BANNER SERIAL FICTION

She Painted Her Face

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

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CHAPTER VI—Continued

—12—

I was six steps short of the landing which gave to the upper door, when Percy spoke—to bring my heart into my mouth.

"Oh, and bring my pistol, damn you. It's next to the torch."

The man was beyond the curtains masking the upper door.

Herrick and I stopped dead.

An instant later the curtains were dashed apart and a transient glimmer of light revealed our enemy.

Then—

"Who said it was shut?" he screeched. "It's open wide. They've done it on you, you poisonous fools. Where's Elgar? Get hold of Elgar and tell him to watch the drive."

With that, he thrust into the tower.

He could, of course, see nothing, but his foot at once encountered the heavy length of carpet which we had laid on the steps.

"Hullo! What's this?" he muttered.

I heard him pass on to the carpet, but what further movement he made I could not tell, for the pile was tremendously thick and deadened all sound.

With Herrick one step below me, I crouched there, straining my ears. We were just clear of the carpet, standing upon the stone.

Then Virgil spoke again—and made me jump like a foal.

"God in heaven," he yelled. "Why don't you bring that torch?"

The man was three steps above me—and coming down.

I dared not try to hit him—I could not see: but, quick as a flash, I seized the end of the carpet and jerked it downstairs towards me with all my might.

His feet whipped from beneath him, with a foul but forgivable oath, Percy Virgil fell violently on to his back. As he did so, still holding the carpet, I flung myself full upon him, enveloping him in its toils. Moved by some brilliant instinct, Herrick fought his way past us and, seizing the head of the carpet, flung this over and down.

Remembering Percy's orders to Elgar, I hurled myself up to the doorway and on to the landing beyond.

"Well done," breathed Herrick. "Which way?"

The mighty landing was empty, but, as we bolted across, a man came full tilt up the staircase, the head of which was six feet from Elizabeth's door.

So dim was the light and he was making such haste that though we must almost have met, I think he would have let us go by, but I dared not take the risk, and hit him, very reluctantly, full on the jaw.

As he crumpled and fell downstairs, Elizabeth's door was opened, and Herrick and I passed in.

Thirty seconds later, the four of us left the castle by way of the staircase - turret by which, two nights before, we had hoped to come in. The drive was clear. If Elgar had had his orders, he had not yet had time to carry them out. We darted across the gravel, slipped down the steps to the garden and hastened, Elizabeth leading, to where the walk began that led to the belvedere.

Twenty minutes later Winter, still breathing goodwill, was leading us down to where he had berthed the car.

If our narrow escape had shocked us, the drive to Raven ministered to our minds.

Arrived there, Herrick found a note addressed to him.

Sir,

I am told that you are returning to Raven tonight. A man, of the name of Max Bracher, was found by Salzburg yesterday afternoon. He corresponds to your description of the man of that Christian name. Your identification of him is desired, and I beg you will visit Salzburg without delay. When found, he had been dead for some hours, shot through the back.

Your obedient servant,
Sergeant of Police.

I confess that from this time on a medieval vigilance ruled whatsoever we did.

Herrick visited Salzburg against his will, and viewed the corpse of the man we had known as Max. No evidence had been discovered—against Virgil or anyone else. Even the bullet was useless, for it had spread irreparably. The same day, Thursday, Elizabeth, resting at Raven, laid her plans. I sat by her side in the meadows, and listened—and watched the woods.

The Duchess of Whelp was at Tracery, 25 miles from Innsbruck and 90 from where we lay. Tales out of number were told of the state she had kept, of the things she had said and done, of the efforts which had been made to obtain an invitation to enter her house. If the half were true, it is clear that for years before the War, the Chateau of Tracery sheltered a second Court. And now, though she shut herself up, her writ still ran; and though the "fountain of honor" no longer played, its peaceful pool was reflecting, as never before, the vivid presence now nearly eighty years old.

"I shall go there tomorrow," said my lady. "And you, if you please, will drive me—there and back. At least, we'll be breaking a record. No one's gone uninvited to Tracery for certainly fifty years."

"With all my heart," said I. "But won't you take Winter, too? I mean, it'll look more important than if you just roll up with me at the wheel."

Elizabeth seemed to reflect.

At length—

"Perhaps you're right," she murmured, pulling the grass. "I wish I knew what to expect. I know that she visited Brief very shortly before I was born, and my grandfather knew her well: but my—my uncle has never seen her since Mother was killed."

I sat up at that.

"Are you sure that he saw her before?"

Elizabeth started, and a hand went up to her head.

"Good heavens," she breathed.

"Exactly," said I. "I'll lay he's never set eyes on the Duchess of Whelp. Your father saw her—and knew her: but the younger son—the 'bad hat'—was not at Brief when she came. He can't deny her visit, because he knows it took place. It was a great occasion. Brief was delighted to honor so rare a guest. And so your uncle is bound to pretend he was there. But he wasn't—because he isn't the man he pretends to be: and all he knows of her visit is what he's picked up from the staff."

"That's right," said Elizabeth, slowly, still pulling the grass. "What a fool you must think me for not having seen it myself."

"How can you?" I cried. "I've known the truth for a year, and you for less than a week."

At eleven o'clock the next day I stood with my hat in my hands at the foot of Tracery's steps. Elizabeth stood at their head, some ten feet up. We were waiting for the door to be opened, in some suspense.

At last the door was opened, and a man all in black, with knee-breeches, inclined his head.

His manner was ceremonious and very polite, but left in my mind no doubt that he did not mean to admit "The Lady Elizabeth Virgil" or anyone else.

When he had finished speaking, I saw my lady nod. Then she held out the little packet she had in her hand. A salver appeared from nowhere . .

I do not know what she said, as she laid the packet down, but after a little I saw the man bow and turn and Elizabeth cross the threshold into the hall.

At least, she was in: but, as the door was shut and I turned to the car, I confess I felt far from sure that she was to be received. And if she was not, what then? The packet contained no less than the king's great ring, with which she was hoping to gain the access she so much desired. If the Duchess of Whelp was scrupulous, well and good: but if she was not, Elizabeth would be dismissed—and the ring was gone. And "Old Harry" might well be hostile to a girl that made bold to remind her that the bearings which Tracery flaunted were rightly hers.

I sat down on a step of the Rolls and lighted a cigarette, while Winter stood like a statue beside his charge, determined, I think, to show that he could maintain the pace which the major-domo had set.

The house was imposing, but grim, and plainly had not been cared for for several years. Massively built of stone, wind and weather could do it but little harm, but rust was corrupting the bars to the lower windows and the stain of roof-water showed where the gutters were choked.

This I found peculiar, for rumor had it the Duchess of Whelp was rich. But I think the truth was this—that when she had closed her Court, she had determined to let its residence go. What was the setting to her, when the jewel was gone?

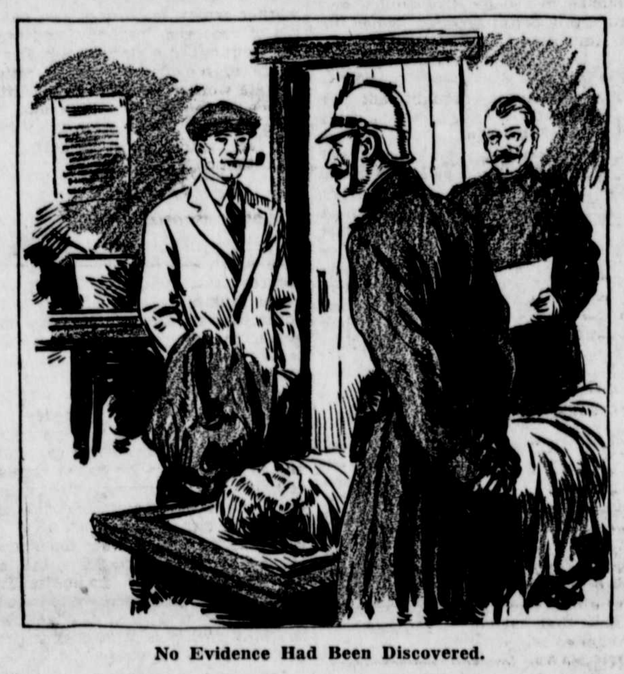
Nearly an hour had gone by, when the door was opened again and the major-domo appeared and began to descend the steps. Expecting some message, I rose and went to meet him, and then I saw that he was an Englishman.

As I approached, he stood still.

"Sir, he said, with a bow, "Her Grace desires to see you. If you please, I will show you the way to her private rooms."

His announcement took me aback, as well it might: but, though the summons shook me, my heart leaped up, for it meant that "Old Harry's" interest had been aroused. And that was everything.

To my surprise, three footmen stood at the door, but the echoing hall within was that of a house whose owner has gone abroad. Furniture and pictures were shrouded and carpets rolled, but the marble floor was spotless and there was no sign of dust.



No Evidence Had Been Discovered.

We passed up a glorious staircase, the carpet of which was gone, by draped or hooded statues and sheeted tapestry, to enter a sunlit gallery down which three four-in-hands could have passed abreast. At the gallery's farther end a woman-servant was standing beside a door. To her I was delivered and at once she ushered me into a drawing-room. This was small and stiff, but, though it showed no sign of having been lately used, its furniture was not shrouded and a carpet covered the floor.

The woman, who looked very sour, addressed me in German and indicated a chair, and, when I had taken my seat, she passed to another door. As she opened this, I saw that it gave to a passage some six feet long. She closed the door behind her as though, I thought, she was happy to shut me out, and I can only suppose that I looked as much out of my depth as indeed I felt. Within 30 seconds, however, the door was opened again, and she beckoned to me to approach. As I did so, I saw that a second door was now open at the farther end of the passage I had observed. Through this the woman pointed, and stood back against the wall, for me to go by. I passed her and entered the room, and the door behind me was shut.

I stood in a spacious bedroom, splendidly furnished in the Italian style. Gold leaf, and velvet and beautifully painted wood; lantern and plaque and mirror; silver, dusky crimson and mellowed green made up a stately harmony of lovely things. In their midst, commanding them all from its dais, a great state bedstead stood with its head to the wall. And sitting up in the bed was Her Grace the Duchess of Whelp.

The room was full of light, and I saw her well. A highly elaborate coiffure attired her head, and a richly embroidered vesture swathed her from throat to wrist, but once I had seen her face, I had no eyes for anything else in that room. That this was painted was nothing—motley could not diminish the light of her countenance. Her cheeks were raddled, her lashes were stiff and laden, her lips were a scarlet blotch: but the visage thus overlaid was above these things. It was handsome as an eagle's is handsome—with a cold majesty of feature, heedless of the sense of minority which it imposed.

I bowed—something awkwardly, dimly aware of Elizabeth sitting beside the bed and smiling at me to tell me that all was well.

Old Harry inclined her head.

"How d'you do, Mr. Exon. Come here, if you please."

I stepped to her side, and she put out a hand which was blazing with three magnificent rings.

I took the fingers in mine and put them to my lips.

"I am told you're a man of action," she said, "and so it seems. But you're not very quick off the mark." She tapped the papers that lay on her delicate quilt. "This Gering business. Why did you wait so long?"

"For two reasons, madam," said I. "First, for several months I was not myself. I found life hard to handle and had no brains to spare for anything else. And then I shrank from interference with a state of affairs which had been established so long."

"And then you saw Percy Virgil?"

"Yes," said I. "He's—he's not a nice-looking man."

"He'd look very well from a gallows," observed the Duchess of Whelp. She turned to Elizabeth. "What made you allow Mr. Exon to carry you off?"

"That," said Elizabeth, "is what I keep asking him."

"Sex," said Old Harry, firmly. "You liked subjecting yourself to the strength of the male. It's been done before. The Sabines kicked and screamed for the look of the thing: as a matter of hard fact, they were tickled to death." She turned upon me. "And what do you mean, Richard Exon, by hiding this lady at Raven for over a week?"

Her attack was so sudden that I was taken aback.

"Madam," said I, "it seemed the best thing to do."

"Did it, indeed?" said Old Harry. "Well, God preserve us all from your benevolence. The Lady Elizabeth Virgil, for whom the cities of Europe are being surreptitiously scoured, sharing two young men's lodgings ten miles from her father's house! And who's this Herrick person? I knew a Naseby once . . ."

"He's one of the best," said I. "And he pulls far more than his weight. As a matter of fact, he's the present Lord Naseby's heir."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Anglers Do Not Agree on Ability of Fish to See, Hear, Feel, Taste, Smell

What is the highest developed sense possessed by a fish—sight, hearing, smell or taste? This subject is frequently discussed in fishing camps, but the anglers never agree. Most of them base their arguments on observations made while fishing. Opinions differ on various species of fish, but those who hold that sight is the most important seem to be in the majority, observes Albert Stoll Jr., writing in the Detroit News.

The structure of a fish's eye is well adapted to the water element they inhabit. This sense perhaps is their greatest means of protection against all predators, including man. All of us have seen trout dart away from shadows cast by the fisherman as he travels the bottom or shore of the streams. Likewise in still fishing schools of small fish as well as solitary mature specimens will quickly scurry away when they observe the slightest move in the boat.

Many fishermen believe that fish are unable to hear under water but vibrations caused by loud noises might drive them to shelter, which is often mistaken for hearing. If they do not see the fisherman they seldom move even if loud talking is taking place.

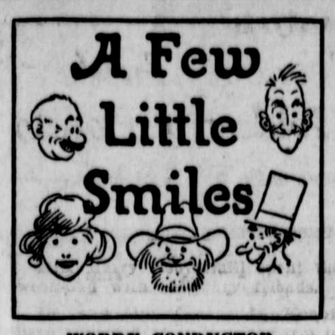
As to smell and taste, fish certainly must possess these senses to some degree. Fishermen often observe fish taking food into their mouths and it is immediately expelled. On other occasions they do not hesitate to swallow the food immediately if it proves pleasing to the taste.

But to determine accurately how their senses rate in importance is still unsettled, as is the question: Do fish feel pain when hooked?

Latin-America

Latin-America comprises all those portions of this hemisphere to the south of the United States in which one or another of the Latin languages is the native tongue. It includes Brazil, which speaks Portuguese; Haiti, which speaks French; Porto Rico, Spanish-speaking dependency of the United States, and the eighteen Spanish-speaking republics from the Rio Grande to Cape Horn. It is not usually considered to include any of the European colonial possessions.

A Few Little Smiles



WORDY CONDUCTOR

Conductor (on train)—Fare!

The passenger paid no attention to the conductor's demand.

Conductor—Fare, please.

Still the passenger was oblivious, according to the Montreal Star.

Conductor — By the ejaculatory term "Fare!" I imply no reference to the state of the weather, not even to the kind of service vouchsafed by this philanthropic company. I merely alluded, in a manner perhaps lacking in delicacy, but not in conciseness, to the monetary obligation incurred by your presence in this car, and suggest that you liquidate.

Wholesale Lots

King Solomon once attended the opening night of a musical comedy and enjoyed himself immensely. The producer hurried up to him after the show and asked:

"What did you think of the chorus your Majesty?"

"Great," replied the potentate, "I' like to date up the first three rows some evening."

IN THAT FAMILY

"Those pugilists are birds."

"Right—they're both featherweights."

Guilty Conscience

A meek little man was in court for a minor offense.

"Were you ever in trouble before?" asked the judge.

"Well—er—er," was the hesitating response, "I kept a library book too long once and was fined six cents."

Two Troublesome Cases

Husband—You will never succeed in making that dog obey you.

Wife—Nonsense. It is only a matter of patience. I had a lot of trouble with you at first.—Philadelphia Bulletin.

A Good Show

She—Are they putting that poor man out for laughing?

He—No. The manager sent for him to find out what he was laughing at.

Transatlantic

Guide in Trafalgar square—Have you seen Nelson's column?

American Visitor—No, what paper does he write for?

Tune Changed

Lieutenant (roaring with rage)—Who told you to put flowers on the table?

Gob—The executive officer, sir.

Lieutenant—Pretty, aren't they?

Grand Canyon

Photographer—Do you want a large or a small picture?

Sissy-boy—A small one.

Photographer—Then close your mouth.

Borrowers

Smith—And do the people next door borrow much from you?

Jones—Borrow? Why, I feel more at home in their house than my own.

Taking no Chances

Boss—I want a reliable chauffeur who takes no risks.

Applicant—I'm your man, sir, provided I can have my pay in advance.

THE OFFENSE

Magistrate—Well, what have you been arrested for—shooting birds?

Sambo—No, sah, jedge, your honor, I'se 'rested feh on'l jes' shootin' a little crap.

Something to It

"You wouldn't care for a man unless you could look up to him."

"Yes," answered Miss Cayenne, "but I don't want to be obliged to look up too far. Who wants to feel like a midget?"—Washington Star.

The Cord Attached

First tramp—The lady said she'd give me a meal, but there was a cord attached.

Second—You mean a string.

First—No, I mean a cord—a cord of wood!

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SAFETY TALKS

Like the Chicken, We—

IT BEGINS to look as though maybe we humans are second cousins to the chickens when it comes to crossing the road.

Of 7,250 pedestrians killed during 1937 in traffic accidents that occurred in cities, says the National Safety council, in its 1938 edition of "Accident Facts," 85 per cent were struck while crossing the road.

About 2,900 persons were injured fatally while crossing a street somewhere BETWEEN intersections. Approximately 3,260 met their death at intersections. Either they were crossing the intersection with the traffic signal, against the signal, diagonally, or were crossing an intersection at which there was no traffic signal. Deadly and tragic work at the crossroads!

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ALWAYS CARRY TUMS QUICK RELIEF FOR ACID INDIGESTION

WNU—4 14—39

Misplaced Pride

To be proud of learning is the greatest ignorance.—Jeremy Taylor.

Watch Your Kidneys!

Help Them Cleanse the Blood of Harmful Body Waste

Your kidneys are constantly filtering waste matter from the blood stream. But kidneys sometimes lag in their work—do not act as Nature intended—fail to remove impurities that, if retained, may poison the system and upset the whole body machinery.

Symptoms may be nagging backache, persistent headache, attacks of dizziness, getting up nights, swelling, puffiness under the eyes—a feeling of nervous anxiety and loss of pep and strength.

Other signs of kidney or bladder disorder may be burning, scanty or too frequent urination.

There should be no doubt that prompt treatment is wiser than neglect. Use *Doan's Pills*. *Doan's* have been winning new friends for more than forty years. They have a nation-wide reputation. Are recommended by grateful people the country over. *Ask your neighbor!*

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