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TWENTY YEARS AGO.

I've wandered through the village, Tom, and sat beside the pen Where you are still reducing rock as you were doing when I left you back in eighty-four—ah me! How time does fly! Excuse me while I wipe a briny teardrop from my eye.

The same old bricks are in the wall—you couldn't steal the bricks; The same old warden's watching you, to thwart the same old tricks; But few are left to greet me, Tom, and none is left to know The way they came to send up you, just twenty years ago.

Your cell looks rather different, Tom—the bars have been replaced By new ones stronger than the bars your trusty file defaced, But the same old lockstep's still in vogue—you journey to and fro With little of the awkwardness of twenty years ago.

You know I was your lawyer, Tom, and when the sentence came You tried to make me shade my fee, and said I was to blame, But I had done my duty—you are doing yours, I know, So let us, pray, dismiss the theme of twenty years ago.

—W. F. Kirk, in Milwaukee Sentinel.

:: FIREPROOF ::

By Morice Girard

WELL, Gerald, you seem strangely distraught to-night; it is toothache or love, man?" exclaimed the jovial rector of Menstone, the Rev. Harry Ingold, a squarson of the old school, now fast passing away.

Mountjoy started as the older man laid his hand on his shoulder.

"Not toothache, I'm thankful to say. I've never been troubled with that in my life."

"Then it must be the other thing," Ingold linked his arm into his friend's and drew him into a recess. There were several of these convenient resting places in the great ballroom of Mellans Castle.

The scene was certainly not one which favored either melancholy or abstraction. Sir Harry Gayter, the owner of Mellans, was giving a ball to inaugurate his shrievalty of the loveliest county of England, in the eyes of, at any rate, its inhabitants, Devon. It was an affair of the elite of the county, with a large military, naval and marine element thrown in, to give a touch of brilliance and color to the ensemble. It may be doubted whether more beautiful women or a finer body of men had ever before responded to the hospitable invitation of the lord of Mellans Castle than on this particular occasion.

From the alcove to which Ingold and Mountjoy had retired glimpses could be obtained of the dancers as they floated past on the carefully polished floor. Gerald sat forward, looking eagerly at the couples gracefully circling round to the tune of a waltz, played by the marine band from Plymouth, stationed in the whispering gallery.

The younger man was so intent and preoccupied that he seemed already to have forgotten—at any rate, he was oblivious of—the propinquity of his companion.

Ingold looked at the fresh, strong, handsome face with evident sympathy. He knew perfectly what was passing behind that inadequate, ill-fitting mask. He knew that every time the revolution of the dance brought Bertha Reeve and her partner, Lord Dayre, into Mountjoy's line of vision, a hardness came about the flexible mouth, and something very like pain showed itself in the clear gray eyes.

"You don't think Bertha would ever look at him, do you, Gerald? Why, she could crumple him up in the palm of one hand. She is the finest girl in the room, and that's not saying little. And he! Why, he has the intellect and frame of an under-sized monkey!"

"What does it matter to me whether she looks at him or not? Besides, you never know what a woman thinks or what she likes."

"Don't you? I do. I never was a marrying man; but not the most inveterate husband in this room, or anywhere else, for that matter, can teach me about what a woman likes or dislikes."

"Perhaps, then," he remarked, somewhat testily, "you will tell me what they do like?"

assure you, with all the confidence in life, that woman is not Bertha Reeve."

"I cannot help thinking sometimes—"

Gerald said almost under his breath.

"That Bertha cares for you—loves you?" put in the parson.

"Almost that," Mountjoy assented, after a pause.

"Why don't you take your courage in both hands, and ask her?"

Gerald looked at his friend.

"How can I?"

"Why not?"

"You know the state of my exchequer just as well as I do. I have the oldest name in the county and the poorest property. My pedigree is as long as my rent roll is short. Bertha is Miss Reeve, of Reeve, the richest girl in the west, absolute mistress of herself and all her belongings. If she were poor I would ask her to go with me to Canada, or somewhere, and we would make out life together somehow. But as it is! Would not men say I was a fortune hunter? Nay, should I not feel like one myself? I cannot even talk to her like I can to other girls. I should say that she thinks that fellow Dayre a genius by the side of me. Look at them now."

The dance was over. They were now at the further end of the salon. Lord Dayre was half a head shorter than his companion. An ill-matched pair physically, any one would have said off-hand. But those who knew the circumstances might have judged differently. For in rank Dayre would take rank of any one at the ball, and in wealth the mistress of Reeve, an orphan ruling in her own right, had no peer.

Neither Ingold nor Mountjoy spoke a word for the next few minutes, which seemed like an eternity to one of them at any rate. Gerald felt perfectly certain that what he loved most in the world was slipping from his grasp, and his fate was being decided while the band rested, from its labors, and the gay assemblage prepared itself for the next item in the programme.

There seems something specially incongruous in blank despair gripping the heart under such conditions. The brilliancy of the lights, the beautiful dresses and conspicuous uniforms all seemed to mock the gnawing pain at Gerald's heart.

Bertha Reeve and Lord Dayre passed the alcove. As they did so these words fell, softly as they were spoken, on two pairs of ears: "I hardly know what to say; it is all so unexpected. You do not wish me to decide to-night?"

"May I come for my answer to-morrow?"

Then the speakers passed out of hearing of those involuntary listeners.

"I cannot stay here," Mountjoy said, in a horse whisper, very unlike his usual tones. "The air of the place chokes me. I shall get away without any fuss. They won't miss me. If they do, make some excuse to Sir Harry and Lady Gayter. Say I was taken bad, or something."

With a squeeze of the hand Gerald slipped out of the alcove. Mechanically he found his coat and hat, and then went out at the ball door. He was

glad that the stables were likely to be deserted. He had not brought a groom himself. In his present state of mind he hated to have to make even trivial explanations and excuses.

With some difficulty he managed to find his own mare among the hundred horses tethered wherever standing room under cover could be found. The carriages were outside in the great yard.

Gerald was just issuing from the stables when he heard a great shouting from the direction of the castle. He let go his mare's bridle; she galloped out of the yard and disappeared.

Mountjoy smelt burning wood. He ran toward the entrance of the courtyard. When he reached the great gates his heart stood still. All the basement and ground floor of Mellans were in flames. Panelled and lined, as the fine old rooms were, with oak, dry as tinder, centuries old, with a great staircase of similar material in the centre, the castle was just adapted for rapid conflagration.

As it turned out afterward, when investigation into the cause of the outbreak was made, the fire originated with the overturning of a lamp in the butler's pantry.

Gerald rushed to the main entrance, before which a crowd of guests were standing. They all seemed paralyzed with fear. The young man brushed them to one side. He could see Bertha Reeve nowhere. She must be in the burning building still. And there was Ingold, too, the man he loved best in the world.

Gerald dashed into the hall, meeting overwhelming smoke. He was choking, and his eyes were smarting and red hot. He could hear the cries of girls, the shouting of men above. In his frenzy he could have flung himself into the flames which danced before him.

Then an arm was laid upon his shoulder, and he was half dragged, half led, out. It was the parson, whose courage was of that order which rises calm and resolute to the greatest emergency.

The men, under Ingold's direction, were bringing up long ladders.

Up and down they went in relays, bringing in their arms fainting women. The gentlemen above either helped by handing insensible burdens to the rescuers, or stood back to wait their turn.

Half a dozen times Gerald had been up and down the ladder he had made his own. Ingold was at the next. On each journey he had brought some one to the outside air and safety, and then handed her to another willing helper to take away. But that some one was not the girl for whom, with glad prodigality, he would have given his life. Then at the last, when almost all were saved, Gerald saw Bertha. He jumped from the ladder top through the window and ran to her. The flames were at the back of her, and had begun to singe her light dress. Lord Dayre was still by her side. Just as Mountjoy reached her she was overcome and tottered backwards. Lord Dayre, with a quick effort, saved her from falling. There were now only these two and Gerald left at that end—the most dangerous part of the great salon. Some devil seized him, whispering in his ear: "She has half given herself to Dayre; let him save her."

For years the memory of that terrible lapse haunted him.

"Take her, Dayre, and carry her down!"

The peer was hardly able to support Bertha's weight, much less carry her down the ladder. He glanced at the window, filled with the eddying smoke; then he turned to Gerald.

"Curse you," he said; "you know I can't do it. Take her yourself."

"If I do," replied Mountjoy, "I take her for good and all."

Then he gathered the girl up in his arms and carried her down the ladder, Lord Dayre closely following.

In the afternoon of the following day Gerald rode over to Reeve to inquire after its mistress.

Dressed in a teagown, looking very white and interesting, she received him in her boudoir.

"I came to ask after you," he said.

"To confess—to ask forgiveness."

"For saving my life? It surely is easily obtained."

"I had the devil in me!" he cried.

Then he told her all.

"So you have come to me for absolution?" she said. "Then you shall have it without any pains and penalties, since you saved my life." She added, looking at him with a half smile, "Lord Dayre only asked me whether I would care to be one of his party for a yacht-

ing expedition. Even that I would not promise offhand. Had it been what you thought—"

"Bertha!"

"I should have had no hesitation at all."—London World.

DAN FLAHERTY'S OWL

—es to Sing, But the Sound It Makes is Anything But Harmonious.

Dan Flaherty formerly of Hartford, who runs the Opera House cafe in Willimantic, was out hunting the other day, when he fired at what he thought was a partridge. The bird dropped with a bullet through a wing, but it was not a partridge, but a screech owl. Dap took the bird by the legs and, thinking to end its suffering, dashed its head repeatedly against a big rock. Then he put the owl in his bag, thinking to take it home and have it "set up."

When he got home to his place of business he threw the limp form of the owl into a corner behind a box, and next day he had Michael Laramie call for the owl so that he could take it away and stuff it. But when Dan removed the box to get the owl the bird came strutting out to meet him as big as life. To be sure the little fellow was somewhat the worse for wear; some of his feathers were gone, one wing dragged on the ground, his neck was twisted like unto a corkscrew, his feet didn't track, one eye was shut and he wheezed when he breathed, but he was game, and as he wobbled out toward Dan and coked his one good eye up at him cheerfully and tried to speak—or seemed to try to speak—Dan's heart went out to the odd little old fellow, and Dan gathered the owl up into his arms and vowed that the owl should have the best of everything in Willimantic. So Dan doctored up "Wottie," as he calls him, and the owl gained fast and has become in a week a great pet.

There is only one thing upon which Dan and the owl fail to thoroughly agree. At times, especially in the evening, after partaking of his supper at the hands of Dan, Wottie is apt to find himself in a musical mood, and he bursts forth into song—and such a song! Say, did you ever hear a screech owl when he really and truly tried to make himself heard? Well, the noise Wottie makes is a cross between a clap of thunder and a Willimantic Traction Company car whistle and gong combination with a fire bell accompaniment. When an outbreak of this kind occurs the crockery and glassware in the cafe begin to shiver and break, the lights go out and the customers fall over one another trying to get into the street and far away, even unto the quietude of Putnam. Then Dan becomes angry and he seizes Wottie and pushes his bunch of fives into the solar plexus of the bird and throws a horse blanket over Wottie and sits upon him and stifles him until the owl can screech no more—for the time being.—Willimantic Journal.

A Monster Steer.

Sixteen years ago the late Dennis Jeffers, of near Hopkins, owned a steer that weighed 3330 pounds. The animal was a monstrosity. He was not fat, when weighed, but was simply big all over, being eight feet tall. Mr. Jeffers meant to fatten him and place him on exhibition, but without any warning the steer lay down and died one night. His hide was saved and is now in St. Louis. Abe Jeffers, son of Dennis Jeffers, has been asked to send some of the bones to St. Louis to be exhibited along with the hide. Mr. Jeffers has accordingly dug up the skeleton that is still in a good state of preservation. The steer is considered the largest framed one that ever lived, and it is said that if the skeleton had been preserved entire it would now be worth \$1000.—Kansas City Journal.

Complex Origin of the Japs.

The Japanese are not as mixed a race as the modern "Britons," but they have a very complex origin. It is certainly not correct to regard them as originally Chinamen, for while they do possess Chinese blood, there is certainly a Korean strain in them, as well as one derived from the Malaysians and another from the Ainos or aboriginal inhabitants of the islands—the "savages" of Japanese historians. There has consequently been none of that disastrous "inbreeding" which is fatal to animals, nations, or aristocracies; and latterly there is evidence that the Japs is growing taller.—London Chronicle.

Steamers sailing from New York to San Francisco by way of the Strait of Magellan must cover some 13,000 miles.

TELEGRAPHER MEETS HIS FATE

A telegraph man sat by his key And dreamed there was peace across the sea. Then with a start he raised his head And listened while the sounder said:

"From Chiyoda and Kioto, Chinnampo and Ka-San, Chemulpo, Hakodate and places in Japan, There's an army of 'em marching to fight the Russian Czar, From Yungampo and Fuji, Mokpo and Naniwa, Hatsuse, Hashidate, Yong-ju and Yoshino, Che Foo, Bayan, Chitose, Saiti, Idzumo, Ping-Yong, Tsukushima, Tokiwa and Sats-u, With Kogoro Takahira and Admiral Uriu; From Suma and Nagasaki, with Nagai and Togo; From Ta-Tung-kau and Miji, with Baron Kanako; Asama and Azuma, Sasebo, Wei-hai-wei, Sotokichi and Kasagi, Gensan and Akishi, Seoul, Akitsushima, Chin-Yen and Asahi, Yakumo, Yokosuka, Kasuga, Idzumi, Iwate, Shikishuma, Takasago and Chon-ju, Yashima and Niitaka, Masanpo and Yalu, Tsushima, Kamimura, Tokio and Chang-song, The Japanese are marching 300,000 strong."

The telegraph man, with a glassy eye, Lifted his head and heaved a sigh. Then the sounder began again: "Russia is moving a million men; The Czar is going to fight the Jap At the following places on the map—"

The telegraph man let out a yell As they carried him off to a padded cell. —New York Globe.



Experience is costly, As all of us can tell; We purchase it at retail, And then at wholesale sell. —Life.

Laura — "This time last year you were engaged to that little homely professor." Bertha—"Sure enough; what was his name?"—Detroit Free Press.

Bacon—"Why is it that the landlords won't let children in their flats?" Egbert—"Oh, I suppose they're afraid the janitors' dogs may bite them."—Yonkers Statesman.

"What is Jones doing nowadays?" "Surveying." "What?" "Yes, he walks up and down Broadway every afternoon and looks at the pretty girls."—Columbia Jester.

Butler—"But do you remember all you read?" Baker—"I hope not. If I did I shouldn't enjoy the original writings of some of my friends, you know."—Boston Transcript.

Nell—"Maude has suddenly discovered that she needs exercise, so she goes out for a walk every day." Belle—"Yes, I heard she had a lot of new clothes."—Philadelphia Record.

With skilful hand the cook reversed The pancake that it might not burn; To whom the nervous pancake said: "Oh, dear, you gave me such a turn!" —New Orleans Times-Democrat.

Little James had been telling the minister that his father had a new set of false teeth. "Indeed, James?" replied the minister. "What will he do with the old set?" "Oh, I suppose," replied little James, with a look of resignation, "they'll cut 'em down and make me wear 'em."—Ran's Horn.

"Yes, he proposed," Miss Passay continued, blushing, "and when papa came into the room he found me in Mr. Huggins' arms." "Ah, now I see," exclaimed Miss Speitz. "I wondered what your father meant to-day when I heard him telling my father that Mr. Huggins had an old head on young shoulders."—Philadelphia Press.

An American visiting Dublin told some startling stories about the height of some of the New York buildings. An Irishman who was listening stood it as long as he could and then queried: "Ye haven't seen our newest hotel, have ye?" The American thought not. "Well," said the Irishman, "it's so tall that we had to put the two top stories on hinges." "What for?" asked the American. "So we could let 'em down till the moon went by."—Brooklyn Eagle.

Escaping Their Enemies.

It has been noticed that Australian eucalyptus trees grow better in South Africa than in Australia, and the suggested explanation is that the South African trees have all been raised from seeds instead of from young plants. In this manner they have escaped from the insect and fungoid enemies to whose attacks they are subject in Australia, and now stringent regulations are enforced concerning the importation of eucalyptus plants into Cape Colony, lest the foes of the trees be brought upon them again from their original home.