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A MAKER OF HISTORY

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Author of "The Master Mummer," "A Prince of Sinners," "Mysterious Mr. Sebin," "Anna the Adventurer," etc.

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CHAPTER XXIV.

UNCOMBE unfasted the chain and bolts of the ponderous front door and looked out into the darkness. A carriage and pair of horses were drawn up outside. A man and a woman, both dressed in long traveling coats, were standing upon the doorstep.



The letter, I am afraid, does little to satisfy your curiosity.

"This is Duncombe Hall, I believe," the man said. "Is Sir George Duncombe at home?" "I am Sir George Duncombe," he answered. "Will you come inside?" They crossed the threshold at once. The man was tall and dark, and his voice and bearing were unmistakable. The woman was fair, petite and apparently very sleepy. She wore magnificent furs, and she had the air of being in a very bad temper.

"We really are heartily ashamed of ourselves for disturbing you at such an hour, Sir George," the man said, "but you will pardon us when you understand the position. I am the Marquis de St. Ethel, and this is my wife. I have a letter to you from my friend the Duke of Chestnut, with whom we have been staying."

Duncombe concealed his astonishment as well as he was able. He bowed to the lady and led them toward the library. Spencer, who had heard them coming, had hastily concealed his revolver and was lounging in an easy chair reading the evening paper.

"I am afraid that my servants are all in bed," Duncombe said, "and I can only offer you a bachelor's hospitality. This is my friend, Mr. Spencer—the Marquis and Marquise de St. Ethel. Wheel that easy chair up, Spencer, will you?" Spencer's brow had betrayed not the slightest sign of surprise, but Duncombe fancied that the marquis had glanced at him keenly. He was holding a note in his hand, which he offered to Duncombe.

"My errand is so unusual and the hour so extraordinary," he said, "that I thought it would be better for Chestnut to write you a line or two. Will you please read it?" Duncombe tore open the envelope. Chestnut, Wednesday Evening. My dear Duncombe—My friend De St. Ethel tells me that he is obliged to great personal inconvenience for a friend which involves a somewhat unceremonious call upon you tonight. He desires me, therefore, to send you these few lines. The Marquis de St. Ethel and his wife are among my oldest friends. It gives me great pleasure to vouch for them both in every way. Yours sincerely, CHESTNUT.

"The letter, I am afraid," the marquis said, smiling, "does little to satisfy your curiosity. Permit me to explain my errand in a few words." "Certainly," Duncombe interrupted. "But won't you take something? I am glad to see that Spencer is looking after your wife."

"I must go," she answered simply. "You wish me to give you?" "If you please," she interrupted. He turned toward the door. "I have something belonging to Miss — to my guest," he said, "in my own room. If you will excuse me for a moment I will fetch it."

He returned with the sealed envelope which she had given him and which he placed in her hands. He carried also a fur coat and an armful of wraps. "You must take these," he declared. "It is cold traveling."

"It is cold traveling," he declared. "But how can I return them to you?" she protested. "No, not the coat, please. I will take a rug if you like."

"You will take both," he said firmly. "There need be no trouble about returning them. I shall be in Paris myself shortly, and no doubt we shall come across one another."

Her eyes flashed something at him. What it was he could not rightly tell. It seemed to him that he saw pleasure there and fear, but more of the latter. The marquis intervened. "I trust," he said, "that in that case you will give us the pleasure of seeing something of you. We live in the Avenue de St. Cloud."

"You are very kind," Duncombe said. "I shall not fail to come and see you." Spencer threw open the door, and they passed out. Phyllis kept by Duncombe's side. He felt her hand steal into his.

resented a little his friend's air of superiority. "There's only a year difference in our ages," he remarked.

Henri de Bergillac smiled, this time more expressively than ever, and held out his hands. "I speak of experience, not years," he said. "You have lived for twenty years in a very delightful spot no doubt, but away from everything which makes life endurable, possible even, for the child of the cities. I have lived for twenty-one years mostly in Paris. Ah, the difference!"

Guy shrugged his shoulders and leaned back in his chair. "Well, he said briefly, 'tastes differ. I've seen quite all I want to of Paris for the rest of my life. Give me a fine June morning in the country and a tramp round the farm, or an early morning start in September walking down the partridges, or a gray day in November, with a good good underneath, plenty of grass ahead and hounds talking. Good God, I wish I were back in England!"

Henri smiled and crossed his upper lip, but symptoms of a mustache were beginning to appear. "My dear Guy," he said, "you speak crudely because you do not understand. You know of Paris only its grosser side. How can one learn more when you cannot even speak its language? You know the Paris of the tourist. The real magic of my beautiful city has never entered into your heart. Your little dabble in its vices and frivolities must not count to you as anything real. The joy of Paris to one who understands is the exquisite refinement, the unsurpassed culture of its atypical wickedness."

"The devil," Guy exclaimed. "Have you found out all that for yourself?" Henri was slightly annoyed. He was always annoyed when he was not taken seriously. "I have had the advantage," he said, "of many friendships with men whose names you would scarcely know, but who directed the intellectual tendencies of the younger generation of Parisians. People call us decadents—that, I suppose, because we prefer intellectual progression to physical activity. I am afraid, dear friend, that you would never be one of us."

"You will not even drink absinth," Henri continued, helping himself from a little carafe which stood between them. "Absolutely the most artistic of all drinks. You prefer a cigarette you call a pipe to my choicest cigarettes, and you have upon your cheeks a color of which a plowboy should be ashamed."

"Well, I can't help being absurd!" he declared. Henri sighed delicately. "It is not only that," he said. "I wish so much that I could make you understand. You positively cultivate good health—take cold baths and walks and exercises to preserve it!"

"Why the dickens shouldn't I?" Henri felt closed his eyes. He was a dutiful nephew, but he felt that another month with this cloistered of an English boy would mean the snapping of his finely strung nerves. "My friend," he began gently, "we in Paris of the set which I belong to do not consider good health to be a state which makes for intellectual progression. Good health means the triumph of the physical side of man over the nervous. The healthy animal sleeps and eats too much. He does not know the stimulus of pain. His normal condition is unassuming—not to say boring, according to our tenets, is to get rid of superfluous health."

Guy did not trust himself to speak this time. He only stared at his companion, who seemed pleased to have evoked his interest. "Directly the body is weakened," Henri continued, "the brain begins to atrophy. With the indisposition for physical effort comes activity of the imagination. Cigarettes, drugs, our friend here," he continued, putting the carafe "is night, is belle passion—all these—all these!"

He broke off in the middle of his sentence. Simultaneously he abandoned his carefully chosen attitude of studied languor. He was leaning forward in his chair watching a carriage which had just come into sight along the straight wide road which led from the outside world to the chateau.

"The devil!" he exclaimed. "My respected uncle!" A man servant stepped out upon the terrace. "Moment!"

"Remove the absinth, Jacques. M. le Duc arrives!" Guy, who also had been watching the carriage, gave utterance to a little exclamation. He pointed to two figures on a horseback who rode behind the carriage.

"The gendarmes!" he exclaimed. "They have come for me at last!" His face was no longer ruddy. The pallor of fear had crept to his cheeks. A note of despair rang in his voice. His companion only laughed. "Gendarmes, perhaps," he answered, "but not for you, my young friend. Have I not told you that you are in sanctuary here? A guest of the Yl-la-comte de Bergillac evades all suspicion. Ah, I understand well those gendarmes. Let their presence cause you no anxiety, their mission is to guard the peace of the manor house and the personage who resides with him."

Guy resumed his chair and set with his head buried in his hands in an attitude of depression. His companion leaned over the stone balustrade of the terrace and waved his hand to the occupants of the carriage below. They pulled up at the bottom of the steps and commenced slowly to ascend. In obedience to an imperious gesture from his uncle Henri advanced to meet them. He greeted his nephew with graceful formality. His appearance was homely and his dress almost untidy, he bowed very low indeed and accepted his proffered hand as a mark of favor.

The Duc de Bergillac was tall, slender, with black mustache and imperial. He possessed all the personal essentials of the aristocrat, and he had the air of one accustomed to command. "Henri," he said, "your young friend is with you?"

"But certainly," his nephew answered, with a sigh. "Am I not always obedient? He has scarcely been out of my sight since we arrived."

"Very good. You saw us arrive just now. Did you mention the name of M. Gisson?" the vicomte asked. "But certainly not," Henri answered. The vicomte nodded. "You have discretion," he said. "M. Gisson is here inconspicuously. He wishes to hear your young friend's story from his own lips."

The vicomte's companion nodded silently. He had the air of a silent man. He was short, inclined to be stout, and his dress and bearing were almost bourgeois. His features were large and not particularly intelligent, his cheeks were puffy and his gray beard ill brushed. He had the double neck of the Frenchman of the lower class who has not denied himself the joys of the cuisine, and his appearance would have been hopelessly commonplace but for the deep set brilliant black eyes which lit up his whole face and gave it an aspect of power.

"After dejeuner, you understand," he said. "It is well that your young friend should not understand that I came here for no other reason. I will see first your manuscripts, M. le Duc."

The duke waved his hand courteously to Guy as the two men passed along on their way to the library. Henri resumed his seat with a little shrug of the shoulders. "My respected uncle will bring such strange people here to see his manuscripts and collection of missals," he remarked. "For myself, it is a hobby which wears me. And you, mon cher Guy?"

"I know nothing about them," he answered. "But the gendarmes, Henri? Why did they ride with your uncle's carriage?" Henri smiled reassuringly. "The old gentleman," he said, "has something to do with the government, and they were in attendance upon him. You can realize, my friend," he added, "that you are indeed in a republican country. Such people must have the entire to our houses, even to our table. I presume that you will have the pleasure of taking luncheon with him even."

A manservant came out upon the terrace. "M. le Duc desires me to say that luncheon is served," he announced. Henri passed his arm through his friend's. "Come," he said, "let us go and see if we can amuse ourselves with my uncle's venerable friend. I do not suppose that he speaks English, but I will interpret for you."

London's first playhouse and New York's Oldest Theater. Few of the comedians who heap contempt upon Philadelphia with jokes built upon her alleged slowness realize the fact that the Quaker City furnished New York with its first theatrical company. This was on Monday, the 5th of March, 1750, at a theater on Nassau street. The play was "Richard III.," with Thomas Keen for Richard. The actors were billed as "the Philadelphia company in New York" and played a highly varied repertoire. They came over from England two or three years before and opened in Philadelphia, then the chief city in the British colonies, where they had the honor of presenting the first tragedy ("Richard III.," the first comedy ("Dumplings," "Spanish Friar") and the first musical piece ("The Beggars' Opera") ever given in America—or in English speaking America—at any rate—by a regular troupe. They were forced to leave Philadelphia for New York owing to an ordinance which called the attention of the authorities to "certain persons taking upon themselves to act plays." The site of their Philadelphia theater was Little Dock street, lying between Chestnut and Walnut and between First and Second streets.

London's first playhouse was called simply the Theater and was erected outside the city walls, on Finsbury fields, in the year 1576. Its builder was James Burbage, an actor, father of the more famous player, Richard Burbage, the original Hamlet. It was taken down some eighteen years later, and the materials were used in the erection of the Globe, Shakespeare's home, opened around 1599. The Curtain, London's second theater, in Holywell street, was so called, strange to say, not from the drop, but from the name of the manor house on the site of which it was put up a few months after the Theater was inaugurated.

The oldest theater now standing in New York is the Thalia, on the Bowery. It was first opened on Oct. 23, 1825, under the name of the Bowery theater, and as such became one of the most famous playhouses in America. The building was three times destroyed by fire—once on May 26, 1828; again on Sept. 28, 1856, and a third time on Feb. 18, 1838. On all three occasions the house was rebuilt and reopened in a remarkably short time. This theater has been the home of every form of amusement, from circus to Shakespearean performances, and upon its stage some of the greatest players America has seen made their debut.—Scrap Book.

Human Nature. "Why are guests so habitually discontented?" asked the landlord. "They're not really discontented," answered the clerk. "They merely want to convey a favorable impression about what they are used to at home."

The Mysia He Didn't Want. A young man who was to be married in church to a Miss Way, after a courtship of four years, privately requested the clerk not to open the service by singing, "This is the Way I Long have sought."

A Mexican Band. Celebrated Musicians Represent Sister Republic at Jamestown Exposition. The Mexican band, assigned by President Diaz, of Mexico, to represent that country at the Jamestown Exposition, arrived June 28th, and went into camp on the military reservation.

The band, consisting of forty-one pieces, is attached to the general staff of the Mexican army, and stands next in importance to the Presidential Band. At home it is stationed in the City of Mexico and twice a week plays in the park or plaza for the enjoyment of the people.

The band under the leadership of Lieut. Nabor Varquez, and is one of fine quality in its musical make-up, and promises to be an attractive feature of the Exposition during the three months it will remain. On the day of arrival at the Jamestown Exposition and the band gave a concert in the Auditorium, and then going to the grand stand on Lee's Parade it played during the parade of the 23rd Infantry. Those who heard the selections given were delighted and great enthusiasm is left at the pleasant prospect attending the long stay of the celebrated band of musicians, which was secured for the Exposition through the earnest endeavor of Senor Veloz, Jamestown Commissioner to Latin American countries.

Judge Parker in a Wreck. Asheville Dispatch, July 16. Passenger train No. 8 from Asheville to Lake Toxaway with Judge Alton B. Parker and daughter, of New York, and many others aboard was derailed 300 yards east of Rosman about noon today, and while the passengers were slightly shaken up, all escaped injury. According to information received here, the wreck of the passenger train was due to cattle on the track. The engine and baggage car turned over on route to Lake Toxaway to spend the day when the accident occurred. The passengers aboard the derailed train were returned to Brevard. It is said that when the train rounded a curve 300 yards east of Rosman six cattle were standing on the track. The engineer was unable to bring his engine to a stop, the cattle refused to move, and an instant later the train and baggage car overturned. All trainmen escaped without injury.

A Memorable Day. One of the days we remember with pleasure, as well as with profit to our health, is the one on which we became acquainted with Dr. King New Life Pills, the painless purifier that cures headache and biliousness and keeps the bowels right. 25c. at J. C. Simmons' Drug Store.

A trained nurse who had victimized several jewelry stores by posing as the wife of Senator Tillman, of South Carolina, was arrested in New York Wednesday. She ordered much jewelry sent to fashionable hotels for inspection and then disappeared with it.

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Mayor Schmitz, of San Francisco, was refused bail pending his appeal from the sentence of five years in the penitentiary. Talk about your breakfast foods. A thousand you can see; I would not have them as a gift. But would have Rocky Mountain Tea. Sold by Thompson Drug Co.

The Dillberry Cotton Mills is the name of a new cotton mill to be built at Davidson. It is capitalized at \$100,000 and will have 2,500 spindles. Beginning with this week the Asheville Citizen, which has been published six days in the week (omitting Monday), will be published every day. The Citizen is the second daily paper in the State, the Charlotte Observer being the first, to publish every day.

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