

How They Tagged the Baron

By SEWELL FORD



He Had the Long-Lost-Brother Tackle on Me.

DID you shut the hall door? That's right. There's no tellin' what's liable to float in here any time. Say, if they don't quit it, I'll get to be one of these nervous prostraters, that think themselves sick abed without half tryin'. Sure, I'm just convalescin' from the last shock.

How? Now make a guess. Well, it was this way: I was sittin' right here in the front office, readin' the sportin' dope and takin' me reglar mornin' sun-bath, when the door-buzzer goes off, and in drifts about a hundred and ninety pounds of surprise package.

There was a foreign label on it, all right; but I didn't know until later that it read "Made in Austria." He was a beefy sort of gent, with not much neck to speak of, and enough curly black hair to shingle a French poodle. He was well colored, too. Beats the cars, don't it, the good health that's wasted on some of these foreigners?

But what takes my eye most was his trousseau. Say! he was dressed to the minute, from the pink in his buttonhole, to the mother-of-pearl gloves; and the back of his frock-coat had an in-curve such as your forty-fat sisters dream about. Why, as far as lines went, he had Jimmy Hackett and Robert Mantell on the back shelf. Oh, he was a crusher, sure!

"I have the purpose of finding Prof-fes-seur McCabby," says he, reading it off'n a card.

"If you mean McCabe," says I, "I'm discovered."

"Is it that you are also by the name of Shortee?" says he.

"Shorty for short," says I, "and P. C. D. on the end to lengthen it out—Physical Culture Director, that stands for. Now do you want my thumb-print, and a snap-shot of my family-tree?"

That seemed to stun him a little; but he revived after a minute, threw out his chest, lifted his silk lid, and says, solemn as a new notary public takin' the oath of office: "I am Baron Patchouli."

"You look it," says I. "Have a chair."

"I am," says he, gettin' a fresh start, "Baron Patchouli, of Hamstadt and Düsseldorf."

"All right," says I, "take the settee. How are all the folks at home?"

But say, there wa'n't any use tryin' to jolly him into makin' a short cut of it. He'd got his route of parade all planned out and he meant to stick by it.

"Professeur McCabby—" says he.

"Don't," says I. "You make me feel like I'd been translated into French and was runnin' a hack-line. Call it McCabe—a-b-e, a-b-e."

"One thousand pardons," says he, and tries again. This time he gets it—almost, and I lets him spiel away. Oh, mama! but I wish I could say it the way he did! It would let me on the Proctor circuit, if I could. But boiled down and skimmed, it was all about how I was a kind of safety-deposit vault for everything he had to live for.

"My hopes, my fortune, my happiness, the very breath of my living, it is all with you," says he as a

wind-up, hittin' a Caruso pose, arms out, toes in, and his breath comin' hard.

How was that for news from home? I did some swift surmisin', and then I says, soothin' like: "Yes, I know; but don't take on about it so. They're all right, just as you handed 'em over; only I asked me friend the Sarge to lock 'em up til you called. We'll walk around and see the Sarge right away."

"Ah!" says he, battin' his noble brow, "you do not comprehend. You make to laugh. And me, I come to you from the adorable Sadie."

"Sadie?" says I. "Sadie Sullivan that was?"

I was tellin' you about her, wasn't I?—the girl I used to know when her mother ran a prune dispensary, and that married into the Dipworthy Drowsy Drops family just in time to connect with a mournin' outfit and a bunch of money that would start a Broadway bank. Yes, that one. And you remember how me and Pinckney landed her in the swell push and got her headed up Newport way?

"If you've got credentials from Sadie," says I, "it's all right. Now, what's doing? Does she want me to match samples, or show you the sights along the White Lane?"

"Ah, the adorable Sadie!" says he, rollin' his eyes, and puffin' out his cheeks like he was tryin' the lung-tester. "I drive with her, I walk with her, I sit by her side—one day, two day, a week. Well, what happens? I am charm, I am fascinate, I am become her slave. I make to resist. I say

to myself: 'You! You are of the noble Austrian blood; the second-cousin of your mother is a grand duke; you must not forget.' Then again I see Sadie. Puff! I have no longer pride; but only I luff. It is enough. I ask of her: 'Madam Deepworth, where is the father of you?' She say he is not. 'Then the uncle of you?' I demand. She say: 'I'm shy on uncles.' 'But to who, then,' I ask, 'must I declare my honorable passion?' 'Oh,' she say, 'tell it to Shorty McCabe.' Ha! I leap, I bound! I go to M. Pinckney. 'Tell me,' I say, 'where is to be found one Shorty McCabe?' And he sends me to you. I am come."

On the level, now, it went like that. Maybe I've left out some of the frills, but that was the ground-work of his remarks.

"Yes," says I, "you're a regular come-on. I guess the adorable Sadie has handed you a josh. She's equal to it."

But that got by him. He just stood there, teeterin' up and down on his patent leathers, and grinnin' like a monkey.

"I say," says I, "she's run you on a sidin', dropped you down a coal-hole. Do you get wise?"

Did he? Not so you would notice it. He goes on grinnin' and teeterin', like he was on exhibition in a museum and I was the audience. Then he gets a view of himself in the glass over the safe there, and begins to pat down his astrakhan thatch, and punch up his puff tie, and dust off his collar. Ever see one of these peroxid cloak models doin' a march past the show windows on her day off? Well, the Baron had all those motions and a few of his own. He was ornamental, all right, and it wa'n't any news to him, either.

About then, though, I begins to wonder if I hadn't been a little too sure about Sadie. There's no tellin', when it comes to women, you know; and when it hit me that perhaps, after all, she'd made up her mind to tag this one from Austria, you could have fried an egg on me anywhere.

"Look here, Patchouli," says I. "Is this straight about you and Sadie? Are you the winner?"

"Ah, the adorable Sadie!" says he, comin' back to earth and slappin' his solar plexus with one hand.

"We've covered that ground," says I. "What I want to know is, does she cotton to you?"

"Cot-ton? Cot-ton?" says he, humpin' his eyebrows like a French ballad singer.

"Are you the fromage?" says I. "Is she as stuck on you as you are on yourself? Have you made good?"

He must have got a glimmer from that; for he rolls his eyes some more, breathes once like an air-brake bein' cut out, and says: "Our luff is like twin stars in the sky—each for the other shines."

"It's as bad as all that, is it?" says I. "Well, all I've got to say is that I'd never thought it of Sadie; and if she sent you down here on approval, you can tell her I'm satisfied, if she is."

I figured that would jar him some, but it didn't. He looked as pleased as though I'd told him he was the ripest berry in the box, and before I knew what was comin' he had the long-lost-brother tackle on me, and was almost weepin' on my neck, splutterin' joy in seven different kinds of language. Just then Swifty Joe bobs his head in through the gym door, springs that gorilla grin of his, and ducks back.

"Break away!" says I. "I don't want to spoil the looks of anythin' that Sadie's picked out to frame, but this thing has gone about far enough. If you're glad, and she's glad, then I ain't got any kick comin'. Only don't rub it in." Say, it was like talkin' to a deaf man, sayin' things to the Baron.

"She is mine, yes?" says he. "I have your permission, Professeur McCabe?"

"Sure," says I. "If she'll have you, take her and welcome."

Now you'd thought that would have satisfied him, wouldn't you? But he acted like he'd got a half-arm jolt on the wind. He backed off and cooled down as if I'd chucked a pail of water over him.

"Well," says I, "you don't want it in writin', do you? I'm just out of permit blanks, and me secretary's laid up with a bad case of McGrawitis. If I was you, I'd skip back and keep my eye on Sadie. She might change her mind."

The Baron thought he'd seen a red flag, though. He put in a worry period that lasted while you could count fifty. Then he forks out his trouble. "It is not possible that I have mistake, is it?" says he. "I am learn that Madam Deepworth is—what you call—one heirsch? No?"

See? I'd been sort of lookin' for that; and there it was, as plain as a real-estate map of Gates of Paradise, Long Island. Me bein' so free and easy with tellin' him to help himself had thrown up a horrible suspicion to him. Was it true that Sadie's roll was real money, the kind you could spend at the store? And say, long's it was up to me to write her prospectus, I thought I might as well make it a good one.

"Do you see that movin'-van out there?" says I.

The Baron saw it.

"And have you been introduced to these?" I says,



Beggin' Her to Fly With Him and Be His'n.