THE YELLOW MAN.

A THRILLING STORY OF THE BOXERS IN CHINA.

BY CARLTON DAWE.

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CHAPTER XIII.

WHAT HAPPENED IN LEICESTER SQUARE.

The long silence which followed the reading of this manuscript added a grewsome impressiveness to the narrative. My uncle, sitting low in his easy chair, pulled away at his pipe, a gloomy frown straightening his brows and adding a look of grim intentness to his face. My brain tossed and tumbled like a chaos of waters, amid the roar of which I heard a voice crying: "Wooching must die. You must kill Kung." Again I saw the little man as he opened our gate at Windsor on that fateful day, the politest cutthroat in the world. I could hear the soft, throaty accents, so deferential and full of deep respect, as he made his inquiries. I read now the meaning of that look as he put the question, "Are you Captain Kingston's son?" I saw my mother as she stood that evening in the porch and waved a last farewell to me. The impulse which prompted me to run back and throw my arms about her neck was a warning, if I could only have read it. What an escape had been mine! I looked at my Uncle Jim and thought of that night in Maidenhead and the bone clapping Christy. How strangely it had all worked out.

Presently Jim laid aside his pipe and rose to his feet.

"Well, Davie," he said, "what do you make of it?"

Truth to tell, my brain was in such a whirl that I could not marshal my ideas. I only knew that the tale was horrible and that it affected me horribly. But I replied: "Everything that's bad. My father has left me a fine heritage."

"Aye," he answered, "but let us not talk of that. I think there is no reason why we should doubt the veracity of the story."

"None, I am sorry to say. I have seen too much during the last two years."

"Well, then, we must set our house in order, unless"— He stopped and looked me up and down, a singular, penetrating expression playing about his eyes.

"Unless we follow out his wish?"

"Precisely."

"But we cannot kill."

"Neither can we allow ourselves to be killed. You would not hesitate to shoot a wild beast that threatened you. These men are worse than wild beasts, for they have human intelligence and the resources of civilization to aid them. One thing is certain, they know neither pity nor fear. It is not enough for them that they have punished the traitor. They mean to wipe out the traitor's brood. It matters nothing that you or your mother never did them harm. You must pay bitterly for the sins of others. Now this is an iniquity which should be put an end to, and that can only be accomplished by the suppression of Kung. How we are to bring about such a consummation I haven't the least idea, but of one thing I am certain—the world is not big enough for the three of us."

It was horrible, but perfectly true. I felt it. I had seen too much of the doings of the Society of the Hidden Meaning. I knew with what tenacity they clung to the work in hand, and I had no hope whatever of their abandoning the enterprise, no matter what obstacles there were to be surmounted. The result then would be a life somewhat similar to my father's, a death which could not be prolonged indefinitely.

"What do you propose?" I asked.

"It is evident," said he, "that one of two things must happen—either we kill Kung or he kills us. I gather from what your father says that the death of Kung, coupled with that of Wooching, will probably end the feud, as they are the only two chiefs left of the original council who take a personal interest in the vengeance. Wooching is probably here in this country. If we could lay our hands on him, the law would relieve us of all moral responsibility concerning him. With Kung it is different. He is in China and apparently beyond the reach of any law. If we want him, we must look for him in his native land."

"Go to China?" I gasped.

He smiled. "Why not?"

"But surely that would be to court instant annihilation."

"Not necessarily. It is just possible that it may be safer than this. Kung not improbably will credit us with the wish to avoid him. The matter is very serious, Davie. I, as you know, am a man of peace, but if peace is denied me, then I have no objection to war. We each have a personal debt to pay—an obligation which it is our bounden duty to fulfill. I know your mother was good enough to forgive the hand that struck her down, but, you see, the vengeance does not end there. As sure as we are living men our turn will come, unless we make ourselves masters of the situation."

I had no doubt that he was right, though I shrank from such a foolhardy enterprise as seeking Kung in his native land. If we could not guard against his emissary in our own country, surrounded by police and the appliances of civilization, how could we hope to succeed in the very stronghold of the yellow fiends? My uncle admitted the apparent soundness of my argument, but the idea of penetrating into the enemy's country had taken possession of him, and nothing that I could say made him waver in his design.

"At all events," I said, "we cannot be sure that these men mean to continue the vengeance. It is just possible that my father in his hatred and fear of Kung may have overstated his case. Ought we not to wait for some sign, watching always? What if they are satisfied?"

"It matters nothing," he replied. "I am not. Are you?" This rather bitterly, I thought.

I did not answer, but looked at him in a way that was more effective than words.

"Sorry," he said apologetically. "You know what I mean. But nothing [illegible] satisfy me until I have brought Lucy's murderer to book. I believe the old man to be right. He knew what he was talking about. We shall have to settle with Wooching and Kung."

Deep in my heart I was of the same belief, but if the truth must be told I

With a cry I sprang forward, but the crowd impeded my progress.

had some of my father's horror of the society, and I would not have been ill content to forget. But that was not to be, as I was presently to know.

That night my uncle and I dined at his club in St. James street, and afterward we looked in at a so called palace of pleasure on the north side of Leicester square. Perhaps it was rather early days for music halls, and I ventured to suggest as much, but Jim (for I had already reached that stage of intimacy which permitted the use of the Christian name) protested that we had supped enough of horrors and that it was sometimes advisable to forget. He was like that, not much given to sentimentalisms, and I have found that it is not your puling, whining man who feels the most, though he usually commands the most sympathy. Jim made but a small bubble with his excitement, but I, who read his face like a book, could tell by his mouth or the look of his eyes how much he felt.

As usual the Empire was very full that night, and as we moved about among the crowd, the lights, the bustle, the well dressed men, the gaudy women, all made such a complete change that I congratulated myself upon coming and my uncle in insisting upon his wish. Indeed, wedged in the gay throng, I forgot for a time the Society of the Hidden Meaning and the shadow that hung over me. Kung was a bad dream which I had dispelled; Wooching a yellow phantom that had passed from before my eyes.

But I was not permitted long to enjoy this sweet hour of forgetfulness, for as we left the theater I, looking around as one will in a crowd, saw a man standing on the curb, who arrested my thought even though my eyes swept past him. Back they came instantly, and I recognized in a moment Wooching, the man with the strange eyes.

With a cry I sprang forward, but the crowd impeded my progress, and after nearly knocking down two men a third brought me up with an oath. I stammered an apology which, unless my memory fails me, was received with another unflattering adjective. But, unheeding this, I sprang out on to the road and was immediately almost run down by a hansom, the driver of which loaded the air with a further contribution of choice billingsgate. But after rushing wildly for a dozen yards or so I pulled up, nonplused. The man was nowhere to be seen.

Here my uncle joined me, and, laying his hand on my arm, he gasped out, "What is it?"

"I saw him. He was here a moment ago."

"He?"

"The man with the strange eyes."

Jim ground out an oath.

"Which way did he go?"

I pointed along Coventry street.

"I would have had him, too, if the crowd had not blocked me."

"You are sure it was he?"

I was so sure that I did not take the trouble to be emphatic, even though every nerve of me was a-thrill with excitement.

"Then let us follow."

We moved westward among the people, who were now very numerous, owing chiefly to the emptying of the theaters in the neighborhood. But, though we intently peered into each face, we failed to encounter the object of our search. Then we stood for a time at the corner of the Pavilion, just where Shaftesbury avenue empties itself into that ocean of light and life which people call Piccadilly circus—the brightest, gayest, saddest spot in the whole world.

In such a place one might as well search for the proverbial needle in the bundle of hay, as expect to find an insignificant little personage who had every intention of not breaking cover. But still we stood watching the people, the bewildering rush of cabs and carriages, the honest citizen hurrying home to bed, the young dandy with the immaculate shirt front and hat tipped saucily on one side, who is a little weak at the knee perhaps, but who is "seeing life," don't you know; the gray haired roue, the dawdling vagrant. These, with the rattling of vehicles, the laughter and curses of men and women, the hoarse shouts of the newsboys, make up a babel unapproachable in any other capital.

After a time, to the infinite risk of life and limb, we ventured to cross the circus. Then, eyes open, ears alert, we continued our journey homeward, reaching our rooms without encountering anything that might be termed suspicious. It was with a feeling of relief, and yet with a relief which did not dissipate my fears, that I heard the front door close. For the moment [illegible] doubt we were secure, but the man rose threateningly before the mental vision, a sign and a symbol which could not be blotted out.

However, nothing happened that night, and on the following morning I for one had lost many of my fears. My uncle was still very grave, and I could see that the shadow of Wooching was making life for him absolutely intolerable. But he said nothing, and we descended the stairs together, and so out into the street. Then, as I gently pulled the door to, I saw something just below the number which made me start. I looked again and could no longer doubt.

It was the elliptical sign of the Hidden Meaning.

My uncle, who had passed some paces down the street, finding I was not by his side, here turned and beckoned me to him. I, however, called to him instead, a movement evidently betokening much mystery, for he quickly retraced his steps, his face eagerly asking the question, "What is it?"

For answer I pointed to the door, and as his eyes encountered the sign I saw a startled look leap to them. He stepped up closer to it and peered at it intently. Then he surveyed me with a wondering look, in which I detected alarm and a profound anxiety.

"Let us go in," he said.

He opened the door and rang for the porter, and him he subjected to a searching examination concerning the lodgers and the would be lodgers. But the man could give us no satisfactory information. The rooms were full—they had been for some time previous to our arrival, and, though many people had called to make inquiries, he could not recollect any one in particular resembling our description of Wooching.

My uncle then nodded to me without speaking, and together we mounted the stairs to our rooms. Throwing his stick and gloves on the table with a bang, he turned and faced me, and I saw that his eyes had grown hard and desperate, and I knew that his blood ran wickedly. His fair skin wore a dark, ominous flush which only visited it in moments of intense anger.

"Well," said I, "what's it to be—flight or fight?"

"Fight," he answered grimly. "To fly would be to live your father's life and eventually to meet his death. No; we must stand our ground and meet Mr. Wooching with his own weapons. He has very kindly warned us. If we neglect the warning, we shall deserve to suffer."

"Why should he have warned us?" I asked.

He was silent for a few moments, during which he walked the length of the room. Then he said, "I don't know, unless it's vanity."

"Vanity!" Surely this was the strangest form vanity had ever taken!

"Yes; of a kind—that is, supposing he did it, which is not probable."

"Then you think he does not work alone?"

"I am sure of it. That sign may be merely a warning to his associates. Remember what your father said. The society has agents all over the English speaking world. We shall be shadowed day and night. Come here."

He had been standing by the window peering into the street, and as I approached him he drew suddenly behind the curtain and waved for me to do likewise. Unhesitatingly I obeyed, though ignorant of the reason. I took up a position on the other side of the window and peered out into the street, but seeing nothing unusual there I turned inquiringly to him. "What's the matter?"

"You see that man in the billycock hat and the gray trousers?"

"Yes."

"Watch him."

The person thus described, who seemed an everyday individual of the better class artisan or shopman type, would, in an ordinary way, have attracted no attention in the streets. One would meet thousands of such men in a walk from Charing Cross to the bank. I myself, gazing upon him, would have seen him with my eyes only. The brain would have retained no impression of his unimportant personality. But now I looked at him with other eyes, with eyes which were full of suspicion, and I saw that he loitered in a way which was uncommon with people of his class in Dover street. I saw, too, that his eyes were fixed upon one object, and that object was our house. Though his hat was pulled well over his forehead, I could see his eyes glancing up in our direction from under the brim.

Slowly he passed along the street, and at the second lamppost up he stopped. Against the farther side of it he leaned; but, though he occasionally glanced about him, I could see that his attention was really engrossed by our end of the street. And yet further to add to the mystery, if mystery there were, he suddenly left his lounge against the lamppost, and we saw him disappear around the corner of the next street.

More puzzled than ever, I looked at my uncle for an explanation, and I saw a grim smile play about his mouth. His eyes had come back to the Piccadilly end of the street, and, following the direction of his gaze, I saw it center upon a burly policeman who rolled with lordly nonchalance along the pavement.

Quickly putting two and two together, I turned to my companion for confirmation. He nodded approvingly, as though he read my thoughts.

"Quite right. I believe that man to be there for no good purpose. His sudden exit into Stafford street, just as the constable appears, is, to say the least of it, a trifle suspicious. Of course it may be merely a coincidence, but we shall see. If I am not mistaken, he will return by way of Albemarle street and Piccadilly."

"But this is an Englishman," I began. "Surely he"— and then I stopped, feeling very foolish. I was going to suggest in the face of my father's confession that Englishmen would not mix themselves up with the Society of Hidden Meaning.

Jim saw the hesitation and smiled.

"My dear Davie," he said, "you must not imagine that we have only Wooching to fight. The society is rich. There are always plenty of men ready to earn good wages. One has only to go into the streets and look at the faces of the people to imagine how easily the society would gain recruits."

With a sigh I assented. With so much murder and robbery rife for problematical gains, how very easy it would be to find workmen when the wage was assured. It seemed to me that the ground beneath us was slipping more rapidly than ever.

We accordingly set ourselves to watch, Jim stationing himself at one side of the window, I at the other. I saw the spy slowly enter our street from the Piccadilly end. We watched the man walk on until he reached the end of the street, and there he took up his stand and began slowly to fill a pipe. Then my uncle picked up his gloves and cane.

To be continued.

HIS BROTHER'S KEEPER;

Or, Christian Stewardship.

BY CHARLES M. SHELDON,

Author of "In His Steps," "The Crucifixion of Philip Strong," "Robert Hardy's Seven Days," "Malcom Kirk," Etc.

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CHAPTER I.

THE GREAT STRIKE.

"They say 5,000 men have gone out of the Champion and De Mott mines this morning," said one of the passengers in the train to the young man in the seat by him as they slowly drew up to the station.

"I wonder if that is so?" replied his companion. "There seems to be something unusual going on. Well, goodby. This is my home. I shall soon know all about it."

The young man caught up his traveling bag and hurried out upon the platform.

The station was entirely deserted except by a few of the railroad employees. The young man looked around a moment, as if expecting some one, and then walked hastily across the platform and around the corner of the station. From the side of the building the town and the public square were in full view. And as they came in sight the passenger gave an exclamation of wonder.

The public square was a small park, with a band stand in the middle of it. It was situated at the meeting point of several streets, each of which seemed to wander down the hills from the different mining districts, starting first as a footpath trod by the miners, then developing into a piece of country road, adding on fragments of wooden sidewalks as it approached the town and finally growing into a street with paving and cement walks and stores and office buildings on either side. Directly in front of the band stand, facing the park, stood a large church, which with its lot occupied the entire space between two streets. The railway station formed one side of the heptagon made by the converging of the seven streets. Another church building, two streets from the other, formed another side. The rest of the buildings fronting the park were stores, offices of various mining companies and a large hotel.

Into this center of the heart of the mining town of Champion on this particular morning, in the year of our Lord 1895, was gathered the largest crowd Stuart Duncan ever saw there. This young man was the son of Ross Duncan, owner of the largest mines in Champion. He was 30 years old, had finished his college education and was just home this morning from a year's trip in Europe. As he came down from the railway station platform and pushed his way into the crowd he said to himself that in all his travels abroad he had not seen anything to compare with the remarkable gathering in this mining town where he had been reared previous to his college life in the east.

The minute he stepped into the crowd several voices called out: "Stuart, lad, give us your hand! Glad to see you back!" The voices were in different tones and various degrees of brogue, Cornish, Finn, English, Irish, Scotch. He noticed the subdued action of the men. They were excited, but under control. The band stand was crowded with familiar faces, but Stuart Duncan looked at only one. That was the face of a short but muscular young man who was standing with head uncovered upon the bench which ran around the inside of the stand. He had thick black hair, deep set black eyes, heavy eyebrows, large features, smooth face and short, round neck. He stood leaning forward a little, his left hand around one of the supports to the roof of the stand, his right holding an old hat which moved gently up and down.

Stuart moved up nearer the stand until he was within easy speaking distance. As he crowded in closer he was finally stopped by the great pressure of the men. Several voices greeted him, but all of them quietly, and the interest of the gathering seemed centered in the figure that stood leaning out a little over the crowd.

"What's it all about? What's the trouble?" asked Stuart of the men around him. "What's Eric doing up there?"

Before any one could reply the young man standing on the bench began to speak. His words came very slowly, as if every one of them was being thought out carefully. He stopped every motion of his body and stood perfectly still. The great crowd in the square was so quiet that Stuart thought for a second of a scene he once witnessed in an English cathedral when 4,000 people were kneeling just before a special service began.

"Brothers," said the speaker, whom Stuart had called Eric, "this is no ordinary movement in the history of labor. What we have done and what we are about to do are of the most serious consequence. We have made a demand for wages such as will sustain us and our families this winter in comfort. It has been refused, and we have come out of the mines determined to make a peaceful but resistless protest for the rights of our manhood." The speaker paused a moment, and Stuart noticed the hand around the post tighten its grip. Then he continued. The quiet of the crowd was, if possible, more deep than before.

"Brothers, we need more than human wisdom at such a time as this. It is fitting that we bow our heads and implore divine aid." Every head in the square was uncovered as the speaker's voice rang out clear and strong over the crowd:

"Lord, we need thy help today. We ask for wisdom. Grant us to know thy will. O Lord, keep us from committing any lawless act. Keep every man here from drunkenness and violence to property or life. We want simply our rights as men. We want wages sufficient to live in comfort. Show us what to do. Keep us today from evil. Bless all men who work with their hands. Bless our families. We ask it for Jesus' sake. Amen." [This incident is based on fact. The writer of this story was witness to a gathering of iron miners in the great strike of July, 1895, where one of the miners offered just such a prayer as the above, at Negaunee, Mich., July 24, 1895.]

The speaker lifted his head, and the miners put on their hats. Stuart looked out over the heads of the crowd and up at the man who had just prayed and then out beyond him to the pine covered hills dotted over with the engine houses and stock piles of ore. He noticed the smoke curling from the furnace stacks and said to himself, "The pumps are going yet." The whole scene was very vivid to him. The crowd, the churches, the park, the band stand, the faces and figures up there, the hills, the mines, the whole with its strong setting of human interest, smote him almost with a shock. And at the very nerve center of the shock was that brief prayer. It was so strange, so unusual, so like a story, so unlike real life.

Eric was speaking again. He was making an appeal to the miners to commend their cause to the world by their conduct. He spoke, as before he had prayed, very slowly and carefully. Toward the end of his speech he caught sight of Stuart.

His face flushed for an instant. The eyes of the two men met. The look on each man's face seemed to say, "I wonder if he is still the same?"

A clock in the steeple of the larger of the two churches struck 8. Eric jumped down from the bench, and another miner took his place and spoke in a more impassioned manner to the men. There were cheers and swinging of hats. Stuart gradually worked his way out of the crowd, stopped frequently by acquaintances. At last he had come out in front of the church with the clock in the tower, looking about him eagerly for some one from his own home, when a strong voice from a man standing on the church steps above him exclaimed:

"Say, Stuart, when did you join the strike?"

"Doctor," cried Stuart eagerly, with a smile of welcome that lighted up his thoughtful face wonderfully, "next to father and Louise you are the very person I wanted to see most. Where are they? They were to meet me at the train this morning. Isn't this a most astonishing affair? Tell me all about it."

The doctor shrugged his shoulders. "You know as much about it as I do. The men went out this morning without notice. The Freeport, Vasplaine and De Mott miners are all here with the Champion men. They walked over from the lower range early this morning."

"What do the men want?" Stuart asked vaguely. He had so many questions to put he asked the first that occurred.

The doctor shrugged his shoulders again.

"The contract miners want $2 a day, the trammers $1.75 and the men at the top $1.50."

"Who is the leader of the men?"

"You see for yourself; Eric Vassall. And it seems only yesterday that you two men were young kids in knickerbockers tumbling down the mines and worrying the life out of the companies because of your pranks. And now Eric is the leader of the biggest strike on record among the miners, playing the role of prophet and priest and I don't know what all, and you"—

"And I," interrupted Stuart, with another smile, as he pulled the doctor down off the step above him, "I am—so far—nobody, until I have had my breakfast. I can't understand where father and Louise can be. Haven't you seen them this morning?"

"No. Get into my buggy. I will take you up to the house."

The doctor's office fronted on the square, and his horse stood near by. Stuart took one glance back at the crowd as he and the doctor started up the street.

"It is a remarkable scene. I have not witnessed anything like it abroad. I have seen several strikes in England and Germany and France since I have been away. But I never knew a strike to be opened with prayer, did you, doctor?"

"No," replied the doctor dryly.

Stuart looked at him. He was driving, as always, with one foot outside the buggy, the lines gathered up in a careless way in one hand and the horse tearing along like mad up the sandy, red, iron ore street, for they were off the paving now and going up a sharp grade cut through one of the numerous hills that surrounded the town. The doctor always drove that way, and a ride with him was as exciting, Stuart used to say, as working in a powder mill during a thunderstorm.

"Why? Don't you think the prayer was sincere?" Stuart asked.

"Sincere enough. But pshaw! What's the use? We all know how the strike will end, prayer or no prayer."

"What's happened to Eric, doctor? He never used to be religious. Not that way."

"Salvation Army," replied the doctor briefly.

"Oh!" Stuart looked puzzled, but he thought he would have it all out with Eric. There was so much to talk over since they had parted a year ago. So many grave questions had arisen in their lives that needed to be discussed. He was growing anxious as they drove along concerning his father and sister. It was very strange that they had not met him at the station. But the strike and all might have kept his father. It was a different home coming from that of his anticipation.

The house stood back from the road on the side of the hill. It was a handsome brick mansion, surrounded by a dozen immense pines. Stuart loved the place. It was dear to his memories. He had no recollection of any other home, although he had been born in one of the eastern states. It was in this house that his mother had died when he was 10 years old. He owed his thoughtful, romantic, truthful nature to her. From his father, on the other hand, he had inherited his slow, stubborn, occasional fierce bursting out of passionate feelings. He thought of all the happy times in the old house where as a boy and later as college man he had enjoyed all the luxuries of wealth and leisure and companionship.

Suddenly a man drove out of the roadway into which he and the doctor were just turning to go up to the house. Both men pulled up just in time to avoid running into each other.

"Is that you, Dr. Saxon?" shouted the man. "I was just going for you. Mr. Duncan has been hurt. The horses ran away this morning and"—

Stuart did not wait to hear more. He jumped out of the buggy and at the top of his speed cut through the grounds in front of the house. The doctor uttered an exclamation, gave his horse one short stroke with the whip and dashed up the driveway like a whirlwind. At the end of the long veranda he stopped long enough to jump out and let the horse go on to the barn. He met Stuart just leaping up the veranda steps.

"Now, then, my boy," said the doctor quietly, filling up the doorway with his large frame and getting directly in front of Stuart, "don't get excited. This is my case, not yours."

"Let me by!" cried Stuart, his face almost black with passion. "He is my father! Perhaps he is dying! What right have you to keep in the way?"

"Very well." The doctor spoke softly, almost like a child. He stepped aside and began to walk slowly down the veranda steps. "You have inherited the Duncan passion to perfection, but if your father dies through your nonsensical exercise of it just now don't blame me."

Stuart made one stride and caught the doctor's arm. "Come back!" he said. All his black passion was gone in an instant. "I will be a man like you. Come! You will perhaps need my help."

The doctor looked keenly at him and at once turned around and entered the house with him. The incident would not mean anything without a knowledge of what was at stake on this occasion. But Dr. Saxon had good reason to believe that the life of the son in this instance was imperiled by the fearful excitement which at rare intervals broke out in him like a torrent. To confront the father with him under those conditions might prove serious to them both.

Within the house servants were running about in confusion. The doctor

The doctor lifted her up just as Stuart entered.

stopped one of them and said roughly: "Now, then, are you all crazy here? Where is Mr. Duncan?"

"They carried him into the north room," was the answer.

"North room! Why didn't you carry him to the north pole and be done with it! Here, Stuart! Send one of the men down for my black case at the office and then come to your father."

The doctor went down the long hall, turned to the right into another corridor and entered a large room at the end.

Lying over the bed in the middle of the room was a young woman. Her arms were clasped over the face of the man who lay there, and she had fainted in that position.

The doctor lifted her up just as Stuart entered.

"O God! Louise, too!" he cried.

The doctor gave him a look that calmed him and replied: "No; she is in a faint. Now, then, use all the sense you have, and it won't be too much. You look after your sister while I see to your father."

He put Louise into Stuart's arms, who, with the servant's help, soon restored her to consciousness, while the doctor turned to the man on the bed and in a masterly manner proceeded to do all that his skill and keenness of practice could do.

Ross Duncan lay like a dead man. He was of powerful build and looked very stern and hard even as he lay there helpless. There was a terrible gash over one of his eyes. He was covered with blood and dust, bruised from head to foot, with clothes torn and disfigured, but he had not lost consciousness, and, with the iron will which had always characterized him, he managed to let the doctor know his wishes.

"All right, all right, Mr. Duncan," said the doctor in reply to a whisper from the wounded man. "I won't give you any anæsthetic if you don't want it. I shall have to sew up this little place over your eye, though. Has that tortoise got around with that case yet?" he asked Stuart, who had left Louise a minute to come over to the bed.

"He hasn't had time yet, doctor."

"Why didn't he take my horse?" growled the doctor. "How is Louise?"

"Better. But what a terrible fall father must have had!"

Stuart felt for his father's hand, and Ross Duncan's fingers closed over those of his son. Stuart kneeled by the bed and kissed his father's cheek as he used to do when a boy. The older man was evidently moved by the caress. A tear rolled over his face.

"Come now," broke in the doctor, apparently gruffer than ever. "One would think you two hadn't seen each other for a year at least! We must get him ready for the operation. Stuart you promised to help me. Give me your attention now."

The doctor soon had his patient as comfortable as the nature of the injuries would allow. The case arrived, the gash was sewed up quickly, and at the end of the hour Ross Duncan was resting under the influence of a draft, while the doctor, Stuart and Louise were in another room talking over the accident.

The sister of Stuart Duncan was very pretty, very proud and very selfish. She was 6 years younger than her brother. She had been two years to a finishing school in New York, but had not finished any particular branch of study. She could play the piano a little and the harp a little and do other things, except housework, a little. She lay on the lounge now, with Stuart near by stroking her head, and told the story of the accident:

"Father and I started to drive down to the station this morning to meet you, Stuart. When we reached the crossroad leading up to the Forge mine, we were early for the train, and father drove up to the engine house on some business. When we got up there, the miners were gathering to march down to the square. It was the first news of the strike we had had. Father was very much excited and talked to the men to persuade them to go back to work. Some of them talked back in the most insulting way; said they were free men and did not have to work for a corporation and all that. You know how they talk, Stuart. Nothing makes father so angry, and I don't blame him. I think the men are simply horrid to make all this trouble just now as I was getting ready to go east for that yachting cruise with the Vasplaines, and this strike will probably stop their going.

"Then father jumped out of the carriage and was going to give one of the men who insulted him a good thrashing, and serve him right, when the rest came around and made him get into the carriage again. I never saw father so angry, and I was scared almost to death, the men were so rough. We drove back to the crossroad, and at that steep turn by that old Beury shaft we came upon a crowd of miners marching into town from the lower range. They were carrying a large white banner with some horrid picture on it. The horses were frightened and turned and ran right toward the old shaft. I don't know what happened then, only we were thrown out, and it is a miracle that I was not killed. Jem, the coachman, was driving, and he fell on a pile of shaft ore. He ran up to the house and got the other horses and brought father and me home. I fainted away several times, and when I saw father laid on the bed with that awful gash on his head I thought he was killed. If he dies, the miners will be to blame. If it hadn't been for their going out on this strike, this horrible accident would not have happened. It's all as horrid as it can be!"

At this point Louise burst into a great fit of hysterical crying.

"Dear, you must have been hurt by the fall!" cried Stuart as he soothed and comforted her.

"No, no! I was not even bruised!" replied Louise. She stopped crying and sat up on the lounge and began to arrange her hair.

Dr. Saxon walked toward the other end of the room with a peculiar look on his face. Then he wheeled around and said with his characteristic bluntness: "I must go back to the office. I've left directions for your father's treatment. He is not dangerously hurt. Send for me if I am needed. Miss Louise, you had better take those powders and keep as quiet as possible today."

He laid the medicine down on a table and went out. A minute later his horse was heard rushing by the veranda and down the road.

So this was the home coming of Stuart Duncan after his year's absence abroad. He had visited with interest many of the famous capitals of Europe. He had sauntered through museums and picture galleries, he had studied not very profoundly, but with genuine interest, the people he had met and the customs he had observed that were new. The year had been very largely a holiday for him. He had used all the money he wished, drawing on his letter of credit without any thought of economy. His father was several times a millionaire and never stinted the money. What he wanted was that his son and daughter should have the best of everything, from clothes and food to education and travel. And Stuart had gone through college and through Europe with about the same easy feeling of having a comfortable time. He was perfectly healthy, had no vices (he did not even like a cigar), unusually thoughtful on some questions, with no particular ambitions and no special enthusiasms. If he gave his future any thought while abroad, it was simply to picture a life of business in connection with his father's mining interests. That was his father's desire, and Stuart did not have any other.

He had come home from the picture galleries and cathedrals of the old world to face first of all this rough incident of his father's injury. In connection with it was the strike, which was specially personal not only because it involved the Duncan interests, but because the leader of it was Eric Vassall, Stuart's old playfellow and friend. The more he thought of Eric the more he felt the strike to be a serious matter. So much might be involved in it for him and Eric.

Nearly a week went by before Ross Duncan was able to sit up and talk much. During that time Stuart faithfully remained at home. He had not seen Eric, and Eric, as he supposed, had not been to see him. His father and Louise needed his constant care. But he anticipated meeting his old playfellow with a curious feeling of excitement whenever he thought of that scene in the public square and recalled the prayer and its effect.

At the end of the week father and son were talking together over the situation. The miners were still out, and the strike was still on, with no prospect of settlement.

"I tell you, Stuart," said Ross Duncan, while his great square chin grew hard and tense, "the companies will never concede the demands of the men. I will never go an inch to meet them while they are in their present attitude."

"Do you think the men ask too much, father?"

"Too much! With ore at the present price! It is outrageous, just when we were beginning to get on our feet again. It has been a very dull winter, and things were just beginning to turn our way again."

"But I thought ore had gone up. Isn't that what the men claim as the reason for their demand for an increase? They say the wages ought to go up with the rise in ore."

"They are fools!" Ross Duncan struck the pillow beside him passionately. "The companies were under contract for large quantities of ore at the old price before this rise came. The rise will not benefit us any until we have disposed of our old contracts."

"Why don't the companies tell the men so?"

"Pshaw! Stuart, you are"— Ross Duncan controlled himself violently. Stuart was alarmed for him. He rose and went over nearer the bed.

"Father, you must not get excited. Remember what Dr. Saxon said yesterday. You must not talk any more on this subject."

"I shall. There, I can control myself."

It was wonderful to see the change that came over the man. He stiffened his muscles, then relaxed them and let his hand, which had been clinched, open easily and lie open on the bedclothes. Then he spoke without a quiver of passion, slowly and coldly:

"The companies do not tell the men so because the men wouldn't believe a word the companies say. Yet there isn't a man in our mines who can say Ross Duncan ever cheated a man out of a penny or ever told him an untruth. I tell you, Stuart, the men are the most stubborn, ungrateful, ignorant lot of animals that ever lived. Why, all last winter I kept more than a dozen families going with food and fuel because they had been sick or shiftless, and I'll warrant you those very families are in the front row of the parades every morning! The men are cutting their own throats. The companies will never give in."

Stuart did not say anything for awhile. Then: "Don't you think, father, that the men have been very quiet and law-abiding? There has been no disturbance thus far."

To be continued.

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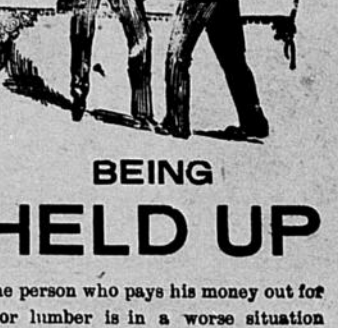

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