said.

I could hardly believe my ears and I think my look of amazement made her laugh. Be that as it may, the two of us laughed together as though at some excellent jest, till a bright-eyed girl came running, to see what the matter might be.

Her mother addressed her in German, still shaking with mirth, and the two of them laughed together before returning to me.

"My mother," said the girl, "can only speak two or three words, but I am better, sir, if you will say what you want."

"She's better than I am," said I. "And you are extremely good. Have you ever been in England?"

"Oh, no. But every summer an English family stays here. They come in August to fish. And they have been good to teach me as much as I know."

"Do you mean that they stay here?" said I. "That they lodge with you?"

"Always," said Brenda, proudly—for I later learned that that was her name. "They have made us a beautiful bathroom two years ago."

"Listen," said I. "From nine o'clock this morning my friend and I have been scouring the countryside to try and find an inn at which we could possibly stay. We could not even find one at which we could break our fast."

Brenda nodded sympathetically.

"The inns are no good," she said.

"Will you receive us?" I said. "We shan't be any trouble, and my servant here will do all he can to help."

The girl consulted her mother. I watched them with my heart in my mouth.

Then—

"We shall be pleased," she said simply, "until the end of July."

As may be believed, we did no more that evening than minister to our needs and stroll in content about our heritage. The house, which had been a bailiff's, was full of fine rooms: our apartments were all that two men could ever desire: and the Rolls was lodged in a coach-house which would have accepted three cars. All this was well enough, but the honest goodwill that was shown us was such as a man remembers as long as he lives. With it all, no questions were asked and we were left to ourselves.

After breakfast the following day, we returned to the map. We found our bearings at once, for the farm was marked. The name of it was Raven: and Brief lay 11 miles off. Such a distance was very convenient, for while we could have gone to the castle in 20 minutes or less, we were out of the range of such gossip as comes to a servants' hall.

The estate was large, but the castle stood to one side: and that, of course, was something, for if it had stood in the middle, unless we were ready to trespass, we could have seen nothing at all. About the estate stood mountains — so much was clear. But whether, by climbing one, we should have a fair view of the castle was more than we could divine. Still, we carefully penciled the roads which, so to speak, bypassed Brief on the southern side, for that was the side upon which the castle was built. And then we set out to prove them. Unless the map was lying, if Brief could be commanded from any point, that point could only be reached from one of our penciled roads.

At half past ten that morning the three of us entered the Rolls, and I drove leisurely westward, while Herrick and Winter regarded the countryside. It seemed as well to get our surroundings by heart.

At every side road, I stopped, and we studied the map, so that, though our progress was slow, we all of us knew continually where we were. And then I turned north and on to our penciled roads.

It was half past twelve and we were among the mountains, when the way which we were using began to rise very steeply, after the way of a pass. This was so much to the good, but hereabouts the map and the country agreed together so ill that we could not determine the heights which we were beginning to climb. As though to confuse us still more, the road bent to and fro and doubled upon itself, while the woods through which we were moving were very thick and the trees upon either hand met over our heads. Though we were not lost, we were as good as blindfold and after five minutes had passed we knew not which way we were going nor whence we had come.

We must have threaded this natural gallery for nearly two miles, when we heard, at first very faint, the roar of falling water some distance ahead.

"And very nice, too," said Herrick, cocking an ear. "This means a break in the trees. Stop when we get there, my boy, and I will return to the map. I need hardly say that it shows no sign of water. In fact, I'm inclined to think that they guessed this bit. The temptation, no doubt, was great. Nobody seems to come here: so who on earth was ever to say they were wrong?"

Whilst he was speaking we had been rounding a bend, and, though we could not yet see it, the song of some great cascade was growing more impressive with every yard. Then we floated over a crest, and there was a bridge before us, some forty yards off.

I am sure that neither Winter nor I will ever forget the moment when we walked on to that bridge. We had never before encountered so tremendous a head of water falling from such a height; and what with the terrible might of the sheaves and tresses of foam, the everlasting roar and the definite quaking of the ground upon which we stood, we felt both dazed and abashed and looked the one to the other, as men in the presence of something they cannot conceive.

I do not know how long I stood staring, but I suddenly found that Herrick had hold of my arm. Because of the tumult I could not hear what he said, but I let him turn me about and bring me up to the parapet of the bridge.

I now had my back to the fall and at once I leaned over and down to see if the splendor below us compared with the grandeur above, but Herrick would not allow me to do as I wished, jerking my arm and shouting, until in some impatience I lifted my head.

And then I saw he was pointing—not at the raging water, but out of the gap in the trees.

A crow's mile away stood a castle, built on the spur of a foothill against the green of the woods. With the naked eye I could see four staircase-turrets, and towards the left of the pile was rising one great, round tower.

Ten minutes later, perhaps, I made Winter a little speech.

Herrick and I had strolled on, out of sound of the fall, and Winter had taken the Rolls and had caught us up.

"I want you to know," said I, "why we three are here and what we are out to do. In that castle you saw I believe there to live three people. One is the present owner, the Count of Brief: the second, his only child: and the third, a nephew of his—a Mr. Percy Virgil, by name."

"The same, sir?" said Winter, shortly.

"The same," said I.

"Thank you, sir," said Winter, between his teeth.

"Now though Mr. Virgil lives there, he is not the son of the house and the castle is not his home. It is his cousin's home—and yet he lives there . . .

"I have reason to think that the Count of Brief prefers Mr. Virgil, his nephew, before his only child: and since the Count is about as big a sweep as Mr. Virgil himself, I think it more than likely that, between the two, his cousin has a very thin time. And his cousin is a girl—the Lady Elizabeth Virgil, just twenty-four years old."

If that was as much as I said, it was more than enough to fan to a flame the embers of Winter's zeal, and from that time on he was heart and soul in the business, as I shall show.

The astonishing chance which led us straight to the viewpoint to which we had hoped to come was the only stroke of good fortune we met that day. To be sure, it was handsome enough: but the fact remains that, so far as we could discover, the bridge from which we had sighted the Castle of Brief was the one and only point on the roads we had marked from which that remarkable pile could be fairly surveyed.

We now had our bearings, and, the map proving faithful once more, we never lost them again.

By four o'clock that day we had compassed the property twice and had never seen so much as the top of the tower, but, for what it was worth, we knew the lie of the land and had marked the two entrance-drives and three or four tracks which would have accepted a car. To a great extent we had the ways to ourselves, and, except in one village, called Gola, I do not think our passage excited remark. But we ran through that twice, which was foolish, and the second time, looking back, I saw a smith and his helper run out of the forge and stand staring after the Rolls, with their tools in their hands.

When I told Herrick, he sighed.

"Can't be helped," he said. "But a blacksmith's forge is as bad as a barber's shop. Gossip. And that's the worst of using a notable car. We'd better give Gola a miss for as long as we can."

It was after that that we climbed again to the bridge and, berthing the Rolls beyond it, turned to the arduous business of proving the woods through which the cascade fell down. Except by entering these, we could not possibly tell whether or no they were hiding some coign which commanded Brief, for we could only survey them by looking up from below—an angle which showed us no more than a billowing quilt of leaves.

For three full hours we fought with that mountainside, and for all the good we did we might never have left the car. We could not even reach the head of the fall, for after perhaps 250 feet I came to a hidden cornice of blue-gray rock, and though, in view of the tales which men of the mountains tell, I hardly like to say that this could not have been climbed, I should like to see the man that could have climbed it and, better still, the manner in which he went to work. As for finding a point of view, but for the roar of the water, we should not have known where we were, and, until I came back to the road, I never found so much as a rest for the sole of my foot.

Going down, I met Winter past speaking, clinging to the roots of a beech, but of Herrick I saw no sign till I came to a brake of brambles not more than 60 feet up. Here his hat was hanging, caught up on a venomous sucker that sprang from a monstrous bush, and, since he was not to be seen, I supposed that I had passed him in my descent—for had he been coming down, he would not have left his hat. I, therefore, shouted his name with all my might, to be answered from the midst of the brambles by which I stood.

"I trust," he said gravely, "that you have enjoyed your stroll. I'm not going to ask if you've viewed the promised land—first, because I know the answer, and, secondly, because I am not interested in posts of observation to which only an anthropoid ape can conveniently repair. And now, if Winter's alive, you might procure my release. I'll direct the operation—I've had nothing to do for ten minutes but work it out."

"You're not hurt?"

"No. Merely disabled. If I don't breathe, I hardly suffer at all. But to move means laceration. You see, I'm embedded in briars which simply must not be touched. Transgress this law, and you're savaged beyond belief." I heard him sigh.

So thick and fierce were the briers and so deeply was Herrick involved that a quarter of an hour went by before we could haul him out.

That was enough for us all, and we made our way home, proposing upon the morrow to assault the neighboring heights.

The burden of the next three days will hardly go into print. Enough that we fought like madmen to wrest from the mountains and forests a secret which, if they had, they would not disclose. Such harsh and unprofitable labor I never did, and when Herrick at last declared that he would no longer abuse his long-suffering flesh, I must confess I was thankful to throw in my hand.

At four o'clock on a Thursday he leaned against a fir and stated his case.

"I am tired of unseating my intestines by efforts no goat would be such a fool as to make, and I'm sick of straining my eyeballs in an effort to see through cover which is just about as transparent as a cellar of coal. In a word, I have had my fill of futility. I, therefore, suggest that we enter the enemy's lines without further delay. I may say that this suggestion belongs to the spirit alone: if I took the advice of the flesh, I should enter a nursing-home."

With that, he began to retire by the way we had come, and Winter and I came after without a word.

As we drove back to Raven, we summed up what we had learned from going about the estate, and after an excellent supper, of which we were very glad, we studied the map we had marked and laid our plans.

These were, very shortly, to make for the mouth of the northern entrance-drive. There Winter would set us down and then go off for petrol, of which we were running short. How long our visit would last, we could not tell, but when Winter had taken in fuel, he was to return with the Rolls and berth her in one of the tracks.

With that, we went to bed early, for we were to rise at dawn, more or less content that the country had forced our hands and little dreaming of the ruffle which the morrow was to bring forth.

The sky was cloudless, the world was drenched with dew and the sun was not yet upon the mountains, when Winter set us down a hundred yards from the mouth of the entrance-drive. To this there were no lodge-gates, and only a board marked "Private" distinguished its rough, brown surface from that of an ordinary road.

"The first track on the right, Winter. Back her down and take her well into the wood. You may have to wait some time, but don't go far from the car and keep out of sight of the road."

"Very good, sir," said Winter, and set a hand to his hat.

Five minutes later the Rolls was three miles off and Herrick and I were padding along the drive, one upon either side of the ill-kept road.

For a furlong the drive ran straight: then it bent to the left and the woods upon either hand began to close in: but the bracken held on and was growing tall and thick—we could see the green flood stretching beneath the trees. And then the drive curled to the right and ran into the woods.

We had covered more than a mile and the sun was up, when, something to our surprise, we heard the sound of a car. This was behind us, coming the way we had come, and at once we whipped into the bracken and kneeled down among the green stems, to let it go by.

After a moment or two, a closed car, traveling slowly, slipped into and out of our sight. The blinds of the car were drawn, and a chauffeur, wearing black livery, sat at the wheel. A glance at the number-plate showed that this was obscured.

"The return of Percy," said Herrick, "after a heavy night. I know just how he's feeling. And I'm glad I'm not his valet, if what you tell me is true."

With his words, the car disappeared, and we rose out of the bracken to hasten along in its wake.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

One-Third of Farm Families Living in "Slum" Conditions, According to Survey

One out of every three farm families in the United States is living in "slum" conditions, according to a survey completed by the Department of Agriculture.

Findings of the survey were based on a three-year study by the bureau of agricultural economics and the Farm Security administration. The study included approximately 10,000,000 rural families.

"It is a conservative estimate," the report said, "that one-third of the farm families of the nation are living on standards of living so low as to make them slum families."

Poverty is as abject and as widespread in rural areas as in the most crowded sections of many large cities, the report said. Among nearly half of the farm population living conditions were said to be "substandard."

These conditions were said to have existed for many years and to have been aggravated by the depression. Fifty years ago three out of every four farmers owned the land they tilled. Now only a few more than half own their land. In 1935 there were 2,865,000 tenant families and the number was increasing by 200,000 a year.

Of the non-owners, 700,000 were sharecroppers, thus having status little, if any, above hired laborers, of which there were 2,700,000 in 1930. "Farm laborers are on the bottom rung of the so-called agricultural ladder and apparently are increasing in numbers," the report said.

At the height of the 1929 boom, the survey showed, there were 1,700,000 farms—homes of 7,700,000 persons—yielding a gross income of less than $600, including the value of products, sold, traded and used.

Use Roses as Food

The Chinese serve fritters on their New Year's day made from rose petals. Years ago rosebuds were served on tables like radishes. One of the legends is that Cupid, hurrying to a council of deities on Olympus with a vase of nectar, fell and spilled the contents. Roses sprang from this nectar. One of the myths pertaining to roses, notes a writer in the Rural New-Yorker, is that Milto, a maid, gave flowers to Venus. This maid had a tumor on the chin and Venus told her to apply roses from the altar to the swelling as a cure. The rose is used in arts and sciences and is related to the apple, pear and berries.

APOLOGY

A pantomime chorus girl introduced her young man to another chorus girl, with the result that he transferred his affections, says London Tit-Bits magazine. The aggrieved girl gave her rival a piece of her mind in a letter which read:

"You Heartless Creature — You knew very well we had been going about together for six months. Wait till I lay my hands on you, you good-for-nothing bleached blonde. I'll scratch your face, pull out your hair, and throw things at you. Yours truly, L— B—.

"P. S. Please excuse pencil."

Just Too Bad!

The old lady entered the butcher's shop with the light of battle in her eyes.

"I believe that you sell diseased meat here," she accused the butcher.

"We do worse," blandly replied the shopkeeper.

"What do you mean, 'worse'?"

The butcher put a finger to his lips.

"The meat we sell is dead," he confided in a stage whisper.—London Answers magazine.

NAUGHT, DOUBLE NAUGHT

He—Wonder why it is that lovers always whisper sweet nothings to girls?

She—Because they're the least expensive things they can whisper.

Dog's All Right

A dog-lover had presented a puppy to a friend who called up in a few days, all distress and excitement.

"O," she wailed, "Skippy has chewed off the corner of our best Oriental rug. What shall I do?"

"Never mind," answered the dog-lover, soothingly. "If it's real Oriental the colors won't harm him."—Philadelphia Inquirer.

Too Much

Mrs. Jones—This is too bad.

Jones—Why, what's the matter?

Mrs. Jones—We'll have to give up sending things for that woman to launder. She's dishonest. This week two towels we brought back from our hotel are missing.—Philadelphia Inquirer.

Began in Time

Mrs. Seeall—The bride nearly fainted during the ceremony, and had to be supported by her father until it was over.

Mrs. Knowall—Yes, and now I hear that her father is supporting both of them.

Prompt Action

Mr. White—I have tickets for the theater.

Mrs. White—Good, I'll start dressing now.

Mr. White—Yes, do. They're for tomorrow night.

Move On

Mr. Jones—Good night! Out of gas right here in the middle of traffic!

Mrs. Jones—Well, you can't stop for that now; here comes a cop.

So It Ap-pears

He (bragging about ancestry)—Yes, my father sprang from a line of peers.

Bored Listener—Did he drown?

HER LITTLE TRICK

First Wife—How do you make your husband pony up?

Second Wife—Accuse him of not having horse sense.

In the Family

The teacher wrote on the margin of little Betty's report card: "Good worker, but talks too much."

Betty's father wrote on the opposite margin when it was returned: "Come up some time and meet her mother."—Hartford Courant.

Cheering!

"Doctor, shall I have to remain in bed long?"

"If your temperature keeps as high as this, I don't think so."—Stray Stories magazine.

Uncle Phil Says:

How Patient We Are

A public problem is rarely solved until it becomes unbearable.

"Don'ts" that one gets at home are nothing like the "take thats" one gets from the world.

When a man asks a favor and deserves it, he is often more diffident about it than the asker who deserves nothing at all.

Left and Right Needed

When a married couple or a pair of shoes are exactly alike, they fail to make a fitting pair.

The widow's mite was not her spare cash, hence its value.

Two men, when they first meet, size each other up. Wouldn't it be fun to compare notes frankly?

Mark Twain Wished to Put Reporter at Ease

When Mark Twain was in Europe, a reporter called upon him by appointment. Mark was at ease in bed.

"Mother came into the room," relates Mark's daughter, Clara Clemens, "to announce the reporter's arrival, and said to her husband:

" 'Youth'—the pet name she had given him—'don't you think it will be somewhat embarrassing for the gentleman calling to find you in bed?'

"Very deliberately came the reply: 'Why, if you think so, Livy, we could have the other bed made up for him.' "

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TO RELIEVE PAIN AND DISCOMFORT OF A COLD

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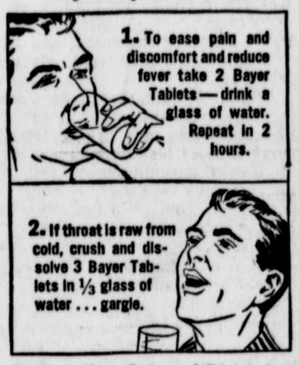

Starts to Ease Pain and Discomfort and Sore Throat Accompanying Colds Almost Instantly

The simple way pictured above often brings amazingly fast relief from discomfort and sore throat accompanying colds.

Try it. Then — *see your doctor.* He probably will tell you to continue with the Bayer Aspirin because it acts so fast to relieve discomforts of a cold. And to reduce fever.

This simple way, backed by scientific authority, has largely supplanted the use of strong medicines in easing cold symptoms. Perhaps the easiest, most effective way yet discovered. But make sure you get genuine BAYER Aspirin.

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Patience Brings Peace

Patience ought to be the first attribute of the man who loves peace.—Paul Painleve.

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