

GUNMAN'S BLUFF

BY Edgar Wallace
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FIRST INSTALMENT
CHAPTER I

"But you are going to marry him, Peggy?"

There was an agitation in the voice of Rex Leferre that almost startled his sister.

"What makes you say that?" she asked. "Does it mean that I am breaking off my engagement because Luke is a bad host and has kept us waiting ten minutes?"

"They were in the palm court of the Carlton."

She stood apart with the young man who was her only relation and no stranger seeing them would imagine them to be brother and sister. Rex was red-haired, weak-chinned, a fretful young man with a nervous trick of adjusting his dress tie every few minutes.

Margaret Leferre had the carriage and poise of the great lady. She was fair-skinned, faultless of feature, gray-eyed—a model of cold dignity.

"I don't know," Rex was nibbling at his nails; he could not be cured of this ugly habit. "Only Luke is a

The Gunner's smile when he heard this was a grim one. He always smiled when he was hurt—and as he smiled now, his heart was one great throbbing wound.

So he came from prison, and in one course to the Carlton Hotel, where Mr. Luke Maddison was celebrating his engagement. Of Luke he knew nothing—what had brought him there was a jewel box which a rich American lady kept in the hotel safe all day and in her bedroom between 9 p. m. and 1 a. m. Gunner Haynes had taken a room on the same floor.

"What was he like—in appearance?" Danton asked Luke Maddison.

Danton's voice sounded a little hoarse, as though he were speaking from a dry throat.

"Who—the man who held me up?" And when the other nodded Luke went on: "A dark-looking fellow—I thought he might be a German—two scars across his right cheek—the sort of wound that duelling student love to acquire. I remember when I was

about them. The Gulanga Oil accounts should be settled. We made a very considerable loss there."

Luke nodded impatiently.

"Settle it," he said. "No message from—From Miss Leferre?"

Gunner Haynes? He breathed a little faster. Down his back ran a cold shiver of apprehension. Suppose he had recognized his old friend; suppose he packed a gun, suppose he was waiting out there in the lobby—

It was a stupid question to ask, for he had a private phone and he knew that any message that came from Margaret would be put through to him direct.

The manager shook his head gloomily.

"A bad business, sir. I have not spoken to you about it because I realize how badly you must be feeling. The Northern and Southern have been on the phone this morning about that check—you remember they queried the signature yesterday?"

"Yes, yes," Luke's usually gentle voice was harsh. "Tell the manager it is all right."

"I told him yesterday, as a matter of fact," Mr. Stiles was inclined to linger on a subject which was hateful to the other. In desperation Luke reverted to the question of the Gulanga Oil Concession, and for once Mr. Stiles's father interest in the business irritated him.

"Of course, sir, I know that Maddison's is as sound as a bell of brass, but there is no getting away from the fact that we have been making rather heavy losses during the last six months, and I am afraid I shall have to call upon your reserves. Personally, I went on, oblivious of Luke's growing resentment, "I have always believed we made a mistake in not setting out to a joint stock concern. In private banking business the personal security plays too big a part for my liking."

Mercifully the house phone rang at that moment. Luke snatched up the receiver and listened with a frown.

"Yes, show him in, please." And as he replaced the receiver, "I am seeing Mr. Morrell, and I do not wish to be interrupted," he said.

Mr. Stiles made a little grimace. He had been all his life in the firm of Maddison & Sons, and he did not feel called upon to disguise his dislike of the caller.

There is something about that fellow that I dislike very much, Mr. Maddison. I hope we are not going to carry his account."

Luke shook his head and nodded toward the door.

Mr. Danton Morrell came into an atmosphere which he sensitive in such matters, realized was charged with hostility. Nevertheless he was smiling self, and laid his carefully brushed silk hat upon the table. Luke did not fail to notice that he wore a mourning tie, and that, for some reason, was a further strain upon his jangled nerves.

"Sit down, will you?" His manner and voice were brusque. "You were a friend of poor Rex's?"

Danty inclined his head sorrowfully.

"Yes, I was completely in his confidence," he said. "I think I told you the day following his unfortunate—"

Luke cut short his recollection.

"Were you so much in his confidence that you accompanied him to the Northern and Southern Bank three days ago when he cashed a check for eighteen thousand five hundred pounds?"

Danty opened his eyes wide in well-stimulated surprise.

"Why, of course," he said. "Rex had made very heavy losses in the City and I advised him to see you. I understood you gave him a check for that amount."

"Did he tell you that?" Luke's blue eyes did not leave the man's face.



The man who held him must have been unusually strong, for he literally and in the most effortless fashion lifted Luke Maddison bodily and placed him on his feet.

good fellow—in a way. Rather a nightwad."

"Have you been borrowing money again?" she asked, and he wringed uncomfortably.

"No—what rot! Only Danty and I had a scheme."

She looked awestruck at that moment. Somehow she knew that the dark-eyed Danton Morrell was watching them.

Luke Maddison came through the vestibule with long strides. He paused to strip his overcoat and take off his silk hat, which he almost threw at an attendant, and took one step toward the door. As he did so his foot slipped sideways on the marble floor and he would have fallen unpleasantly but for the hand that suddenly gripped his arm.

The man who held him must have been unusually strong, for he literally and in the most effortless fashion lifted Luke Maddison bodily and placed him on his feet. Luke turned himself looking into a hard, med face, the color of brick, into two smiling eyes, expressionless.

"Thank you—awfully."

"I'm glad I was here. Fortunately I always wait in the lobby when I am expecting people to dinner. Good night."

Two lives touched at the Carlton that January night—touched and went looping away one from the other, to touch again in a moment of crisis. Rough roads they were; a bitter, heart-aching road for one, a methodical hell for the less favored, to be tramped with that cynical smile with which "Gunner" Haynes met every misfortune.

Luke Maddison saw life like that—a bewildering mass of crossing and parallel paths, if he fell into error it was in believing that his own was the straight-as-a-ruler highway to which and from which all other paths inclined or diverged.

Gunner Haynes, whose strong arm had saved him from a fractured wrist or worse, had no collateral worth speaking about. His principal assets were an immaculate dress suit, a cultured voice, and perfect manners, which more than overcame the handicap represented by his lean, dark, sinister face. He lived God knows where, but was to be seen at such of the best hotels as did not know him for an expect jewel thief.

They called him "Gunner" because of certain happenings in New York City. It was said but never proved, that he was the man who bumped off Lew Selinski, that notorious gang leader, and shot his way through Lew's gunmen to the safety represented by a cattle boat which sailed from the Hudson River an hour after the police reserves answered a riot call.

Nobody had ever seen him with a pistol in England; but the detectives who arrested him a year after his return to his native land fully expected gun play and came armed.

When he came up for trial, nobody came near him: not his pretty wife or his best friend, Larry Vinman. Larry was a prince of confidence men, young, good looking, plausible.

There might be excellent reason why Larry should not wish to draw attention to himself by appearing in court; no reason why Millie should not write or do something. She had a thousand pounds in hard cash; a good lawyer could have been briefed; but when the Gunner had sent for her, she had left the lodging house they had occupied. He never saw her again. A few months before his release he heard that she had died in a workhouse infirmary.

at school in Bonn . . ."

Danton was not listening now. Two seats across the right cheek! Then he had not been mistaken. The question was, had the Gunner recognized him? It was seven years since they had met—Danton had been clean-shaven and rather towheaded in those days. Millie Haynes used to call him "the gold-haired boy" in the days of her fascination. He had grown a moustache and darkened his hair down since then—he no longer filled the police description of Larry Vinman. He made the change long after he had thrown over Millie and left her to drift to a workhouse infirmary. It had been necessary for the success of a trick which had left an Australian squatter poorer by eight thousand pounds, and the subsequent activities of Scotland Yard's confidence squad.

Luke Maddison was cheery. The marriage was to be quiet, and only a few guests were to be invited. He had only a few minutes before arranging his train reservations—no secretary should perform that sacred duty!

That night Mr. Horace Bird, detective, known as the Sparrow, was called to number 342, Brook Street. Assisted by the white-faced Mr. Danton Morrell, he burst open the door of a bedroom, and there he found Rex Leferre, dead by his own hand. He lay on the floor, a revolver by his side; the quick-eyed Danty saw the note scribbled in pencil on a small telephone message block, and his hand closed over the paper. An hour later Margaret Leferre, pale and lovely in her silken negligee, read the message the detective had not seen.

Margaret darling, I have lost. For months I have been gambling. Today I took a desperate step, on the advice of Luke Maddison. He has led me to ruin—money is his god. I beg of you not to trust him. He has led me from one act of folly to another. God bless you.

REX.

She read the pitiful message again and again. Luke Maddison: the man she was to marry in a week!

For two days Margaret Leferre moved in a world of hideous unreality. Strange people interviewed her; a tall, big-framed man, who was strangely sympathetic in his heavy way; a bank manager who talked wildly and incomprehensibly until Danty appeared and whisked him off.

One thunderous fact hammered night and day at her weary brain—Rex was dead by his own hand, and the man she was to marry, the man who, frantic with anxiety, was calling three times a day and being refused admission to her, was the cause. Money was his god!

Luke had been at his office since eight o'clock, an hour before the arrival of the staff, and here his bearded manager found him, sitting at his table, his head in his hands, his personal letters unopened.

Maddison looked up with a start as the manager entered.

"Hullo!" he said awkwardly. "Is there anything wrong?"

There were many things wrong from the point of view of Mr. Stiles, that shrewd man of affairs. He laid a small sheaf of papers on the table and detailed the contents of the documents briefly.

"Here are four or five transactions that ought to be closed today, Mr. Maddison. I am rather worried

up of several services, the significance of which must be mastered if the farmer is to perform them well. There are also some steps in the marketing progress which individuals cannot perform efficiently. Then comes the question of how to secure this efficiency.

Probably one of the best means of doing this is to work together co-operatively in associations and thus get the service at cost. In some cases, the dealer has proved to be more efficient than the co-operative association but generally this was because the co-operative was poorly managed. Today, the old-time dealer must clearly demonstrate his superiority over the co-operative system because the latter system is making good all over the nation.

Farmers cannot hope to market efficiently independently of each other. Working together, they can force better service from the middleman or do the work themselves at cost prices, declares Dr. Knapp.

Eugene Koon, 4-H Club boy of Union Mills, produced 87 bushels of corn on one acre, winning first prize in Rutherford County and second in the mountain district.

"Certainly. Why, what was wrong? I saw the check myself."

There was an uncomfortable pause and then:

"Did you see him sign it?" asked Luke deliberately.

Danty's gaze did not falter.

"I am afraid I do not understand you," he said evenly. "I saw him endorse it—"

(CONTINUED NEXT WEEK)



WHAT DR. CALDWELL LEARNED IN 47 YEARS PRACTICE

A physician watched the results of constipation for 47 years, and believed that no matter how careful people are of their health, diet and exercise, constipation will occur from time to time. Of next importance, then, is how to treat it when it comes. Dr. Caldwell always was in favor of getting as close to nature as possible, hence his remedy for constipation, known as Dr. Caldwell's Syrup Pepsin, is a mild vegetable compound. It can not harm the system and is not habit forming. Syrup Pepsin is pleasant-tasting, and youngsters love it.

Dr. Caldwell did not approve of drastic physics and purges. He did not believe they were good for anybody's system. In a practice of 47 years he never saw any reason for their use when Syrup Pepsin will empty the bowels just as promptly.

Do not let a day go by without a bowel movement. Do not take cathartics but go to the nearest druggist and get one of the generous bottles of Dr. Caldwell's Syrup Pepsin, or write "Syrup Pepsin," Dept. BB, Monticello, Illinois, for free trial bottle.



Col. Samuel Hill of Seattle, famous international capitalist and promoter of good roads, is behind the project to build the connecting link between British Columbia and Alaska which will make a continuous motor road from Mexico to the Far North. The road will pass through the Peace Portal which stands on the International boundary line. The Reindeer meat industry in Alaska is being fostered by the Government which owns great herds which serve as food for the Eskimos.

"Man So Nervous Feels His Stomach Jump"

"I got to nervous my stomach felt like it was jumping. Vinol entirely relieved the trouble. I feel better than in years."—J. C. Duke.

Vinol is a compound of iron, phosphates, cod liver peptone, etc. The very first bottle makes you sleep better and have a B.G.I. appetite. Nervous, easily tired people are surprised how QUICK the iron, phosphates, etc., give new life and pep. Vinol tastes delicious. Hodges Drug Company.

—Advertisement.

GIVES THREE FACTORS IN FARM MARKETING

Raise those things which will be in demand, study the marketing process and support a co-operative marketing association; are three vital factors in efficient marketing by any North Carolina farmer.

"While it appears ridiculous to grow some product which will be over-produced, and which will meet severe competition, the individual farmer cannot be informed about this unless he studies the outlook reports issued at the first of each year by the State and Federal agricultural authorities," says Dr. J. G. Knapp, marketing expert at State College.

"These outlook reports give the individual grower knowledge of the probable production of certain crops during the next year. It is economic suicide for the farmer to go on producing crops which are not wanted by consumers and to act independently of what other producers in all parts of the world are doing."

Neither can farmers market efficiently unless they know how the products pass from the producer to the consumer, says Dr. Knapp. The general process of marketing is made

why it costs you next to nothing to trade now for safe new . . .

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FIRST, the extra amount we allow for your present tires offsets the winter's depreciation on the Goodyears. Worry also girth your present tires until spring, and they'll have little trade-in value. But new Goodyears, put on now, will still be like new in the Spring because winter wear on tires is far less than when they have to travel over hot summer roads.

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The shrewd investor trades now for his new Goodyears—to wet all-winter protection for next to nothing! Phone for our estimator—or drop in and talk it over.

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