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. Elizabeth wins faith in her benefactor. Percy Virgil brings the police to Raven, announcing that two strangers are being sought for the kidnaping of Elizabeth. Herrick discomfits Virgil, tells of the morning's adventure, names a man called Max and hands the police a sealed envelope with the name of the leader in the abduction—Percy Virgil. Exon and Herrick suspect Percy of having sold the family jewels through Inskip. All realize the only solution is to find the Secret of Brief, which the impostor Ferdinand does not know. They decide to take possession of the Tower.

CHAPTER —IV—Continued

—9—

Holding my torch in my teeth, I inspected the four beddings carefully, one by one. There was nothing to choose between them: all were apparently sound. I put my torch away, and tested the bars themselves. The first was not rock-steady: the second, however, might have been a part of the tower.

Clinging to the cage like some ape, I fought to loosen the first, and when I stopped to take breath, I could move it an eighth of an inch.

But for the cage, I could never have done what I did. As it was, I could work with freedom, and, when I was tired, I could rest: and this without the dragging, deadly oppression of what I will call self-support. Never at any time was I holding my own weight up.

Without the mallet, the chisel was of no use, and I could not have used them together, because I had to hold on: but by working the bar to and fro, I gradually crushed the cement which was lying within the sockets between the bar and the stone.

After nearly half an hour this bedding was gone, and I could move the bar sideways a full two inches each way: but wrench it out, I could not, and after a little I knew that its ends had been purposely bent—to defeat the very object I had in view. I could loosen, but I could not displace it, unless I had the strength to pull a stone from the tower.

Now the bars had been set in the wall four inches apart. By holding my bar to one side, I now had a space of six inches between that bar and the next. But that was not wide enough . . . After a moment or two, I began to try to loosen the second bar.

As well try to shake a statue—or so it seemed. As I have said, the thing was a part of the tower. But after ten frantic minutes I felt it stir.

I stopped for a moment to rip off my tie and collar and let them drop. Then I fell upon that bar, like a man possessed.

Twenty-five minutes went by before I had the sockets clear of cement.

If I moved the two bars I had loosened as far apart as I could, I now had a space of eight inches through which to pass: but, short of displacing a bar, I could have no more, for the iron of which they were wrought was not to be bent.

I have sometimes heard said that where a man's head will enter, there his body can pass. On that exacting night I proved that saying untrue. I could put my head into the cage, but, do what I would, I could not pass my body between the bars.

Three feet below me, I saw Elizabeth's upturned face. She was standing on Herrick's shoulders, leaning against the wall.

"What is it?" I whispered. "What is it?"

"Leave it, Richard. You must. No man could do any more, but it can't be done."

It was the phrase she used that opened my eyes.

"No man could do any more." Perhaps. But a woman could.

"Listen," I said, "you've come in the nick of time. Can you see these bars? The two middle ones are splayed: but I can't move them farther apart, and I'm too big to get through. But you can pass easily—and the window is open beyond . . . Very well. In a minute I'm going to lean down and pick you up, but not by your hands—by your belt. Put your hands above your head, as though you were going to dive: and when you come up to the bars, just wriggle your way between them and get a knee on the sill."

Without a word, she put up her hands as I said, and I disposed myself as well as I could.

Holding fast with my left to a cross-bar, I reached my right hand down till I touched the small of her back. Then I took her by the belt of her breeches and lifted her up.

She could not have played her part better, if we had rehearsed the maneuver a score of times. As she came to the bars, she turned sideways, her back to me: and before I knew where I was, she had taken her weight.

And then it was all over, and she was within the tower—standing, looking out of the window, with her delicate hands on the sill.

We Had Been Within the Tower for Thirty-Nine Hours.

For a moment we regarded one another, she as unearthly fair as I was foul.

Then—

"What can't you do?" she said quietly.

I shall never forget that moment.

The iron bars were between us, the bars which I could not pass. Like some beast, I was peering between them at a beauty which was not of my world. Corruption surveyed incorruption—and found it his heart's desire.

"When you talk like that," I said hoarsely, "you make me feel rich."

Elizabeth smiled.

"That was the idea," she said gently. "Be careful how you get down."

CHAPTER V

I shall not set down in detail the search we made for the "doorway which no one would ever find," for, for one thing, we went about it as anyone else would have done, and, for another, almost the whole of our labor was thrown away. But that, I suppose, was inevitable.

There was the winding stairway, scaling the wall of the tower, and within its coils were the chambers which made the suite. From top to bottom its walls and its steps were of stone, and the flight rose without interruption, except for four landings so slight as scarce to deserve that name. It was very simply built and served or was served by five doorways, not one of which was hidden in any way; and since its form was that of the ordinary winding stair, it was hard to see how any other doorway could really be there, and harder still to divine where such another doorway could possibly lead—for on one hand you had the chambers and, on the other, the wall of the tower itself.

The door from the courtyard gave to a miniature hall which just accepted the oak when Elizabeth swung it back. This hall was but four feet square and might, in days gone by, have been held by one man against fifty who strove to pass. As you entered the hall, the stairway rose on your right, and, before you, another doorway led to the first of the chambers within the tower. These were three in number, and all would have had the same shape, but for the demands which lavatories and a bathroom had made.

Before we did anything else, we bolted the door between the tower and the castle, as well, of course, as the door by which we came in.

After that, I made for the window whose bars I had forced aside, and roughly repacked the sockets from which the cement was gone; and since, before we came in, we had gathered the scraps which had fallen whilst I was at work, there now was nothing to show that the cage had been tampered with.

Then I joined my lady and Herrick, who were surveying the stair.

If this was dark by night, it was dim by day, and we could do nothing useful without the help of a torch: so, though we had not brought Brenda with that idea, she had very soon to come to Elizabeth's aid: together they shed the light, whilst Herrick and I conducted the actual search.

That the work would require great patience was presently clear, for the walls seemed to be as blank as an untouched page, yet we could not believe that a doorway could be concealed in the steps.

"You must go up, counting your steps . . ."

Not until that time did I at all understand the portion confronting the prisoner of ancient days, who set himself to discover a way to break out of his hold: but now I know some of the trials those men endured, for though our case was different, we did as they must have done. The constant chill and the rudeness of naked stone, the furtive light, the anxious fingering of masonry, the whispered consultation, the sudden shock of unfamiliar sounds—of such was our two-day tenure of the great tower of Brief.

It was five o'clock on the Wednesday afternoon when Elizabeth straightened her back and led the way to the bedroom where Brenda had set out some tea.

We had now been within the tower for 39 hours, for more than 30 of which we had striven to find the doorway with all our might. And we were no nearer our goal than when we had bolted the doors and begun our search. At most, ten hours were left us, for by three on the following morning we must be gone.

As I stumbled into the bedroom, Herrick opened his mouth. "We have now eight hours in which to discover a secret we know is here. Myself, I think we should do it: in fact, if we don't, I shall think the less of myself. When all's said and done, it's a question of using one's brain. And that's where I think we've gone wrong. When our eyes and our hands had failed us, we ought to have let them be: to go on using them was only distracting our brains . . . Well, I'm going to give mine a show now—before it's too late."

With that, he walked into the bathroom, to lave his head and his hands, and I sank down on the bed and did my best to marshal my weary wits.

"He's right," said Elizabeth, slowly. "One always begins the wrong way. Once we'd been over the ground, we ought to have sat down quietly and let our minds play upon the puzzle. You know. Like doing a crossword."

"That's all very well," said I, accepting some tea from Brenda, who showed no sign of fatigue. "But who could do a crossword without any clews?"

"We've got two clews. We know that a doorway exists: and we know that, to reach that doorway, we've got to go up the stairs. If—"

"My God," said I, starting up.

There was a moment's silence.

Then—

"Go on," said Elizabeth, quietly. "What do you know?"

"Your father said that there was in the tower a doorway which no one would ever find. And then he used the words 'you must go up, counting your steps.' But he never said that the doorway was on the staircase. He said it was in the tower."

"You mean—"

"I mean that we have been looking for a doorway which we can reach from the stair: but we ought to have been looking for something upon the stair which, when we have found it, will disclose where the doorway is."

"That's right," said Herrick's voice. "And the stairway bears him out. There is no doorway there—I think we can swear to that. But there is a spring or something which, when we can touch it off, will open some hidden door in another part of the tower."

The case was now greatly altered. We knew that the path we were on was the right one and very soon would bring us up to our goal.

And so it did.

Not more than an hour had gone by when I found on the thirty-sixth step a nick which might have belonged to the lid of a pencil box. It was cut in the tread of the step, close to the edge and close to the outer wall. It was choked with a cake of dirt which I had to cut out with my knife, and an obstinate film of dirt was encrusting that side of the tread; but when I had used a wet cloth to rub the stone clean, there were the parallel cracks which I had expected to see. In a word, I had found a panel—a tiny, sliding panel which, if I could draw it towards me, would discover a slot in the tread, three inches by two.

(Here, perhaps, I should say that I have now no doubt that the film of dirt on the tread was more than the natural deposit which time will lay, and that, after replacing the panel, the late Count of Brief had washed the stone with some liquid which, when it was dry, would form an invisible skin.)

Half an hour went by before the little panel allowed me to have my way. Then at last, with a crack, it yielded, and two minutes later I drew it out of the tread.

Its withdrawal disclosed no slot, but a miniature well, rather more than an inch across; and sunk in this well was a bolt of very old iron.

At once we saw that the bolt was thus holding in place the rise of the step upon which we were now at work, and that if we could pull the bolt up, the rise would be free to be moved.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Science Has Ousted Old-Time Sourdough; College Men Now Hit Canada's Gold Trail

The grizzled old prospector, the sourdough trail blazer through the northern wilderness, has not disappeared from the scene but is gradually vanishing from Canada's gold trails, writes a Vancouver (B. C.) United Press correspondent in the Detroit Free Press.

Some have followed the modern trend to the airlanes, while newfangled gadgets explore the secrets of the earth and modern aerial photography eliminates the guesswork in the present day quest for gold.

Still the veterans and the younger men swarm over Canada's hinterland in search of the "gold in them thar hills," but modern mining men agree that they belong to the lost legion.

The yellow metal is still "where you find it" but modern science is finding it first. It is the era of the geologist, the college-trained miner.

Geophysical prospectors reveal what lies under the glacial layer which covers the dominion. This year the Canadian government will send 40 such expeditions into the northern mining areas.

In the Cariboo district of British Columbia placer mining is still in evidence and hundreds of men have gleaned a living by panning the creeks, encouraged by high gold prices in world markets.

But primitive panning methods have given way to scientific geophysical panning, and large companies explore the earth, 600 or more feet deep, for old pre-glacial creek beds.

The drill of the hard-rock miner has displaced the pick and shovel of the surface miner, and in the Yukon old style placer mining has been discarded for huge dredges.

Guessed Wrong

According to the prophecy in St. Peter's epistle the medieval church expected the end of the world to be near. The first century passed without this catastrophe occurring. Gradually as the year 1000 approached all Christendom feared the millennium. Crowds renounced their earthly possessions and fled to Mount Zion where it was rumored that Christ would appear. In America, William Miller started a group of Second Adventists or Millerites who waited in vain for the end of the world in 1844. There have been various times since this when the coming doom has been prophesied.

CAP AND BELLS

REASON

The school inspector was visiting a class and, as was his habit, gave a little talk on general subjects in an endeavor to interest the children in the everyday things of life. On this occasion, says London Tit-Bits Magazine, he was talking about the blacksmith and his trade.

"And what kind of arm muscles has the blacksmith?" he asked.

"Big ones!" shouted the children.

"And why is the blacksmith's arm bigger than mine, for instance?"

"He works!" came the reply in chorus.

A Touchy Animal

A hardup sportsman bought a hunter and put off payments for a time. Later he met the man who had sold him the horse.

"I am not satisfied with that animal," he said.

"Why, what's the trouble?" asked the dealer.

"Well, it won't hold its head up," said the sportsman.

"Oh, that's all right, sir; it's his pride. Just you wait till he's paid for!"—Pearson's Weekly.

CHARITY

"Say, George, are you one of the directors of the Charity ball?"

"Yes."

"Well, it would be a charity to give me a ticket, and lend me a dress suit."

Bright Son

Young Oscar was busily working on the examination for office boy when he came to this question: "How far is the earth from the sun?"

Oscar thought, and finally wrote. "I can't recall exactly, but I don't believe the sun is close enough to interfere with my duties as office boy."

P. S. He got the job.

Pretty Tough

The tourist had stopped to change tires. "I suppose," he remarked to a native onlooker, "that in these isolated parts the necessities of life come pretty high."

"Y'er right, stranger," replied the native, gloomily, "an' it ain't worth drinkin' when ye get it!"—Telephone Topics.

Unfortunate Plight

"When I grow up, will I have a husband like daddy, Mother?"

"Yes, Betty."

"And if I don't get married, will I be an old maid like Aunt Susan?"

"Yes, child."

Deep thought for a minute.

"Well, I sure am in a fix."

Higher Mathematics

Farmer's Wife—If you can't sleep, try counting sheep.

Farmer—I did that last night. I counted ten thousand sheep and put them in cars and shipped 'em to market. By the time I'd figured up my losses, it was time to get up and milk.

No Place for Him

Excited Patient—Let me up—I want to get out of here!

Nurse—Lie down and be quiet. The doctor is a very excitable man and loses his patience easily.

Patient—So I heard and that's why I want to get away!

How Absurd

"What's that building?" asked the stranger.

"That's the asylum for the blind," said the native.

"Go on, you can't fool me," said the stranger. "What's all them windows for?"

A SEASONABLE WISH

Lady Bug—Oh, Mrs. Woolly Caterpillar, I wish I had your nice fur coat.

No Pleasing Her

"Have you arranged your holidays yet?"

"Not absolutely. My husband wants me to go with him for a trip around the world, but I want to go somewhere else."

Not Time Enough

Boggy—When that elevator fell with you I suppose all your sins flashed before your eyes?

Woggy—Well, not all—you see, we only dropped five stories.—Minneapolis Journal.

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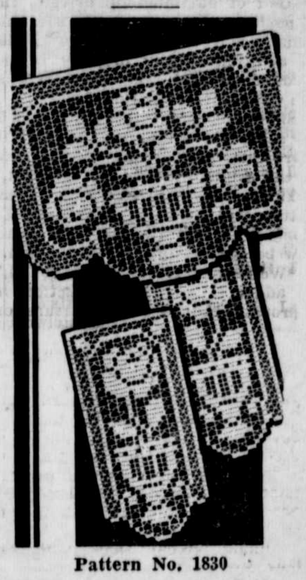

Pattern No. 1830

This graceful bowl of filet crochet roses is set off by the K stitch. The design is lovely as a chair set, scarf ends, or buffet set. Pattern 1830 contains directions and charts for making this set; illustrations of it and of stitches; materials required.

Send 15 cents in coins for this pattern to The Sewing Circle, Needlecraft Dept., 82 Eighth Avenue, New York, N. Y.

Desire to Ride

"The ambition of the average person today is to ride in the cart rather than to help pull it."—Roger W. Babson.

NEWS..Perfected CASTOR OIL EASY TO TAKE

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Peace From Within

"Nothing can bring you peace but yourself."—Emerson.

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THE TRUTH SIMPLY TOLD

Today's popularity of *Doan's Pills*, after many years of world-wide use, surely must be accepted as evidence of *satisfactory* use. And favorable public opinion supports that of the able physicians who test the value of Doan's under exacting laboratory conditions.

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