

Richard the Brazen

By **CYRUS TOWNSEND BRADY**, Author of "For the Freedom of the Sea," "The Southwestern," etc., and **EDWARD PEELE**, Author of "A Brazen Boy," "The Prince Chap," etc.

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CHAPTER XIII.
ON Wednesday morning two items appeared in one of the New York newspapers, neither of which would create a casual reader as being important; but so far as this narrative is concerned, they led to complications. The first was an obviously exaggerated report and read as follows:

TRAGEDY FATALITY INJURED.
Mr. Richard Williams, son of the famous millionaire and cattle king of San Antonio, Tex., was severely injured on Sunday last in an automobile accident. He was taken to St. Luke's hospital, where our reporter called to see him. Mr. Williams was not prostrated by the shock to be interviewed, but we learn from one of the attending physicians, who is suffering from concussion of the brain, besides sustaining a fracture of the shoulder and internal injuries. The accident was due to the carelessness of an inexperienced chauffeur, who gave his name as Peter Wilson, but whose address had not been ascertained up to a late hour last night. The police are making inquiries.

The above paragraph chanced to catch the eye of a certain Mr. Loger, who had taken the morning train for Chicago. He was an intimate friend of old Bill Williams, and he had been asked to look after the son himself, except that urgent business necessitated the continuance of his journey west. Mr. Loger therefore wired his friend from Pittsburg, stating that Richard had been hurt and that the point of death in a New York hospital.

On receiving this startling information the father became greatly agitated. He had not heard from Richard for several days and had begun to worry even before the receipt of Mr. Loger's telegram. He wired at once to the St. Regis, where he knew his son was stopping, and received an answer to the effect that Richard Williams had not been seen since the previous Monday morning, though his dress suit case and other belongings were still in room No. 923, which had not been given up.

Bill Williams, who loved his son as he loved no other being on earth, committed the deep water harbor and improvement business to his most trusted subordinate, although affairs had reached a critical stage, and started for New York on a special train.

The other newspaper item appeared in the second column of the "Morning Gossip." It read as follows:

On Friday evening of the present week an entertainment will be given in the beautiful country home of Mr. Jacob Renwick, at Irvington-on-Hudson.

Among other features a little one act play, the presentation of "The Bird," in which Miss Imogene Chittenden, one of the season's most charming debutantes, will take the part of the bird, while the charming and accomplished Miss Renwick will assume the leading role. The entertainment is ordered specially for the occasion and the famous Renwick diamonds. The entertainment will be given in honor of a distinguished guest, Lord George Fitz-Clarence, who is expected to arrive in the city on Saturday. The affair promises to be an unusually brilliant one.

While largely unremarkable, the entertainment caught the attention of one Jack Bibbs, a gentleman possessed of much ingenuity, some varied experience, quite a collection of aliases and a passion for acquisition. He had received no invitation to the above mentioned social function, though he hoped to profit thereby in ways best known to himself.

Mr. Michael Corrigan, returning from a business meeting in the city, took the 12 o'clock train for Irvington-on-Hudson and went into the smoker, where he seated himself and lighted a short black pipe, the pet aversion of his refined brother-in-law, Jacob Renwick, who visited in the city as a guest upon his unfortunate wife. His business transactions in the city evidently pleased Uncle Michael vastly, for that gentleman kept chuckling to himself and rubbing his plump white hands in the manner of one upon whom good fortune has descended suddenly.

After a time his attention was arrested by two men on the seat opposite him. They were engaged in a whispered conversation while they ate their lunch from a brown paper parcel. To a casual observer there was nothing unusual in the appearance of the two passengers. They were roughly clad, unshaven and apparently poor, having the air of workmen out of a business meeting in the city, took the 12 o'clock train for Irvington-on-Hudson and went into the smoker, where he seated himself and lighted a short black pipe, the pet aversion of his refined brother-in-law, Jacob Renwick, who visited in the city as a guest upon his unfortunate wife. His business transactions in the city evidently pleased Uncle Michael vastly, for that gentleman kept chuckling to himself and rubbing his plump white hands in the manner of one upon whom good fortune has descended suddenly.

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Was stopped by the vagrant at the entrance of the drive. Richard saw him bend in his saddle, confer with him upon the stable yard. Presently he appeared and crossed to his master with the tobacco which he had secured.

"Navy Captain, m' lord," he stated triumphantly, "the kind you 'snoaked at' one air."

"Thanks," said Richard. "By the way, Bill, what was that queer looking leggar saying to you just now?"

"He started slightly, as one ashamed of being seen in such evil company. 'Yes, when Mr. Williams was asked his way to the station, m' lord, a rum sort, I calls 'im, sir, beggin' your pardon for it.'"

"Yes, yes, Bill," Richard replied, with a show of impatience. "That will do, you say no more."

The valet bowed respectfully and departed, while Miss Harriet looked at her companion in polite surprise.

"Why are you so short with him?" she asked. "To me he is perfectly delightful. I don't believe he ever laughed in all his life, did he?"

"Don't know, I'm sure," drawled Richard lazily. "I curl his tongue from necessity. The furb is inclined to be loquacious. At times I am forced to be curt."

Miss Renwick laughed.

"Do you know," she said, "you are becoming an American very rapidly? Really, I am beginning to be quite vain of my success with a first pupil."

"My dear young lady, the physician answered in a tone half banter, half in earnest, which was deeper than she dreamed, "if you should wish it I'd gladly become—a kangaroo."

Again Miss Renwick laughed till the silvery echoes resounded in the front veranda.

"By George," he chuckled to himself as he rubbed his hands in the manner characteristic of him, "that young man is making progress."

In the evening the painter, Mr. Renwick came up from the city. Mr. Corrigan took him aside and related the day's experience with the tramp, suggesting that a detective be employed while the valuable lot of Renwick diamonds, the house, the two gentlemen, and the ready been stated, never got on together peacefully. If one of them offered a suggestion the other found reason to combat it vigorously, and in this case Mr. Renwick was the opposite side with a vengeance, boasting of the possibility of theft from start to finish.

"Why, my dear Michael," he said in a tone of undisguised scorn, "what you are saying is nonsense, pure and simple. The house is equipped with the most perfect system of burglar alarms, which I set myself each night. Unless there is collusion with some person on the inside I not only defy any thief, but I give my word to bottom try. No, sir! If you want to put a Gatling gun in your own house, do so by all means. In mine I have no room for artillery or an army of Pinkertons. Don't you see how absurd you are?"

"All right," assented Mr. Corrigan. "I've warned you, and that's all I've got to say. They're not my diamonds."

"Just wait a moment, Michael," said Mr. Renwick, walking after him. "I stand to show you what an idiotic stand you have taken. You say the man has a cast in his eye. Very good; I'll admit that, but I venture to say that in the state of New York there are from twenty to thirty thousand people with casts in their eyes. You claim that it is a mark of rascality. I don't agree with you. My own father had a cast in his eye."

"Don't do it in the least," snapped Mr. Corrigan. "That explains it. I've often wondered."

"Come, come," laughed Mr. Renwick. "You gain nothing by being personal. But listen. You saw a man in the train—though you confess you only glanced at him—and immediately recognized him as a brigand. You say who has committed the crime of being hungry. Did you see murderer No. 1 get off the train? No, of course not. He is probably dining in the bosom of his carriage. He is a respectable man, my dear sir, and I don't think of him in the penitentiary. While you pause to laugh, 'Really, Michael, you amuse me. Age is responsible for bad eyesight perhaps, but it is your poor old brain that troubles me. You have developed into a fussy old woman—Mr. Michael Corrigan, splinter, sixty-one and afraid to say 'boo' to a bat.'"

The old lawyer paused suddenly in his walk and thrust the ferrule of his cane deep into the gravel path. "Jacob," he said in a tone of suppressed anger, "that will do. You have gone just a little too far. I told you what I thought without any wish for an argument, and now I'll tell you something else. You do care whether you lose your diamonds and plate, don't you? What's more, I hope you will, God night."

"Lord!" he chuckled. "The joke's on me this time, but I wouldn't have Jacob find it out—not for a thousand dollars cash."

Meanwhile Mr. Renwick, having scored decisively on Uncle Michael, entered his dinner as a victor should. He was in the best of spirits, not alone because of his triumph, but because of certain cheerful developments which had come to light at the meeting of the stockholders of his new deep water harbor company. He was so elated over his certain success that he cast over board hints which were mystifying enigmas to all present with the exception of Richard, who understood only too well. To him they meant the collapse of his father's cherished hopes, while he, a dutiful son, was forced to sit calmly and watch an enemy gloat.

Dinner was scarcely over when callers were announced. They were old friends of the family, claiming the attention of Mr. and Mrs. Renwick and Miss Schermerly, which left the four young people to their own devices. For this Richard thanked the visitors fervently and wandered with Miss Harriet across the lawn, where they seated themselves on a favorite bench and enjoyed a long and unintermitted chat. Had Uncle Michael been present instead of sulking in his lonely bachelor home he might have had cause to exchange his frowns for chuckles. In view of the fact that a certain young scamp was assuredly making progress.

The progress was not of tremendous moment, after all, yet Richard forgot:

"Well, every afternoon at the working party of convicts would form up and return to the prison—which, as you know, contains some of the toughest fellows in the State—and the warden and an officer would go to Realf's shed to unlock him and bring him along with the rest."

"But this afternoon the door was opened in vain. Realf was not there, and yet twenty minutes previously had been seen through the little window when visited by the chief warden. He had even answered to his name as he stood peering at his bench in a dark recess. He was gone, how or where not to be known, and the physician, the shed was locked on the outside, and the lock had not been tampered with. And there appeared no other exit except the door, nothing but solid rock. The little shanty was ransacked, emptied, but without any result."

"Could the man, I wondered, have discovered some secret recess? You know the whole rock is fairly honey-combed with holes, both natural and artificial. Like the Grapes of Hesperia at the results such an escape would have on the morale of my dangerous gang. I had torches brought and personally examined every nook and cranny of the cliff against which the shed was built. My best officers went over it all with hammer and crowbar. But no, nothing but solid rock. Now for the floor. It was level and fairly smooth, just covered in places with the little loose shingle."

"Bring me a bucket of water," I cried with sudden inspiration. When it came, I threw it carefully out, and we all watched. "More and more!" We fairly inundated the floor and shouted for a bucket of water. "It is all right," said the physician, "but you have been here by the horns of a fractious steer. He found it imperative to examine her hurt by the light of matches which Miss Harriet struck and held in her untroubling hand, and the physician, therefore, required a much longer time than he might have taken under more favorable circumstances. At length he was forced to admit reluctantly that no light fingered gentleman to enter, but I give you my word to bottom try. No, sir! If you want to put a Gatling gun in your own house, do so by all means. In mine I have no room for artillery or an army of Pinkertons. Don't you see how absurd you are?"

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He had intended staying for dinner, but changed his mind and swung rapidly away, while Mr. Renwick looked after him, laughing merrily.

"Oh, I say, Michael!" he called. "Don't forget to lock under your bed tonight. You might find a burglar with a cast in his eye."

For once Mr. Renwick had got the letter of his brother-in-law, and the fact pleased him immensely.

"The poor old granny!" he muttered as he went into the house. "Upon my word, I'm astonished at him!"

It may be stated that, contrary to the expectation of Mr. Corrigan, the part man did take further interest in the possible burglary, if only to prove his own theory. On the following night three private detectives came out to Irvington and stole separately to the lawyer's house. About 11 o'clock, he was accompanied by Mr. Corrigan in person, they concealed themselves at various points of vantage on the Renwick place and awaited developments. The night was damp and gloomy—most excellent weather conditions for a housebreaking party, but with disadvantages for amateur detectives at the advanced age of sixty-one. Beyond a cough of rheumatism Mr. Corrigan heaped nothing, and the morning the lawyer's house. About 11 o'clock, he was accompanied by Mr. Corrigan in person, they concealed themselves at various points of vantage on the Renwick place and awaited developments. 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