CHALONER of "WHO'S LOONEY NOW" FAME BOBS UP AGAIN.

PRESENT: John Armstrong Chaloner!

That gentleman, who by court decree is insane in New York and sane in Virginia where he makes his home, has bobbed up again as an author. He's picked out a job for himself this time which, on his own confession, is dread and chilling to the heart, but one erstwhile Shakespearianly limned "in divine alchemy." And though his subject calls to memory those toward which the Bard of Avon seemed partial, it may candidly be said that he has written a play entirely different from anything Shakespeare ever did.

The most famous thing J. Armstrong ever penned, of course, is that telegraph message which he sent to his brother, Robert Winthrop, otherwise "Sheriff Bob" Chanler, of New York, when Bob married Cavalieri, the singer, and soon thereafter was "left flat" by that beautiful person. The message read:

"Who's looney now?"

Sundry mutterings emanated from his pen thereafter, including a "Message from Hell," "Robbery Under the Law," and "Four Years Behind the Bars at Bloomingdale."

Then last year J. Armstrong, (who shifted the spelling of his name because of a mad at the family) perpetrated upon the public a book of verses called "Scorpio," in which he stung the kaiser and William Randolph Hearst, though they were not allied at the time, along with other contemporary figures of interest.

Still true to the snake theme, Mr. Chaloner now presents a blank verse drama entitled "The Serpent of Old Nile." The play, whose verse is very blank indeed in spots, is put up in three acts; time 48 B. C., locale Egypt. The dramatic personae includes Cleopatra, well-known queen of Egypt, and her lady-in-waiting, Sappho. Hephaestion, commander of Cleopatra's army in the Civil war with Ptolemy her brother, Caius Julius Caesar, Pothinus, Cleopatra's former body guard and now loyal to Ptolemy, and Holofernes who holds Pothinus' old job, also manage to be among those actively present.

The purport of the story is set forth in a prologue which runs thus:

"We now essay to print a sorceress—
The 'Serpent of Old Nile' of Antony—
That man-devouring Sphinx—Egypt's—none less,
Whom Shakespeare limned in divine alchemy!
The task is dread—the task doth chill the heart—
All in the steps of Shakespeare thus to tread—
Especially as herein plays the part
Of lover Caesar, whom th' world held in dread,
Especially since Cleopatra's tossed
Upon the bosom of two passions dire—
Love—whose fulfillment world-empire would cost—
Ambition—which holds forth the world's empire!
'Twixt Caesar and the bold Hephaestion
The sands of Fate's dark glass portentous run.

"Listening to the divine alchemy," sounds like a task at once quaint and difficult, but Mr. Chaloner wades in blithely by portraying a purple silk tent at Cleopatra's army headquarters on the outskirts of Alexandria, with Cleo asleep therein and the "bold Hephaestion," her commander-in-chief, pacing moodily without—that is, outside the tent. He orders Holofernes and the sentry to withdraw a pace; he wants room to resolve his thoughts; he says. Holo protests on the ground that not long before a sentry who didn't watch his step got all jabbed up by the queen's fair hand. Heph shows his cards right away with this:

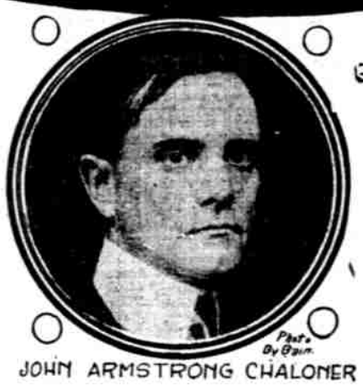
"The tigress! By Mars, I love her all the more!"

He goes on meditating vocally until Cleopatra calls "Ho!" and appears at the flap. After some persiflage of the sort which usually takes place between a queen and a general, Mr. Chaloner makes this situation develop:

Heph: "My queen, vouchsafe one word—who's in thy tent?
Who doth the royal pavilion share with thee?"
Cleo: "Granted, my general. None but Sappho's here;
My faithful friend and thine, too, I may say."

Hephaestion evidently believes in taking a sporting chance. He asks a moment later:

"Pardon a soldier's bluntness, sweet my queen;
But if we win wilt thou deign marry me?"



JOHN ARMSTRONG CHALONER

Sappho, who has an eye on Heph for herself, and who's been listening inside the tent, butts in with the observation that his proposition was a "charge to frighten Hell." The Queen tells him—as Sheriff Bob Chanler might phrase it—"where he gets off at," and then:

Cleo (coldly): "As I have said, this interview is closed.
Never dare broach that subject, sir, again!"

Action is introduced a moment later in the person of a runner, who appears to tip off the General that Caesar and his army are less than six miles away.

Heph. (aside): "Caesar is a proved voluptuary
That with ambition e'er goes hand in hand—
What if he fall to Cleopatra's charm?
(Starting violently) That doubt bites deeper than a serpent's tooth!

Caesar, it seems, wants a conference with the queen. Cleopatra doesn't know whether to grant it or not. She asks Hephaestion, and in asking reveals the curious fact that, though she's an Egyptian and the time of the action is 48 B. C., she has a working knowledge of the language of France.

Cleo: "Speak, my brave general; nought's done sans thee in war."

Hephaestion reluctantly permits the approach of Caesar after this talk;

Helph: "They say the Roman likes the gentler sex;
That's armours e'en are counted by the score."
Cleo (smiling): "So have I heard and so do full believe."
Heph: Would'st thou be one and twenty on his list?
Cleo (frowning): Sirrah, beware! You broadly trespass there!"

Well, anyhow Caesar meets the queen, and the long and short of the whole matter is that he, as Sheriff Bob would say, "cops her out."

The first sceene of the second act shows Sappho and Hephaestion talking over the icy calm with which the queen receives news of her brother's death in battle; the second scene shows a tete-a-tete supper with the queen, Caesar, the commander-in-chief and Sappho lolling around several thousand dollars' worth of gold plate. A note explains that up-to-date folks are introduced to avoid the barbaric appearance of eating with the fingers, implements most in vogue just then. The introduction of a carp, an erstwhile resident among the queen's pet fish, calls for this outburst:

Cleo: "I've fed thee oft, my fish, I know thy nose;
Mark that black spot above the avid mouth
In semblance to a mulberry in shape."

The supper ends up in a row. Pothinus collects some ruffians and comes in to start something. Heph., however, is on the job and saves everybody.

The third act embodies a humid duet performed on a couch. Cleo, who has discovered that she loves Heph, eggs him on until he "rapturously implants a passionate and lingering kiss upon Cleopatra's ravishing lips." Cleo pales, pants delicately, and clasps her arms swiftly about his neck, says the text. They rave about "divine ecstasy" and "fire that burns the veins." And all at once Cleo tells him to beat it, because she's going to marry Caesar.

The upshot of the matter is that Heph and Caesar fight a duel and just about as the bold Heph is going to administer a knockout stab, the fair mistress steps behind him and sticks him in the neck with her own spear, exclaiming:

"So perish all who stand 'twixt me and fame!"

"BEAT IT HEPH I'M GOING TO MARRY CAESAR"

But Caesar, who's not a bad sort after all, is horrified by this. He cuts loose:

Caes: "This self-same act wouldst thou enact 'gainst me
At any time it did thy purpose suit.
I know thee now—a serpent to the core!
Now, hark, my queen, unto thy pending doom:
My toy thou'lt be—or from thy throne step down!

The curtain descends with Caesar forcing the haughty and naughty Cleo to bow before him and kiss his hand in homage—a toy, as Mr. Chaloner put it, instead of a queen.

Caes. (solemnly): "Thus is avenged the bold Hephaestion
And that sweet girl—who lov-ed him so well!"

Oh no, Shakespeare never wrote anything like it—that's certain!

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So far as J. Armstrong is concerned, however, he hasn't wasted much time plodding along beaten paths. He began by being brother of Lewis Stuyvesant Chanler, one-time lieutenant governor of New York; brother of Colonel William Astor Chanler, former Congressman from New York; brother of Mrs. Richard Aldrich, once Miss Margaret Livingston Chanler, and great nephew of Mrs. William Astor, New York society queen. And his fortune was so substantial that whenever he sat down to figure it up he became ill with a headache.

Then he broke into the gay white light by marrying the dashing, talented, erratic Amelie Rives, now Princess Troubetskoy. They got on for a short time, during which his wife immortalized him as her hero in the novel, "The Quick and the Dead." Then came their divorce and the subsequent marriage of the willful Amelie to the Russian prince Troubetskoy.

Followed immediate tragedy as Mr. Chaloner views the situation. Paresis, the alienists say. Inveigled, he claims, to an examination as to his sanity by the late Stanford White, then committed to Bloomingdale, he bided his time. He gained the confidence of physicians and attendants and made good his escape. He went to Philadelphia and put himself under the observation of two alienists for a period of six months. They declared him sane and he turned up at his home, "Merry Mills," Cobham, Albemarle county, Va., and demanded his rights. The Virginia court judged him sane, which decree the New York court refused to recognize. Therefore, at the present time he is free to go and come in forty-seven states, and likely to be clapped into a lunatic asylum if he ventures into the forty-eighth.

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J. Armstrong told in detail his experiences in his "Four Years Behind the Bars at Bloomingdale." "All that is required to deprive a citizen of the Empire state of his liberty," he wrote, "is one or two false witnesses, two dishonest doctors and a judge who can swallow conflicting sworn statements without a qualm. No defense is allowed to the accused. This is truly the Empire state. I sometimes wonder, as I look through the bars of my cell, how such things can be outside the Russian empire state." He pays his respects to Kaiser Wilhelm as "Windy Bill" and to Joseph H. Choate and John G. Milburn as "The God and Magog of Bogus Lunacy Law."

In "Robbery Under the Law," which was rejected by publishers as "far-fetched and sensational in plot, the behavior of the characters being highly unconvincing under all circumstances," Mr. Chaloner dramatized his own story, with himself as chief character. The criticism he considered a prime literary asset, practically all characters and all scenes being from life.

The "Message From Hell" he claimed was a psychic message received from a former confederate veteran, bosom friend and prominent member of the Manhattan club of New York. The "message," he said, was a fabrication of the "X faculty" or subconscious power with which he believes himself gifted; the same which enables him to assume the appearance and characteristics of Napoleon Bonaparte.

KUROPATKIN'S RETURN TO GRACE

JUSTICE may be blind, but the lady with the bandaged eyes every once in a while lays her blessed hand upon the right head. This time she has rested it upon the long suffering one of Kuropatkin, commander-in-chief of the Russian armies during their defeat by Japan, who has been resting in the shadow of national disgrace ever since that war.

But now Justice has discovered him. He has been recalled from his forced retirement by the czar and, rumor has it, has been given the command that once was held by Nicholas Nicholaievitch, who in turn hangs his head in disgrace in the Caucasus.

The first news of the rehabilitation of the long-suffering Kuropatkin came from Petrograd in a telegram to the effect that he had been appointed chief of the Russian grenadier corps. The appointment was something more than a stroke of luck for the Russian army in its great hour of need. It was an honorable amend to a great man who, in the opinion of many students of the Russo-Japanese war, suffered a great wrong.

It was only for a few months that he was in supreme command of the Russian army during the Japanese war. The rest of the time he was under the orders of Admiral Alexieff, considered by all to be the real blunderer and the evil genius of that war. He was humiliated by a series of unprecedented defeats and,

Gen. Kuropatkin

when he was superseded in command, instead of going home he took a minor command and saved what he could out of the wreckage of the disaster. Then he returned to Russia in disgrace.

Kuropatkin during the whole time that the czar was ignoring his advice, and while all the journalists were snapping at his heels, made no word of protest. It was not until his book, "The Russian Army and the Japanese War," came out about seven years ago that it was discovered not only why the Russians lost the war, but why the censor forbid the publication of the book in Russia. Kuropatkin's defense was dignified and convincing. It showed how true a prophet he was, how little of a coward and how great a student of war and history.

Now Kuropatkin has a magnificent opportunity to redeem himself. He may end his career in a blaze of glory or he may suffer greater humiliation than he did before. When he was appointed to the command of the Manchurian army in 1904 it was considered that he stood higher than any other Russian officer not only in Russian opinion, but in that of professional soldiers all over the world. It was thought that if any human agency could have changed the deplorable situation to the advantage of the Russians, Kuropatkin was the man to do it.

At the time he was foremost among Russian leaders. The medals he wore upon his chest had been won by the hardest kind of service. In Africa, Europe and Asia he had seen active service and in it had achieved countless distinctions and rewards for valor. He was known far and wide as a writer on military history and as a political administrator. In his fiftieth year he became the supreme commander of the Russian armies, the head of the largest army in the world and had a record of successes behind him the like of which was not to be found anywhere else in the world.

Had Kuropatkin died in that year he would have gone down in history as one of the very greatest of military men. But as it happened he was to suffer the greatest personal trials that had ever come to him, and in the end the great anguish of defeat.

Kuropatkin was born in the province of Pskoff in 1848, his father being a retired military officer. He started his schooling in the Pavlovskoe Military college in St. Petersburg, and at the end of his course he might have joined the fashionable guards had he not preferred the hardships of active service.

At the time the Russian advance toward Asia had begun and the east was a fertile field for the ambitious. The young soldier made his way to Turkestan as a lieutenant in the Turkestan Rifles. Here he received his baptism of fire and after two years of heavy fighting, for which he was honored with two crosses, he went back to St. Petersburg to complete his war studies.

In 1874 he finished his work and stood at the head of his class. Given permission to study abroad he made his way to Berlin and Paris, in the latter city helping the French to reorganize their cavalry. He was highly complimented for this and later, having been invited to take part in the maneuvers around Metz, he showed such remarkable strategic ability that he was made an officer of the Legion of Honor.

He was the first Russian officer who ever received this honor for distinguished military service. Later he helped the French in Algiers and received further recognition from the government. His next adventure was in the Kashgaria country, where he went on an adventurous military expedition requiring a remarkable ride of 2,500 miles on horseback. His book on this country won him a gold medal from the geographical society. He was still in his twenties at this time.

Later he became chief of staff to the dashing Skobeleff. With the great "White General" he passed through the horrors of Plevna in the Turkish war and entered Adrianople with him. By Skobeleff's side he saw 8,000 of his chief's 18,000 men fall, and being the only officer not dead or wounded Kuropatkin led 300 men in a charge against a battalion of Turks. Only 100 men returned, but the Turks had been driven back. Kuropatkin was showered with honors and swords for this and his book on the campaign became a classic.

After the Russo-Turkish war Kuropatkin resumed his work with the general staff in St. Petersburg and was made director of the Asiatic department. When trouble broke out again in Turkestan and Skobeleff was sent to the front, Kuropatkin went with him and took part in the famous siege at Geek-Tope. By a notable feat of mining he forced his way into the fortress, and at the age of thirty-four found himself a major general.

From this time until 1890 when he was made a lieutenant general he spent many busy years in the reorganization of the Russian army as the natural successor to Skobeleff. He was made governor of the Transcaspian provinces in 1890, and set out upon a work of pacification and construction that made him famous. Through colonization, cotton growing, railway building, construction of churches, schools and colleges, and countless other methods of progressiveness, he gave service of incalculable value to Russia and smoothed over differences with the English.

In 1898 he received the greatest possible reward that Russia can give for a distinguished military career. He was made minister of war. For five years he struggled to place the army on a thoroughly modern basis, hampered all the time for money, while millions of rubles were being spent by Count Witte for what many Russians thought was a better cause—model cities in Russia and administration buildings in Manchuria.

He saw the Japanese storm coming and was powerless to delay it until he could get the Russian army in fighting shape. So in February, 1904, he stepped aboard the train for Liao-yang—and disgrace.

Concerning the home life of Kuropatkin, some of which he spent in a villa outside of Petersburg, Sven Hedin, famouse Swedish explorer, says that this villa was severely simple without a trace of luxury about it.

"Although Kuropatkin is a millionaire he is much too honest to employ his wealth in ministering to his own selfish pleasure," says Hedin. "Simplicity is the note of his home life, and he carries it into the field. No recherche dishes, no choice wines are allowed to appear on his table. He leads the simple soldier's life, and in the unruffled calm and serenity of his features one finds goodness, consideration and self-control."

The late Josiah Flynt, well known for his books on tramps, grafters and criminals, also knew Kuropatkin, and said that when called to the ministry of war it was the consensus of opinion among the knowing ones that, in Kuropatkin, an honest man had been given the right job. "He has slaughtered like a butcher," said an officer to Flynt in Samarcand, "but his purse carries no counterfeits or crooked winnings." Hedin bears this out by saying that Kuropatkin would have nothing to do with favoritism or nepotism. He is known "for his incorruptible sense of justice, and in making his promotions, he has never been guided by any other consideration except those of merit and capacity. He has never abused his power. His own brother, whom I met at Osh in 1902, was then filling a very subordinate post as 'pomoshnik' or assistant chief of that small and insignificant town, which might indeed almost be regarded as a place of deportation in the heart of Asia."

Kuropatkin's splendid history of the Russo-Japanese war takes to itself added interest both by reason of the present war and of his restoration to the czar's favor. The condition he describes in it may have had something to do with the present condition of the Russian army.

The work consists of three bulky volumes and is remarkable for its historic value as the closing chapter of the war from the pen of the commander-in-chief, and for the merciless criticism of the men and the measures which in Kuropatkin's estimate swept Russia and its army to inevitable defeat.

The volumes constitute most amazing revelations of disorganization and incapacity and even of disobedience of specific and urgent orders on the part of certain general officers intrusted with high commands in the field, notably General Kaulbars, against whom a formidable indictment is framed, saddling upon his shoulders practically the entire responsibility for the crushing defeat at Mukden.

Kuropatkin's reasons for the failure of the war are based chiefly on a comparison of the war-like spirit of the Japanese, their preparedness and valor, which he says has never been seen in any previous war, and their ability to maintain the numerical superiority necessary to assume the offensive with the disadvantages of Russia, owing to the inadequacy of the single track railway from Europe, in feeding her fighting strength, with commanding officers disobeying orders and in a hopeless state of confusion and cross purposes, with a low state of morale and confidence among the troops and continual news from home of internal troubles and of insults and reproaches against the army.

The general closes his survey of the cause of the defeat of the Russians with the pathetic reflection that if Russia had been united and ready to make the sacrifices necessary to safeguard her dignity and integrity, the "valiant Russian army would have striven until the foe was subdued."

Speaking of the morale and conditions of the Russian troops at the opening of the Japanese war Kuropatkin says that in reviewing them he noticed the significant lack of strength, especially in the case of the officers, among the reserves, many of whom were old and the majority heavy, clumsy and undersized. He says of these that believing they had been unjustly called to the colors, they came in a sulky frame of mind and would not fraternize with the regulars.

The company commanders did not know their men. Among them were many who had just been appointed to commands and were quite unfit for their posts. The Tenth corps from which a great deal was expected met with defeat after defeat, and "fell far short of justifying the expectations which we had the right to entertain of famous old regiments of the Russian army."

The whole narrative is a dismal retrospective of unpreparedness, disorganization, and cross purposes. There was insufficient firmness in the case of some regiments, he says, especially among the reservists, rank and file, who under various pretexts fled to the rear.