BANNER SERIAL FICTION

She Painted Her Face

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

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CHAPTER VIII—Continued

—18—

"Well, well," said Herrick. "And who ever heard of two guests abusing their host at table until he's carried away and then getting down to his brandy and having a rubber of bridge? You know it's blasphemous. I don't believe the Borgias ever did that. And I'll lay lil Percey's got ear-ache. 'Three swine to one pearl' "

I forgot what answer I made, but I know I sent Winter to bed and, after two or three minutes, went up to my room. But I did not intend to sleep: for the "pearl" was out of my sight.

I had seen her into her suite 20 minutes before. I trusted to see her come out in a little less than eight hours. But I had no faith in Elsa, and—Virgil had his back to the wall. Had there been but one door to her suite, I would have slept across it. But there were four doors to her suite, and one was outside. I could not so much as watch them: Argus himself could have watched but one at a time.

I took off my coat and lighted a cigarette . . .

As I threw the match out of the window, somebody knocked at my door.

I was at the oak in a flash, to find Winter standing without, with a key in his hand.

"I forgot to tell you, sir." He entered and shut the door. "You gave me this key and told me to lock up the Rolls. Her doors, I mean. But I 'aven't been able to, because this isn't the key."

" 'Isn't the key?' " I said, frowning, and with that I took it out of his hand.

"It isn't, indeed, sir. I tried it again and again."

"But . . ."

And there I stopped dead—with my eyes on the key I was holding between my finger and thumb.

Winter was right. This was not the key of the Rolls. Although she did not know it, Elizabeth Virgil had the key of the Rolls. I had handed it to her on Friday, with the rest of her things. It was now, perhaps, under her pillow. But this was her master key . . . that fitted all five of her locks.

CHAPTER IX

Whilst I changed, I gave Winter his orders. These were, in short, to pass the night on the landing, watching the door which gave to Elizabeth's suite.

"If anyone tries to enter, put your torch on his face and hold him up. The door may be opened for him; but don't like Elsa's face, and he's not to go in. When you've got him, lift up your voice and shout my name, and I'll be with you before you know where you are. I shall be in the staircase-turret, closely watching the other door of her ladyship's rooms."

"And if you want me, sir?" said Winter.

"I'll call her ladyship. She'll let me through her suite and on to the stair. I don't think anything will happen, and, but for Elsa, I'd tell you to go to bed. But it's thanks to me that she is inside that suite, so it's up to me to see that she does no harm."

And there I remembered Elgar, the man for whom Virgil had called when we had escaped from the tower. I had learned from Elizabeth that he was Virgil's chauffeur and was as much trusted by his master as he was distrusted by everyone else at Brief.

But when I mentioned his name—

"He's away just now," said Winter, "with Mr. Virgil's car. There's a knock in the engine or something they can't get right."

"So much the better," said I, and spoke as I thought.

And that, I think, shows how ill equipped I was to deal with a man of Virgil's capacity, for I should at once have suspected the absence of his chauffeur and car. But I am ashamed to say that it did not occur to me that, if there is work of a certain kind to be done, the lugger will take an offing, instead of staying in port. Be that as it may, I read the danger-signal as being a piece of good news: then I took up my pistol and torch, and we left the tower.

To post Winter took but a moment; and then I was treading the steps down which I had knocked the servant six days before. My shoes were rubber-soled, and I made no sound, but, as I have said before, the well of the staircase was lit, and the first floor, to which I was going, was very much better illumined than was the landing above. Still, there were shadows enough about, and I carefully kept to them.

As luck would have it, I knew the whole of my way. I was not going down to the hall: I was bound for the picture-gallery, where we had gathered that evening, before dinner was served. This lay upon the first floor—a fine, long room, and its range of windows was broken into three bays by two of the staircase-turrets with which the castle was served. And the first of these, I knew, was Elizabeth's own—I had seen her come out of its door at a quarter past eight.

Using the greatest caution, I left the magnificent staircase and stole to the gallery's doors. Happily, these were open, but here the darkness was thick, so I put to the doors behind me and drew my torch. And there my luck went out, for the torch I found to be useless. It was dead.

Now I could, of course, have gone back: but, since Winter needed his torch, it meant going back or sending him back to my room: so I made up my mind to go on, because, though I should have liked it, I could tread upon Virgil's toes without seeing his face.

The gallery seemed broader than I had thought, but at length I was touching the curtains, which had been drawn. At once I turned to the left, for now I had found the windows, I had to do no more than follow their line along. And because I had my bearings, perhaps I moved with less care than I should have shown. In any event, I had almost come to the door, when I

And at Last I Knew I Was Saved.

brushed against something unwieldy—and knocked it down.

Now when a man who is trying not to be heard knocks over a chair or a table, it shortens his life. But when he knocks over such a thing as a harp . . .

Not only was the crash appalling, but every string of the instrument sounded its liquid note. Indeed, as I stood there, trembling, I thought that the dulcet announcement would never die, and when at last it did, I should have been glad to die with it, because in all my life I never felt so much abashed. Discovery was, of course, inevitable. I had not only waked the household: I had declared where I was: for the harp, like that of the giant in Jack and the Beanstalk, had lifted up an unmistakable voice.

I wiped the sweat from my face and waited for the sound of men running and voices raised. Virgil, no doubt, would come thrusting—to rub my nose in the desperate mess I had made. I began to try to prepare some halting explanation which was not beneath contempt . . .

I do not know how long I stood still, but as the moments went by, yet nobody came, I began to dare to believe that I was to be spared. The silence which I had shattered was absolute as ever: no faintest indication of movement came to my ears. And at last, I knew I was saved. For some extraordinary reason, no one was coming to answer the call of the harp.

Expecting to be discovered and put to shame, I had, of course, relinquished my delicate enterprise: but now there was plainly no reason why I should withdraw, provided that on my way back, when my watch was done, I set up the harp again by the light of the dawn. So I ventured to hold on my course.

Before I had covered six feet, I touched the door of the turret to which I was trying to come . . .

Now I had expected the staircase to be in darkness: but the moment I opened the door, I knew that a light was burning beyond the oak. For a moment I found this strange. Then I remembered that I had left lights burning on the staircase within the tower and decided that the practice was natural where dangerous steps were serving a private room.

I took the key from the lock, stepped across the threshold and closed the door.

I was now in a little, stone passage which ran through the castle wall and gave directly on to the turret-stair: the wall being four feet thick, the passage was four feet long, for the turret adjoined the castle, yet was complete in itself. An electric light was burning where passage and stairway met, thus lighting the steps up and down as well as the passage itself.

I leaned against the wall and heaved a sigh of relief. Harp or no harp, I had gained the position I sought, and Winter and I between us commanded Elizabeth's suite. If . . .

And there I heard a girl laugh . . . a stifled, mischievous laugh . . . to tell me she knew I was there.

It was Elsa, of course. I knew that. She must have heard the harp fall and have left Elizabeth's suite to see what the matter might be. And then she had seen the door open and, probably, me come in.

There was only one thing to be done.

"Is that you, Elsa?" I said, and stepped to the curling stair.

Looking up, I saw her standing, point-device as ever, back to the wall.

Then somebody standing behind me laid me out.

The first thing that I remember was Percy Virgil's voice.

As I lifted my head, he spoke, and a gag was clapped into my mouth—a pad of sweet-smelling silk, which I afterwards found was one of my lady's chemises, fresh from some drawer. When I tried to sit up, I found that my hands were not free. My wrists were strapped tight together, behind my back.

I was still too dazed to make any useful effort, so I laid my head back on the stone and closed my eyes, determined to stay where I was till my strength and my senses came back, for though I could not think straight, I knew that I needed them both as never before. For a moment I seemed to be swaying, although I was lying still . . . Then somebody made me sit up and pushed my head forward and down . . . Then water was poured on my head and down the back of my neck . . .

It was that that cleared my brain, and though my head was aching, from that time on I was healthy in body and mind.

I lifted my head and looked round.

I was sitting in the passage, just clear of the turret-stair. Percy Virgil was sitting on the stair, a step or two up. And a man who I knew must be Elgar was standing in the passage beside me, pitcher in hand.

Percy Virgil picked up my pistol, looked at the safety-catch, weighed the thing on his palm and slipped it into his coat. Then he glanced at his wrist-watch and fingered his chin.

"You are very convenient, Mr. Exon. I should have got you later, but probably only after an ugly scene. And I do so dislike being crossed . . . But now you've avoided all that, and, what is more, you have made my path very smooth. You see, my cousin is going. The Lady Elizabeth Virgil is leaving the castle tonight. That was always understood, not by you, or that silver-tongued fairy, the Duchess of Whelp. But It was understood by me—as soon as I heard that my cousin was coming back. You see, I don't want her here. I really made that plain about ten days ago. But some people won't take a hint . . . Well, now she is going for good. She will never come back."

The man stopped there and leaned forward, with glittering eyes.

"My luck came in, Mr. Exon, when you knocked over that harp . . . We were going, Mr. Exon. Elsa had received her instructions and Elgar was on this stair. And then you knocked over the harp . . . And so I held everything up and waited for you.

"Now what will they find tomorrow? Not one, but both of you gone . . . Abduction? Well, hardly. They don't abduct people like you. What about an illicit elopement? A passionate flight? Oh, that's absurd . . . Wait a minute. Consider that beautiful scene in the belvedere? This evening . . . at sunset, Mr. Exon. Yes, you were watched—by a most reliable man. And then the key to her bedroom . . . that a lady gave to her swain? And then the dressing-case . . . which Elsa is packing now? Elsa—there's a good girl. She will speak to her own reactions—with tears running down her cheeks: how she and you fought for her darling and how her entreaties were foiled by the way of a man with a maid. Aunt Sally may put up a show, but she won't be able to face these basic facts. And I hardly think she'll lay them before the police. I mean, they might miss the idyll and get the blurb . . ."

He got to his feet and yawned.

"Go and get her ladyship, Elgar; and tell Monna Lisa I'm not going to wait all night. If she can't pack a dressing-case—"

"It is ready," said Elsa's voice, as Elgar went up the stair.

"You see, Mr. Exon," said Virgil, "the way to win in this world is to go all lengths. It's simpler, swifter and safer—every time. Think what I should have been spared if I had taken that course ten days ago. But there . . . One lives and learns. Take my two, er, assistants, for instance." He threw a glance up the stair. "I can count upon Elsa. She's wanted in Bristol for forgery—a very bad case. But on Elgar I have no hold: so, though he does not know it, he hasn't got long to live. I think he will be run over—I'm not quite sure. But here they come."

He picked up a length of cord and then stepped over my legs and out of the way. The next moment Elgar appeared, with Elizabeth over his shoulder, as though she were wounded and senseless and he was bringing her in.

"Put her ladyship down," said Virgil, making a knot in his cord.

Elgar unshouldered his burden and set it down on the steps.

My eyes met those of my lady, and order came back to my soul.

"Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased?"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Carp Is Badge of Audacity for the Boys in Japan; Streamers Old Custom

Japanese youths recently celebrated the Boys' festival, under the aegis of carp, their badge of audacity. The carp is seen as the embodiment of manly virtues, its boldness seen when it leaps a waterfall. Its unflinching resignation in the face of death is observed when it is laid on the carving board and touched with the flat of the knife—it stops wriggling.

In every house where there is a boy, the parents attach at the end of a long pole in the garden, or to the roof of the house, a balloonlike carp made of cotton or silk, and black, yellow or red in color, which the wind fills out, making it swim in the air, according to an authority.

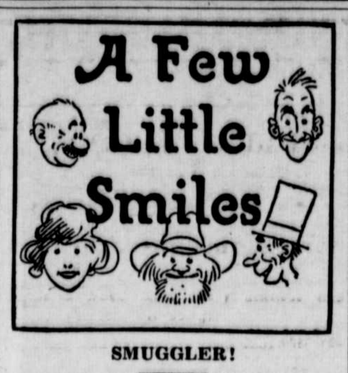
One carp is hoisted for each son: a large one, perhaps 15 feet or more in length, for the eldest; others smaller, and quite a tiny one if there is a baby boy in the family.

This custom of flying carp streamers began more than 250 years ago as an expression of rivalry on the part of the common folk against the armed classes who used to display outside their dwellings war streamers, lances, long-handled scimitars and other arms.

The burghers, who could make no show of arms but were none the less concerned for the welfare of their male children, are said to have hit upon the idea of hoisting paper carp, which, if not exactly awe-inspiring, could be made in any dimensions and therefore be more imposing than anything in the samurai's armory.

Birth of the "Marseillaise"

There is a popular story that the inspiring "Marseillaise" was written as the result of a burst of patriotism. Actually, the song seems to have been written not at Marseilles, but at Strasbourg as a result of the mayor complaining that there was no real marching song for the troops. Rouget de Lisle composed the words, but doubt exists as to the composer of the music, says Pearson's London Weekly. "The Marseillaise" was first played at a review of the Garde Nationale on April 29, 1792, and first achieved fame when sung by the Republican troops that assaulted the Tuileries a few months later.



SMUGGLER!

With a portfolio under his arm, a diplomat passing through the customs at Dover endeavored to walk past the official.

"Excuse me, sir," said the officer, respectfully, "but have you declared that case?"

"No," was the reply. "I'm traveling under diplomatic privileges, and these are important dispatches."

"Well," answered the customs officer, "the neck of one of your dispatches is sticking out of the case."

Has That Effect

"Some people thirst after fame, others after wealth, others after love," said the romantic young man, with a sigh.

The object of his affections was not in the same mood, however.

"And there is something all people thirst after," she said.

"Yes?" asked the lover, eagerly.

"Salt fish!" was the crushing reply.

MODERN VERSION

Actor—The next line is: "A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!"

Manager—But, my dear fellow, that will scarcely be understood in this day—make it an automobile!

Good Guess

"Did you go to the doctor the other day, John?"

"Yes, I did."

"And did he find out what you had?"

"Very nearly."

"What do you mean, very nearly?"

"Well, I had $5.00 and he charged me $4.50!"

Words of Action

"Which is the better," inquired the young patriot, "to be a silver-tongued orator or a practical politician?"

"It depends," answered Senator Sorghum, "on your personal ambitions. Some people desire the last word and others are concerned solely about the first ballot."

It Shouldn't Matter!

"Say, what do you call this?" demanded the petulant customer of the waitress. "Is it beef or mutton?"

"Can't you tell?" she asked.

"No, I can't!"

"Well, then," said the waitress. "why worry about it?"

Too Many Bites

Benevolent Old Man—Don't you think fishing is a cruel sport?

Angler—I certainly do. I've been sitting here five hours and never had a single bite, and I've got three wasp stings, I'm eaten up with flies, and the sun's taken all the skin off the back of my neck!

Co-operation

A parent recently had occasion to punish his six-year-old son. That night he overheard the youngster saying his prayers.

"Please, Lord, make me a good boy," pleaded the child. "I asked you yesterday, but I guess you overlooked it."

TEACH HIM A LESSON

"I don't know what to do with that boy of mine. He won't go to school, he won't work and he's always asking me for money?"

"Why don't you get him a job as collector for an installment house?"

The Little Less

Anxious Sportsman (who thinks he has backed a winner)—Did you send off that wire in time?

Village Postmistress—Yes, sir, but the money was a penny short so I left out the name of the horse.

Oxygen

The teacher of a chemistry class asked:

"For what purpose do automobile shops use oxygen?"

"For the carburetors to breathe," a pupil responded.

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Congressional Misuse

One of the outstanding misuses of the Congressional Record took place in the spring of 1892 when five congressmen took five days to read into it a full-length book, "Protection or Free Trade?" by Henry George, and then, at a cost of five-eighths of a cent a copy, had 1,200,000 of the sections reprinted, bound and mailed, without cost to themselves, to their constituents.—Collier's.

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WNU—4 20—39

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THE TRUTH SIMPLY TOLD

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