

In Which He Goes to Paris for a Night.

He strode to the door, followed by Lakington; and the girl in the chair stood up and stretched her arms above her head. For a moment or two Hugh watched her; then he, too, stood upright and eased his cramped limbs.

"Make the fool sign." The words echoed through his brain, and he stared thoughtfully at the grey light which showed the approach of dawn. What was the best thing to do? "Make" with Peterson generally implied torture, if other means failed, and Hugh had no intention of watching any man tortured. At the same time something of the nature of the diabolical plot conceived by Peterson was beginning to take a definite shape in his mind, though many of the most important links were still missing. And with this knowledge had come the realization that he was no longer a free agent. The thing had ceased to be a mere sporting gamble with himself and a few other chosen spirits matched against a gang of criminals; it had become—if his surmise was correct—a national affair. England herself—her very existence—was threatened by one of the vilest plots ever dreamed of in the brain of man. And then, with a sudden rage at his own impotence, he realized that even now he had nothing definite to go on. He must know more; somehow or other he must get to Paris; he must attend that meeting at the Ritz. Then a sound from the room below brought him back to his vantage point. The American was sitting in a chair, and Lakington, with a hypodermic syringe in his hand, was holding his arm.

He made the injection, and Hugh watched the millionaire. He was still undecided as to how to act, but for the moment, at any rate, there was nothing to be done. And he was very curious to hear what Peterson had to say to the wretched man, who, up to date, had figured so largely in every round.

After a while the American ceased staring vacantly in front of him, and passed his hand dazedly over his forehead. Then he half rose from his chair and stared at the two men sitting facing him. His eyes came round to the girl, and with a groan he sank back again, plucking feebly with his hands at his dressing gown.

"Better, Mr. Potts?" said Peterson, suavely.

"I—I—" stammered the other.

"Where am I?"

"At The Elms, Godalming, if you wish to know."

"I thought—I thought—" He rose swaying. "What do you want with me? D—n you!"

"Tush, tush," murmured Peterson. "There is a lady present, Mr. Potts. And our wants are so simple. Just your signature to a little agreement, by which in return for certain services you promise to join us in our labors in the near future."

"I remember," cried the millionaire. "Now I remember. You swine—you filthy swine, I refuse—absolutely."

"The trouble is, my friend, that you are altogether too big an employer of labor to be allowed to refuse, as I pointed out to you before. You must be in with us, otherwise you might wreck the scheme. Therefore I require your signature."

"And when you've got it," cried the American, "what good will it be to you. I shall repudiate it."

"Oh! no, Mr. Potts," said Peterson with a thoughtful smile; "I can assure you, you won't. The distressing malady from which you have recently been suffering will again have you in its grip. It renders you quite unfit for business."

For a while there was silence, and the millionaire stared round the room like a trapped animal.

"I refuse!" he cried at last. "It's an outrage against humanity. You can do what you like."

"Then we'll start with a little more thumbscrew," remarked Peterson, strolling over to the desk and opening a drawer. "An astonishingly effective implement, as you can see if you look at your thumb." He stood in front of the quivering man, balancing the instrument in his hands. "It was under its influence you gave us the first signature, which we so regretably lost. I think we'll try it again."

The American gave a strangled cry of terror, and then the unexpected happened. There was a crash as a pane of glass splintered and fell to the floor close beside Lakington; and with an oath he sprang aside and looked up.

"Peep-be," came a well-known voice from the skylight. "Clip him one over the jaw, Potts, my boy; but don't you

Drummond had acted on the spur of the moment. It would have been manifestly impossible for any man, certainly one of his caliber, to have watched the American being tortured without doing something to try to help him. At the same time the last thing he had wanted to do was to give away his presence on the roof. The information he had obtained that night was of such vital importance that it was absolutely essential for him to get away with it somehow; and at the moment, his chances of so doing did not appear particularly bright. It looked as if it was only a question of time before they must get him.

He watched Lakington dart from the room, followed more slowly by Peterson, and then occurred one of those strokes of luck on which the incorrigible soldier always depended. The girl left the room as well.

She kissed her hand toward him, and then she smiled.

"You intrigue me, ugly one," she remarked, looking up, "intrigue me vastly. I am now going out to get a really good view of the kill."

And the next moment Potts was alone. He was staring up at the skylight, apparently bewildered by the



"I Am Now Going Over to Get a Really Good View of the Kill!"

sudden turn of events, and then he heard the voice of the man above speaking clearly and insistently.

"Go out of the room. Turn to the right. Open the front door. You'll see a house, through some trees. Go to it. When you get there, stand on the lawn and call 'Phyllis.' Do you get me?"

The American nodded dazedly; then he made a great effort to pull himself together, as the voice continued:

"Go at once. It's your only chance. Tell her I'm on the roof here."

With a sigh of relief he saw the millionaire leave the room; then he straightened himself up, and proceeded to reconnoiter his own position. There was a bare chance that the American would get through, and if he did, everything might yet be well. If he didn't—Hugh shrugged his shoulders grimly and laughed.

It had become quite light, and after a moment's indecision Drummond took a running jump, and caught the ridge of the sloping roof on the side nearest the road. From where he was he could not see The Larches, and so he did not know what luck the American had had. But he realized that it was long odds against his getting through, and that his chief hope lay in himself. It occurred to him that too few unbiased people knew where he was; it further occurred to him that it was a state of affairs which was likely to continue unless he remedied it himself.

And so, just as Peterson came strolling around a corner of the house followed by several men and a long ladder, Hugh commenced to sing. He shouted, he roared at the top of his very powerful voice, and all the time he watched the men below with a wary eye.

It was just as two laborers came in to investigate the hideous din that Peterson's party discovered the ladder was too short by several yards.

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