BANNER SERIAL FICTION

She Painted Her Face

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

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CHAPTER VII—Continued

—15—

Then Winter appeared in the doorway—and Brenda wide-eyed behind him, with one of her hands to her throat.

"Nobody's hurt," said I. "Mr. Herrick's pistol went off. Where did you put it, Brenda? I mean, when you made the bed."

"On the chest of drawers, sir"—pointing.

"I see," said I. "And what time did you make the bed?"

"At six o'clock, sir. As a rule I make it at nine: but, as you were out to dinner, I made it before."

"And then?"

"I visited my cousins at Monein, and spent the evening with them."

"Well, that's all right," said I. "You go back to bed. Let your father and mother believe that we fired by mistake."

"I will do that," said Brenda: "but please may I know the truth?"

"It's simple enough," said I. "As soon as you'd left for Monein, somebody entered this house and came up to this room. They took Mr. Herrick's pistol, which you had laid over there, and put it into his bed. Before they put it in, they put down the safety-catch. And they laid it with its mouth to the pillow—that ruck shows that: on firing, the pistol kicked—and shifted towards the foot . . . Now they've very light triggers—these things. Mr. Herrick touched it off by sitting on the edge of the bed. But if he'd got into his bed in the ordinary way, and had touched it off with his foot—as somebody meant him to do . . ."

After so full a day and in view of what was to come, we were thankful to have a week-end with nothing to do: for all that, I must confess that, had I not been sure that the Duchess would be annoyed, I would have driven to Tracery every day—not to assure myself that my lady was safe, for of that I could have no doubt, but because I was mad to see her and hear her call me by name. Instead, I sat in the meadows and played with the dream which the Duchess of Whelp, in her wisdom, had taken away, which the Countess of Brief, in her sweetness, had given me back. And because I was foolish, I wrote her a little note, which all the world might have read, which I posted myself at Gabble on Saturday afternoon.

Here I should say that out of evil came good: the attempt upon Herrick's life had cleared the air. We had thought it likely that some such attempt would be made, and, while we were not uneasy, our senses did constant duty against some surprise. But now the attempt had been made, and the danger was past—for Virgil would know that, whether he won or lost, his "throw" could not be hidden or made out an accident, and so would be sure to give Raven a very wide berth.

On Sunday the police came to Raven, and we reconstructed for them what had been so nearly a crime.

As they were leaving—

"Sirs," said the sergeant, "one day he will go too far, and will pull up the sluice which will let all our evidence go. And then he will be overwhelmed. To arrest him now would be futile. He bears a very big name, and his word would be taken before yours, in the absence of definite proof."

"I entirely agree," said Herrick. "In fact, I was in two minds whether or no to report this latest affair. You see, we were frightfully tired. Dining out's all very well, but when the house you're dining at's 90 miles off . . ."

"Ninety miles?" cried the sergeant.

"Well, how far is Tracery?" said Herrick. "If you go by Goschen . . ."

"Tracery?"

Herrick surveyed the sergeant in some surprise.

"Tracery," he said. "We dined with the Duchess of Whelp." The sergeant appeared to have lost the power of speech. At length—

"I beg your pardon, my lord. I—"

"I am not a lord," said Herrick.

The other waved his statement away.

"I—I had no idea," he stammered. "If I had known—that first day . . ." He broke off there and put a hand to his head. "If Her Grace were to learn that one of her friends had been subjected to—"

"Her Grace," said Herrick, swiftly, "would also learn how highly the friend in question thought of the police."

The sergeant flushed with delight.

"Your lordship is very good."

"Not at all," said Herrick. "Not at all. And now don't you rush this business. We both agreed just now that the time wasn't ripe. And if I am content to wait—well, I'm pretty closely concerned. In fact, may I leave it like this—that before you take any action, you'll let me know?"

The sergeant gave his assurance with all his might and, after further civilities, took his leave.

As we turned to the house—

"Of such," said Herrick, quietly, "is the kingdom of earth."

On Monday a note came by hand from Brief.

"The Count of Brief presents his compliments to Mr. John Herrick and begs to express the hope that he and Mr. Richard Exon will make it convenient to become his guests tomorrow at six o'clock, to meet the Duchess of Whelp and to remain at Brief during Her Grace's pleasure."

Herrick read this aloud, and fingered his chin.

"Ice for two," he said shortly. "I suppose it could have been ruder, but the blood you wring out of a stone is usually thin. And when we roll up at four, he'll go blue in the face. As for Percy the Good, he must be half out of his mind—a victim raised from the dead and two witnesses coming to stay. Let's send him a wire signed 'Max Bracher,' asking to be met at the station at half-past three. You know, this play has its points. It may be melodrama, but you must admit that the situation is pregnant—if nothing more."

"I'll be glad when it's over," said I. "He's wicked enough in cold blood, but he's going to be red-hot with his back to the wall."

CHAPTER VIII

—

"How good of you to come early."

Herrick and I looked round—from one of the magnificent Bouchers which hung on the hall of Brief.

Percy Elbert Virgil was standing six paces away.

"For that," said Herrick, slowly, "the warmth of our invitation must be our excuse."

Virgil raised his eyebrows and took out a cigarette.

"My uncle will see you later. Till then you must put up with me."

"We'll manage somehow," said Herrick. "I don't remember you here in 1912."

The other frowned.

"Allow me to warn you," he said, "not to refer to that visit when my uncle is here. As you probably know, in 1914 his father and wife were both killed and his only brother, my father, met with a hideous fate. And these three terrible blows all fell within 24 hours. From that day to this he has never so much as mentioned what went before. For him the past is buried—in holy ground."

"Is it indeed?" said Herrick. "I'd no idea. And I don't think his daughter has. She never said—"

"His daughter? When did you meet her?"

The queries flamed. That Herrick had drawn first blood was as clear as day.

"At Tracery," said Herrick, calmly. "We dined there on Friday night."

Virgil stood still as death.

Then, as though released from some spell, he turned to a table beside him, struck a match and lighted a cigarette.

"Well, well," he said lightly. "And how are you proposing to get me down?"

The sudden, impudent question hit me between the eyes, but Herrick replied as coolly as if a child had come up and asked him the time.

"Well, we rather thought of leaving that operation to you."

Virgil laughed.

"I don't know that I blame you," he said, and took his seat on the arm of a mighty chair. "It's rotten to be laughed out of court. Have they found Max yet?"

"They found him on Tuesday," said Herrick.

"Well, that ought to help you," said Virgil, comfortably.

"I think it will," said Herrick, "before we're through."

Virgil fingered his chin.

"Where were you," he said, "on Wednesday, at half-past nine?"

"Elsewhere," said Herrick, shortly. "Where were you on Friday, at half-past six?"

"That," said Virgil, "is easy . . . Never mind, let's look at your rooms." He got to his feet. "Did you bring a servant of sorts? Or are you working alone?"

"I don't think he'd suit you," said Herrick, "if that's what you mean."

"Is that meant to be rude?" said Virgil.

"Intensely," said Herrick.

Virgil sucked in his breath. Then—

"As your host, I—"

"What makes you think," said Herrick, "that you are our host?"

The other's eyes burned in his head.

Then, with a manifest effort—

"Come," he said thickly. "I'll take you a way that you know."

And so he did.

At the foot of each staircase turret, there were two doors, one of which gave to the terrace and one to the house. A moment later, therefore, we followed him into the turret which gave to Elizabeth's suite, climbed the stair and passed through her lovely rooms.

And then we had entered the tower and were climbing up to the bedroom I knew so well.

Winter was busy, unpacking. As we came in, he turned, with a shirt in his hands . . .

Now Winter, of course, was prepared for some such encounter as this; but Virgil was not: and the sudden, improvised meeting with the valet whom he had oppressed, who must, he knew, be itching to take revenge, hit our unpleasant companion extremely hard. Indeed, for one or two moments, his self-possession was gone and he seemed the prey of some nightmare, too grim to be true.

As a man who comes full on a snake, he started violently back. And then in a flash he was round and searching my face and Herrick's with bolting eyes.

We regarded him coolly enough.

"I said he wouldn't suit you," said Herrick, complacently . . .

For an instant I thought that the fellow would launch an attack. As a beast about to spring, he dropped to a crouch and actually lifted his lip. Then he had himself in hand, and had turned about.

As he crossed to the window—

"I'm not at all certain," he said, "that Brief is going to suit him."

I addressed myself to Winter.

"Did you hear that remark?"

"I did, sir," said Winter, quietly.

"Repeat it to Mr. Parish, her Grace's page."

"Very good, sir."

Virgil stood very still, with his back to the room. When at last he turned, I saw he was very pale.

"My uncle will receive you," he said, "in a quarter of an hour."

Then he passed to the doorway and left us alone.

Two things were now clear, and Herrick at once sat down and wrote the Duchess a note.

Madam,

Before we had been here ten minutes, Virgil took care to warn me not to remind his uncle of anything which had happened before he became Count of Brief. This, I submit, goes to show that Virgil is aware of the truth.

The presence of Winter appeared to shock him so much that I am sure that he regards him not only as a personal enemy, but as a witness, to be used against him, if and when he is charged with the theft of the jewels.

Yours to command,

J. H.

This note we gave to Winter, to give to Parish at once. Then we washed our hands and made our way back to the hall.

We were not sent for to go to the Count of Brief. In fact, we did not see him, until he passed through the hall, on his way to receive the Duchess, whose car had entered the drive. This, I suppose, by design—so that Herrick should have no time to awaken such sleeping dogs as the Count desired to let lie.

I shall never forget his appearance, or how startling to me was his coming across the hall, for, except that he was stouter and, seemingly, younger in years, he might have been his poor brother, come back to life.

If he was ill at ease, he never showed it, but used us both cavalierly, as though to confirm the impression his letter conveyed.

"Which is which?" he demanded, and gave us no time to reply, "Oh, this must be Herrick. The Duchess mentioned your name. If you want anything, ask the steward — he knows the rules of the house. And now you'd better come with me. She will expect to see you upon the steps."

With that for welcome, he led the way to the courtyard, as though he were late.

A little bevy of servants was standing beside the steps—with Bertram, the steward, before them, wand in hand. On the other side were standing Parish and Winter and two waiting-women in black.

As I came out with Herrick, Parish came forward at once, to pay his respects.

I put out my hand for his.

"I'm looking forward," I said, "to a talk with you.

As he took my hand—

"I shall be honored, sir, whenever you please."

I turned to see the Count staring—and Percy Virgil beside him, poking his head. Then the Count said something in German at which the two of them laughed.

Herrick's voice rang out, as the crack of a lash.

"We know the Duchess' servants, because we know Tracery. Can you say as much, you two?"

His words might have been a spell. Everyone in the courtyard seemed suddenly turned to stone. Bertram stood open-mouthed, with a hand half-way to his head, and the others stared straight before them, not seeming to breathe. Only the Count and Virgil turned slowly as red as fire, and at this full-flavored moment, I heard the crunch of gravel beneath the wheels of a car.

Since this meant that the Duchess was come, the tense situation was less relieved than submerged, and all eyes were turned to the archway which led to the drive.

A liveried groom appeared, backing . . .

Then a long limousine turned slowly into the courtyard and moved to the foot of the steps—and there were Elizabeth smiling and the Duchess of Whelp leaning back, with the air of a Lord Chief Justice up on his Bench.

The chauffeurs sat still, uncovered, while a footman opened the door and the Count stood bowing and waiting for the Duchess to put out a hand.

In silence Old Harry surveyed him. Then she spoke clear and loud.

"There is something different about you. We're both of us older, of course, but it's deeper than that. The flesh is Esau's flesh, but the spirit . . ." White to the lips, the Count looked ready to swoon. "It's very strange. I should never have said you were Brief."

Somehow the man made answer.

"In twenty-four years, madam—"

"No, no, it's not that. The leopard grows old, but he never changes his spots. Never mind. Here's your daughter back. She has escaped—this time: but I think you should warn all your servants, within and without, to expect another attempt—well, any time now."

With that, having set two balls rolling before she had fairly arrived, Old Harry got to her feet and stepped out of the car and, delining the arm the Count offered, walked up to the head of the steps. There she stopped and looked round.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Twentieth Century Coins Include 159 Monetary Values; 'Cent' Most Common

It may surprise many who are not versed in the lore of numismatics to learn that 159 monetary values are used on the Twentieth century coins, reveals a writer in the New York Times. The "cent" is the most common, being used by 22 countries, including the United States, Canada, Ceylon, China, Ethiopia, Haiti and several British colonies. The "centavo" is next in popular use, being found on coins of many of the South and Central American countries in addition to Angola, Portugal and Cuba. Next comes the "franc," used by 13 countries, the "penny" and "centime" in 11 countries each, the "peso," in ten and the "florin" in eight countries.

Among the odd monetary values are the att and bat of Siam, the lek of Albania, the mungo of Mongolia, the kuru of Turkey, used on six silver and nickel coins, the anna, pie and pice of India, the won of Korea and the zloty of Poland. In Ethiopia, under Menelik II, a few silver coins with the value in talari and fractions thereof were struck, the talari being equivalent to about 45 cents of our money. Haile Selassie struck a few nickel and copper coins with the value in matonas, 100 matonas being equal to a talari.

While gold issues, although limited in volume, were fairly consistent in many countries during the earlier years of the century, the use of that metal for coins has been discontinued in many instances. Belgium issued her last gold coin, a 20-franc piece, under Albert I in 1914. Italy, however, in 1936, issued two gold coins of 50 and 100 lire, respectively, but in France the use of gold in coinage has practically ceased.

When George VI ascended the throne of England, Great Britain brought out its customary issue of gold coins—half a sovereign, one, two and five pounds—as had previously been done for Edward VII and George V.

While the British coins maintain a fairly rigid conservatism in design, the silver crown issued in 1935 to commemorate the silver jubilee of George V represented on the reverse a modernistic figure of St. George riding over the dragon.

Renowned Court Painter

Fragonard (1732-1806), the renowned court painter to Louis XV, was kept busy painting voluptuous scenes of love and seduction. Madame du Barry set the fashion for the whole pleasure-loving court by decorating her boudoir with his paintings. He began his career as a law clerk, but his genius for art brought him to the studio of Francois Boucher in Paris. He surpassed his master. When the people of France rose against the profligate monarchy, they included the court painter Fragonard, and he was forced to return to Grasse, his home. There he turned to simpler subject matter. He was poor and forgotten when he died in Paris in 1806.

WHO'S NEWS THIS WEEK

By LEMUEL F. PARTON

NEW YORK.—Not all the news these days has to do with fighting and contention among the nations. On a week-end run to Washington, this writer found Brazil borrowing Walter Tennyson Swingle, America's 68-year-old plant wizard, in a unique and friendly deal which probably will ring more cash registers than would Mussolini if he swallowed all the Balkans in one gulp.

Plant Wizard to Brazil to Grow Goodwill Fruit

Busy all over the world for 40 years or more, Mr. Swingle has created enough new wealth with his plant conjuring to build a sizable battle fleet. Brazil, getting on Uncle Sam's cuff for $120,000,000, breaks precedent among debtor nations by immediately getting busy in a long-range effort to set up a favorable trade balance and get square with the export-import bank. She thinks Mr. Swingle can show her how to grow many things which we urgently need. Furthermore, she intends to become entirely independent of aggressor nations, not by ersatz or by a strong-arm economy, but by scientific utilization of her natural resources in soil and climate. Mr. Swingle departs for Brazil with the sanction and co-operation of the department of agriculture. His expenses are paid by the Brazilian government.

Tung oil trees, rubber and quinine will get Mr. Swingle's immediate attention. Brazil thinks that, with some expert coaching by Mr. Swingle, she can bring all these through as negotiable assets in interest or amortization day. It looks to this observer like a sunny break in the blizzard of screwball economics which has been sweeping over the world. The above will be just a starter. Mr. Swingle's research will cover virtually the entire range of Brazilian agriculture and forestry.

A native of Pennsylvania, a botanist, educated at the Kansas State agricultural college, he became an "agricultural explorer" for the United States government in 1902 working in nearly every country in the world.

Toured World In Search of Plants for U. S.

He brought Egyptian cotton to Arizona and Acala cotton to California, and helped establish the date industry in the latter state. In Florida, he achieved miracles of hybridization in citrus fruits. He added immeasurably to the knowledge of pollenization, hopped up the seeing power of the microscope, and, in French, German, and English, wrote authoritative treatises on plant pathology, cytology, taxonomic botany and citrus propagation. His fame is widely international and he is a member of every important scientific society in his field.

A homespun American, he is as clubby as a suburban gardener, exchanging garden lore over the back fence with his neighbor. His export of ideas and seeds and cuttings has yielded vastly more goodwill and tangible wealth than our exports of scrap iron, and his imports have run up into billions.

TWO years ago, it appeared that John Logie Baird, the mop-haired garret inventor who took the lead in British television, was running second to other inventors. The postmaster general ruled against him in picking the Marconi-Emi system for the British Broadcasting corporation. But now his system is working in London motion picture theaters and his representatives are here to install it in several Broadway houses.

Sunset Red and Morning Gray; A Start On Way

The son of a Scottish country parson, in an old tweed coat and slacks, he lived meagerly in a dark soho attic and worked with a set of carpenter's tools, a vacuum tube and a few magnets, with no results. When he started thinking his way through a problem, he went to bed. He had been in bed a couple of weeks, when, almost despairing, he saw a red sunset through the window. That suggested a take-off from the infra-red zone of the spectrum. On February 3, 1928, he flashed a picture across the ocean, a ghost face flickering on the wall of the dark cellar of A. M. Hart, of Hartsdale, N. Y.

In the old days, his trousers were patched, his hair was a brush heap, and he usually had one sock drooping. Now, as president of Baird Television, Ltd., he is slicked up a lot, and, according to all accounts, is becoming a magnate. "Sunset red and morning gray start the traveler on his way."

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Smiles

Me Too!

"When I was your age, my boy, I thought nothing of a 10-mile walk."

"Well, I don't think much of it, either."

The Postman—Yes, Mrs. Jones. I did have a card for you, but I guess Mrs. Smith forgot to give it back to me.

Got There First

"Do you see that woman with the squint and the rabbit teeth?" queried Jones. "She's the last woman I'd marry."

The stranger looked at him sadly.

"Old chap," he murmured, "she's the last woman I did marry."

If we could only see ourselves as others see us, we'd never speak to them again.

Thumb in Soup?

Proprietor—Ahem! In settling for your dinner, sir, you forgot the waiter.

Anti-Tip Customer—I didn't eat any waiter.

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