

THE STRANGE ADVENTURES OF MR. JOHN SMITH IN PARIS

IN FOUR PARTS—Part II.
CHAPTER VI.

BY JACQUES FUTRELLE

and perhaps some one there—an American, oh, joy!—could give him some information as to where he might get an interpreter.

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters

JOHN SMITH was assistant paying teller of a bank in Passaic, New Jersey, who had arrived in Paris with one hundred and seventy-three dollars in his pocket. He was seeking W. Mandeville Clarke. Others were also interested in Clarke's movements; for the hotel clerk, who did not understand English, when asked if Clarke was stopping there, thought that Smith himself was Clarke, and told Remi, a Paris detective. Then Smith went on a tour of Paris looking for Clarke; and Paris detectives followed Smith about. The gendarmes had no authority to arrest Clarke, but just to keep him in view. A mysterious woman was also inquiring for Clarke, and also wondering why Smith was seeking him.

SOME one has said that the corner table of the Café de la Paix, that table on the sidewalk, precisely at the intersection of the Boulevard des Capucines with the Place de l'Opéra, is the exact center of the earth. When he dropped into a chair at that particular spot, Mr. John Smith didn't happen to know that he occupied so important a geographical position; he only knew that this famous outdoor place, with its thin-legged tables and unsubstantial chairs, was something like Terry Maloney's Winter Garden back in Passaic, and that was enough. He was weary of limb, battered by disappointment, and there was creeping over him resistlessly that longing for home which at sometime is the heritage of every man who travels.

For just a week Mr. John Smith had been tramping up and down Paris, cut off as effectively from home and countrymen as if he was in a dungeon, asking questions, always the same questions, listening to the meaningless, volatile babblings about him, and pondering moodily upon the hundreds of unused handshakes in Main-ave. back home. Not once had he met an American, save the clerk in the Hotel Continental. He had not seen the mysterious veiled woman again. There came a time at last when he felt he couldn't stand it any longer, and he dropped into the Continental to shake hands with Waterbury, Connecticut. But some change had come there. The clerk regarded him with frigid eyes, in which lay a shadow of suspicion.

"You haven't come across Clarke yet?" Mr. Smith inquired.

"Don't know a thing about him," replied the clerk tersely. That was all.

And once, in his great loneliness, he had paused to watch a child at play in the Garden of the Tuileries, a rosy cheeked little chap who was whipping a top. And he had spoken to the child. The answer was an incomprehensible jumble of sounds—just sounds. Even the children in Paris spoke French! He had moved on wearily, and as he went a shrewd-faced man with beady black eyes—M. Remi—had come up and inquired of the child what the strange American had said and what had been the answer.

By noon of the seventh day Mr. Smith had exhausted those hotels where he could make himself understood, and now he had dropped down into a seat in the Café de la Paix to plan a continuance of his search, with the aid of an interpreter. Disappointment had been added to disappointment as he had gone on with not one clue; but the bulldog determination was in no way dulled, his purpose had not wavered. It had never occurred to him to give up—to quit. It never would occur to him while W. Mandeville Clarke remained to be found.

ACROSS the Place de l'Opéra from the Café de la Paix is a large sign in bold United States sort of letters, the sign of a great Chicago newspaper. Mr. Smith discovered it now for the first time, and the severe lines in his rugged face softened a little. It looked so homy and comfortable and United Statesy that it made him feel hungry all over, a hunger that took the form of an insane desire to see a United States flag, and to shake a United States hand, and to eat a United States pie—all of it, from upper crust to indigestion. Pie! Paris wouldn't be so bad if there was pie to be had. Chestnut fed Jersey pork and pumpkin pie! And perhaps just a snack of applejack, real, undiluted Jersey lightning! He wondered if it was to be had.



"W. Mandeville Clarke, Alias John Smith, Alias Watts Ittooyu, You Are My Prisoner!"

A waiter came and inquired what Monsieur would be so pleased as to have, inquired in the lisping English that nearly every waiter in Paris speaks. How could he be so honored as to serve Monsieur?

"Say, son," queried Mr. Smith, "I wonder if by any chance you know what applejack is? Jersey lightning?"

"Applejack?" the waiter repeated painfully.

"Jairsey lightning?"

"Applejack—it's a drink," Mr. Smith elucidated.

"If you can find me a small glass of it—"

"Apple?" the waiter pondered. "Zat ees ze pomme."

Jack—zat ees ze Jacques in French, and Jacques ees ze James in English. Did it? Zerefore vat you want ees ze apple of ze James to drink? Ees it not so?"

Mr. Smith looked at him in amazement. "Oh, rats! If it's that much trouble, bring me beer," he directed.

Perched there in the center of the world, Mr. Smith meditated upon many things over his *déjeuner*,—dinner back in Passaic,—regaling his drooping soul ever and anon by another glance at that wonderful sign across the way, the sign of a Chicago newspaper. He had never been to Chicago; but he loved it now. He would go over to that office when he had finished,

AND, as he considered it all with rising spirits, there came to him indistinctly from a table a dozen feet away a few words in English—good United States English. The sound of that voice brought a quick, tense expression to his face and a spasmodic gripping movement to his hands. He knew it, knew it despite a certain whining quaver that had never been there before. He brushed the crumbs from his knees, folded his napkin carefully, *à la* Passaic, paid the waiter, and rose. He had found Clarke!

He turned in the direction whence the voice had come, and, as yet unnoticed himself, stared, stared with frank surprise in his face. It was Clarke, all right,—he knew the commanding, gleaming eyes of him,—but a different Clarke, a Clarke minus the square cut beard he had always worn, a Clarke whose head had been stripped of its glory of white hair, a Clarke who had shrunk from the robust, ruddy man he had known to a mere skeleton of himself, a Clarke with thin, yellow face and colorless lips; but Clarke it was—the man he had been seeking!

Mr. Smith strode straight toward him through the web of spidery tables and chairs, heedless of all else in the world, heedless even of the sudden appearance at his side of a strange man who said something to him in English. The slight commotion attracted Clarke's attention, and there, while still half a dozen feet separated them, the eyes of the two men met. Clarke's thin face went white beneath its sallowness and, leaning heavily on the table in front of him, he struggled to rise. It was an effort for him, a desperate effort; but he came to his feet at last and his burning gaze fastened itself upon Mr. Smith.

Some one laid hands on Mr. Smith's arm. He shook them off and took another step forward. Then, and not until then, he became conscious of the fact that Clarke was not alone. There was a young woman with him, a girl he knew, the girl who had directed his cab to the Maison de Treville on his first day in Paris, a girl in poise and in figure and in carriage strangely like the mysterious veiled woman in black. There was abject terror in her blue, wide opened eyes, a blanching of the rosy face, an involuntary movement of appeal in the slim,

white hands—appeal to him! "Keep your seat, Edna," Clarke commanded in the thin, whining voice of a man who is ill, desperately ill. "There will be no scene."

For a second time Mr. Smith attempted to shake off the restraining grip on his right arm; but this time the encircling fingers closed like steel, and again he was conscious of some one mumbling in his ear—something that seemed to be of no consequence in the blinding anger that suddenly possessed him. He wanted to sink his fingers into the throat of this man, he wanted to smash that sickly, yellow face, he wanted to scream the bitter rage that gripped his heart. And yet, looking into the troubled, pleading blue eyes of this girl, eyes that commanded with unspoken eloquence, he stood silent, rigid.

Finally, after a great while, it seemed, reason came back to him, and vaguely he made out something that was being said in his ear:

"M. Clarke, you are my prisoner!"

CLARKE! Yet it was to him, John Smith, that the words were addressed! He turned to face the man who had spoken, the man who clung to him now with a grip of iron. It was the inquisitive