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 agrees to aid Exon. They establish headquarters at Brenda Revoke's farm at Raven, a few miles from Brief and make their plans. They find the castle almost inaccessible. They see a closed car occupied by Percy Virgil, a chauffeur and a woman. Hearing a dog scream, they see the chauffeur flogging it, just as a horse with a girl astride bounds along the path and is felled by a strung wire. The girl, unconscious, is picked up carelessly by the chauffeur and woman, who then run away, after dropping her. Exon rescues the girl and carries her to his waiting car. He identifies the girl as Elizabeth, daughter of the disowned Gering, tells her of her cousin's plot to abduct her and takes her to Raven, where he tells her the story of her father and promises to go the limit to help her right her father's wrongs. Incredulous at first, Elizabeth gradually wins faith in her benefactor. Percy Virgil brings the police to Raven, announcing that two strangers are being sought for the kidnaping of Elizabeth.

CHAPTER IV—Continued

—7—

The sergeant swallowed, and Virgil put in his oar.

"You may be strangers," he said, "but that doesn't put you above the law of the land."

"Nor, I trust," said Herrick, "beyond the traditional courtesy of its inhabitants. What is your rank in the police?"

Virgil flushed.

"I am not in the police," he said.

"Then why," said Herrick, "did you presume to address me?"

"My name is—"

"I have no desire," said Herrick, "to hear your name." He returned to the police. "You were saying that the matter was serious . . ."

Virgil looked ready to burst, but the sergeant went straight to the point.

"I will be plain," he said. "A lady has been abducted—a lady of high degree. She was kidnaped early this morning upon her father's estate . . . at Brief . . . some ten miles from here." He held up our map. "I think you will hardly deny that you know where that is."

"I have known where Brief was," said Herrick, "for 23 years."

The others stared.

Then—

"We are dealing with the present," said Virgil.

Herrick raised his eyebrows.

"Allow me to suggest," he said, "that you should keep to yourself such, er, discoveries as you may make." He turned again to the police. "Yes, gentlemen?"

The sergeant cleared his throat.

"In view, sir, of what has occurred, I must ask you to explain the markings upon this map."

"With pleasure," said Herrick.

"And I sincerely advise you to tell the truth."

"You will find," said Herrick, "that we have nothing to hide." He fingered his chin. "I stayed at Brief, as a child, in 1912. My mother and the Countess Rudolph were very close friends. Happening to be at Innsbruck a week ago, I felt a strong desire to visit the castle again. For various reasons I did not wish to leave cards. Much has happened, you know, in 23 years. My mother, the Count of Brief and the Countess Rudolph have died, the Lady Elizabeth has been born and, worst of all, I'm told that a vulgar blackguard, the son of an uncle of hers, has the run of the place."

A ghastly silence succeeded these moving words, the police regarding the gravel with goggling eyes and Virgil, dark red in the face, surveying Herrick with the glare of a baited beast.

Herrick continued agreeably.

"We, therefore, came here from Innsbruck on Sunday last. On Monday we started out to try to discover some spot from which we could view the castle, without going into the grounds. We only found one, and that was—too far away. Determined not to be beaten, we tried for the next three days—with the aid of that map. And all in vain . . . Last night we reviewed the position, and found it this—that we must either trespass or else go empty away.

"Now I do not like trespassing: but neither, I frankly confess, do I like going empty away. And in the end we decided to rise very early this morning, enter the park from the north and have a good look at the castle before anybody was up. And so . . . we did."

For a moment I thought that Virgil was going to faint. All the color was out of his face, which looked peaked and thin, and he did not seem to be breathing, but might have been turned to stone. Then a shiver ran through him, and a hand went up to his mouth.

But the police had no eyes for him. The two were staring at Herrick as though they would read his soul.

"At what times," said the sergeant, "did you enter and leave the estate?"

"We entered at four and we left about half past six."

There was an electric silence.

Then—

"I am bound to inform you," said the sergeant, "that what you have just admitted makes your position most grave. The outrage was committed this morning at six o'clock."

"Perhaps," said Herrick, "it was not committed by us."

The sergeant shrugged his shoulders.

"I shall have to—"

"I think it is clear," said Virgil, "that this gentleman is telling the truth." The two police stared upon him as though he were out of his mind. "I mean, if he were guilty, he would scarcely have made an admission which put the rope round his neck."

That Evening We Spoke of the Past and Present.

As soon as he could speak—

"But, sir," cried the sergeant, "a rope round the neck is harmless, unless it is tight. If every rogue was believed because he told such truths as could do him no harm—"

"These gentlemen," said Virgil, "have not the appearance of rogues. It only remains for you to beg their pardon and make a fresh cast. Good God, man, when time is so precious, do you propose to waste it in prying into two strangers' private affairs?"

With a manifest effort, the sergeant controlled his voice.

"Sir," he said, "if you do not wish to wait, you must leave us here. I have a sow by the ear, and until I know it's the wrong one, I will not let go." With that, he returned to Herrick. "You have said too much or too little. You were at Brief this morning from four until half past six. Kindly relate what you did there—from first to last."

"With very great pleasure," said Herrick, folding his arms. "We left our car at the mouth of the northern drive—after instructing our chauffeur, first, to seek some petrol, and then to wait in a wood a little way off. You will understand that we did not wish to be seen."

"Is your chauffeur here?" said the sergeant.

"He is. If you would like to see him—"

"Proceed, if you please."

"Before we had walked very far, we heard a car coming behind us, using the drive. At once we lay down in the bracken until it had passed."

His face like a mask, Virgil took out his case and selected a cigarette: but I saw a bead of sweat fall on the gold.

"It was not your car?" said the sergeant, plainly impressed.

Producing a notebook, his fellow made ready to write.

"It was not our car," said Herrick. "Others were abroad this morning . . . within the confines of Brief."

"Describe this car, if you please."

"It was closed and its blinds were drawn: its number-plate was obscured—I imagine, with oil and dust."

The sergeant turned to his fellow, pencil in hand.

"Have you got that down?"

The other nodded and Herrick resumed his tale, relating how the car had been met and had then been backed down the drive and into the track.

"There three people got out, and the man who had met them came up."

"Would you know them again, sir?"

"I should."

As the answer went down, I saw Virgil wipe his face.

"One of the three," said Herrick, "was a woman. She had a dog on a lead."

"A dog?" cried the police, together.

"A long-haired, black-and-white dog: a mongrel, about that size."

Struggling with his emotion—

"Sir," cried the sergeant, "I beg that you will forgive me if I have seemed something short. I have to do my duty, and your interest in Brief seemed strange. But now I know that you are telling the truth. The dog you describe was found at large in the park."

Respectfully thanking Herrick and handing him back our map, the sergeant begged that he would describe "the delinquents you so providentially saw"—and Herrick complied with a gusto which did my heart good.

His picture of Percy Virgil was actually taken from life. Lazily surveying his victim, he drew a merciless portrait of that unprincipled man: and I find it hard to believe that a rogue was ever so trounced.

Virgil's tormentor then repeated the horribly damning words which Virgil had said to his creatures before they had entered the wood, and when the sergeant seemed puzzled about the use of "the wire," suggested that it might have been used to trip a galloping horse.

Protesting their gratitude, the sergeant requested our names, and while Herrick was writing these down, turned and exhorted Virgil to enter and start the car.

"If you'll take us to Gabble, sir, I can get on to Innsbruck from there, and in less than two hours from now every police station in Austria will be alive with orders to search for the people we want."

"Splendid," said Virgil, somehow. He turned to Herrick and bowed. "Please believe that I shall not forget today . . . and that I am a man who invariably pays his debts."

"Is that a threat?" said Herrick.

I saw the police open their eyes, and Virgil in desperation let himself go.

"It's a warning," he snarled. "I do not believe your tale of the numberless car. That you saw a dog this morning proves nothing at all—except that you were at hand when the outrage was done. And who would think of so using a coil of wire — except a man who had planned to employ it that way?"

"Come, come, sir," said the sergeant. "You said yourself just now that these gentlemen—"

"I have changed my mind," spat Virgil, "as you have changed yours."

"I have just remembered," said Herrick, "that one of the men was called Max. Not the leader—the burly man, who got out of the car. The leader was sharp with him, as, indeed, with them all. I think that, if you could find them, they might give the leader away."

"And the name of the leader?" sneered Virgil. "Quite sure you didn't hear that?"

Herrick raised his eyebrows, before he returned to the police.

"You would not believe me," he said, "if I told you the leader's name. And so I prefer that you should apply to Max. But I'll tell you what I will do. I'll write it down for you, and I'll seal it up. And when Max has opened his mouth, you may break the seal. Thus I shall corroborate him, and he will corroborate me."

"Sir," cried the sergeant, "I beseech you to tell it us now."

"I will write it down," said Herrick. "Or, better still, Mr. Exon shall write it down. You will observe that I have not mentioned the name: yet he will go off and write it—which goes to show that he knows it as well as I."

With that, he turned to me and asked me to do as he said . . .

When I returned to the drive, Virgil was back in his car, beside himself with passion and shouting down the sergeant who seemed very much surprised.

"And if you choose," he concluded, "to take your cue from a couple of lying hounds who, if you had done your duty, would now be under arrest, you can take it alone."

With that he started his engine, let in his clutch and swung the car violently round. With storming gears, it squirted between the chestnuts and on to the road of approach.

The police stared after the fellow with open mouths: then they turned to see Herrick with a hand to his chin.

"I gather," he said, "that you find his behavior strange."

"I can't understand it," said the sergeant. "Ten minutes ago—"

"Quite so," said Herrick. "In fact, ten minutes ago he did his very best to get you away—because, when he heard the hour at which we had entered the park, he did not wish you to hear what I might have to tell." He took the envelope from me and held it out. "You may open that now, if you please, and read the name of the leader whom Max will betray. After that, you shall have some tea, and then, we'll drive you to Gabble to take what action you please."

The sergeant ripped the envelope open, and he and his fellow together peered at the sheet.

Percy Elbert Virgil

I thought they would never look up.

When at last they did, they seemed dazed; and Herrick called for Brenda and told her to give them some tea.

It was strange to sit down to supper later on with Lady Elizabeth taking the head of the board, but she seemed so glad to be with us and fell so naturally into the ways we kept that, for my part, I soon forgot how she came to be there and began to accept a relation which seemed too fair to be true.

Enough is as good as a feast, and after supper that evening we spoke of the past and present, but left the future alone.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Aviators Meet Few Birds Flying Above An Altitude of Five Thousand Feet

How high do birds fly in their seasonal journey? Actual evidence above the earth is still scanty, and only since the development of the airplane have definite altitudinal observations become available, writes Eleanor Allen in the Portland Oregonian. Earlier observers maintained that most normal migrations took place at heights above 15,000 feet. They attempted to justify their theory by an uncertain belief that flying became easier as altitude was gained. Aviators, however, are opposed to that theory, as it is found that with greater altitude there is increasing difficulty in maintaining speed and height.

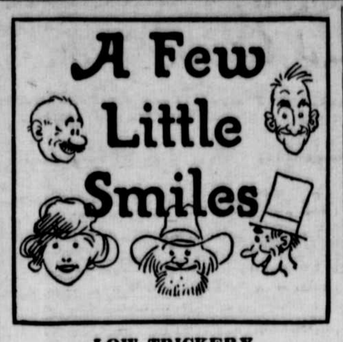
From a considerable number of records based on the experiences of airmen, it has been found that it is exceptional in flying to meet with birds above an altitude of 5,000 feet, and that the bulk of migration is performed below a height of 3,000 feet from the earth.

Birds occasionally fly at great heights. Dr. A. F. R. Wollaston, when on the Mount Everest expedition in 1921, recorded godwits and curlews at 20,000 feet. It also has been recorded that an observer making photographic observations of the sun at Dehra in India obtained a photograph of geese estimated flying at an altitude of 29,000 feet.

Although it has been definitely established that the birds follow certain routes on their journeys to and from breeding grounds and winter homes, it is not generally understood that these routes are followed by the same groups of individual birds during successive years. This fact has been determined by the banding method carried on by the biological survey.

The Cross-Word Puzzle

Puzzles similar to the cross-word puzzles were known to the ancients. What is believed by some authorities to be the oldest cross-word puzzle was made by a Cretan about 2,000 years ago, a copy of which lies in the archeological museum at Johns Hopkins university, Baltimore, Md. The puzzle is called the Phaestus disk, and was found on the island of Crete by an expedition many years ago. The first genuine cross-word puzzle of the modern type was composed by Arthur Winn and appeared in a supplement of the Sunday New York World on December 21, 1913.



LOW TRICKERY

A fisherman was accusing his companions of foul play. "We agreed," he explained, "that the one who caught the first fish would treat the others to supper. I'll be dogboned if those two fellows didn't deliberately refuse to pull in their lines, even when they had bites, just so I'd be stuck."

"That was pretty mean," agreed his listeners.

"Oh, well," the fisherman relented, "I didn't have any bait on my hook."

Plenty Right at Home

A woman entered a butcher's shop with her little daughter. Some tripe was displayed on the counter, and the little girl asked what it was.

"Tripe," replied the mother.

"That's funny," said the child, "daddy says that's what we get over the radio."—Stray Stories.

THE SAME IDEA

Wifie—My, what a large bill for a small bird!

Hubby—That's what I thought when I paid it.

Do They Go Together?

Little Molly was visiting on the farm of her grandfather. She went with him to feed the sheep. A little lamb came up to her and started wiggling its tail.

"Grandpa, why do lambs have tails?" she asked. "The flies don't bother them."

No Trip?

"See here, Tommy," said the teacher, "You mustn't say, 'I ain't going.' You must say, 'I am not going; he is not going; they are not going; we are not going'."

"Gee," said Tommy, "ain't nobody going?"

Strictly Honest

Judge—So you broke into the tobacconist's shop just to get a 10-cent cigar? What were you doing in the safe?

Prisoner—I was putting in the dime.—Stray Stories.

Ability Tested

Employer—Yes, I advertised for a good strong boy. Think you can fill the bill?

Applicant—Well, I just finished licking 19 other applicants outside. —Stray Stories.

Too Soon

Hiram—Gosh, I smell something burning.

Mrs. Hiram—Yes, it's the pie; but according to the cookbook, I can't take it out for another 12 minutes.

No Profit

Teacher—Can you give me an example of wasted energy, Bertram?

Bertram—Yes, sir. Telling a hair-raising story to a bald-headed man.

Who Won?

Jerry—Father, in this book it says that in one battle Brooklyn was hit 17 times.

Father—Who was pitching?

SOUND ENOUGH

"Is your husband a sound sleeper?"

"Makes sound enough when he sleeps to wake the dead."

Two Kinds

"I have perfected a new kind of airplane," said the enthusiastic inventor.

"Which kind," asked the sardonic friend. "Something to fly or something to write about."—Washington Star.

Practical

Mother—Willie, put this piece of wedding cake under your pillow and what you dream will come true.

Willie—Why can't I eat the cake and put the pillow on my stomach?

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