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Million Dollar Mystery

(Continued from page 2)

large order before him to disable Braine. The recognition between them was now frank and absolute;

"You're a dead man, Norton!" panted Braine, as he reached for the reporter's throat.

Norton said nothing, but struck the hand aside. For a moment they both went under. They came up sputtering, each trying for a hold. It was a terribly enervating struggle.

Florence could do nothing. The boat in which she sat continued to drift away from the fighting men.

Once she tried to grab Braine with the pole he had been using, but failed. From the shore came another oar.

For awhile she could not tell whether it contained friends or enemies. It was terrible to be forced to wait, absolutely helpless.

Norton suddenly swung off Braine and began to swim madly for the motorboat, which Florence had brought about. Even then it was only by the barest luck in the world that Norton managed to catch the gunwale.

The rest of it was simple. When they finally reached a haven, Florence, oddly enough, thought of the horse she had left tethered nine miles from the stables. She laughed hysterically.

"I guess he won't die. We can send someone out for him. Now, for heaven's sake, how did you get into this?"



The Magic Paper Was Here.

Where were you? What have you been up to?" with tender brusqueness. "I wanted to do a little detective work of my own," she faltered.

"It looks as if you had done it. You infant! Will you never learn to keep outside this muddle? It's a man's work."

Florence, thoroughly weakened by her long immersion in the water, began to weep silently.

"You poor child, I'm a brute!" And he comforted her.

Later that day, at home, she remembered the blank paper.

"I stole this from one of the men in the cave. He said this blank paper would probably save father."

Jim took it. "Hm! Invisible ink, and it's had a fine washing."

"But maybe it is waterproof." "Maybe it is. Anyhow, Miss Sherlock, we'll show it to Jones and see what he says."

CHAPTER XX.

Braine Tries Another Weapon. "What I want now," said Braine, as he paced the living room of the apartment of the countess, "is revenge. I've been checkmated enough, Olga; they're playing with us."

"That is nothing new," she replied, shrugging. "At the beginning I warned you. I never liked this affair after the first two or three failures. But you would have your way. You wanted revenge at that early date; but I cannot see that you've gone forward. Has it ever occurred to you that the organization may be getting tired, too? They depend solely upon your invention, and each time your invention has resulted in touching nothing but zero."

"Thanks!" "O, I'm not chiding you. I've failed, too."

"Are you turning against me?" he demanded bitterly. "Do my actions point that way?" she countered. "No. But the more I view what has passed, the more disheartened I grow. It has been a series of blind alleys, and all we have succeeded in doing is knocking our heads. I can see now that all our failures are due to one mistake."

"And what the devil is that?" he asked, irritably. "We were in too much of a hurry at the beginning. Hargreave prepared himself for quick action on your part."

"And if I had not acted quickly he would have started successfully on one

of his world tours again, and that would have been the last of him, and we should never have learned of the girl's existence. So there's your argument."

"Perhaps you are right. But for all that we have not played the game with any degree of finesse."

"Bah!" Braine lit a cigarette and smoked nervously. "I can't even get rid of that meddling reporter. He has been as much to blame for our failures as either Jones or Hargreave. I admit that in his case I judged hastily. I believed him to be just an ordinary newspaper man, and he was clever enough to lull my suspicions. But I'm going to get him, Olga, even if I have to resort to ordinary gunman tricks. If there's any final reckoning, by the Lord Harry, he shan't get a chance in the witness stand."

"And I begin to think that that little chit of a girl has been hoodwinking me all along. By the way, did you find out what that letter said?" she asked after a pause.

"Letter? What letter?" She sprang from her chair. "Do you mean to say that they have not told you about that?" Olga became greatly excited.

"Explain," he said. "Why, I was at the garden day before yesterday, and a man approached and asked if I was Miss Hargreave. Becoming at once suspicious that something very important was about to happen, I signified that I was Miss Hargreave. The man slipped a paper into my hand and hurried off. I took a quick glance at it and was dumfounded to find it utterly blank of writing. At first I thought some joke had been played on me, then I changed to remember the invisible ink letters you always wrote me. Understanding that you were to visit the cave in the morning, I had one man at the garden take the note. And you never got it!"

"Some one shall pay for this carelessness. I'll call up Vron and Jackson at once. Wait just a moment."

He went to the telephone. A low muttering conversation took place. Olga could hear little or none of it. When Braine put the receiver back on the hook his face was not pleasant to see.

"That girl!" "What now?" "It seems she had been out horse-back riding that morning. She had seen one of the boys cross the field and suddenly disappear; and she was curious to learn what had become of him. With her usual luck she stumbled on the method of opening the door of the cave and went in. She must have been noosing about. She didn't have much time, though, as the boys came up to await me. Evidently she crawled into that old chest and in some inexplicable manner purloined the letter from Jackson's pocket. They left to reconnoiter; and it was then that Jackson discovered his loss. When Florence heard them returning she jumped into the well. And lived through that tunnel! The devil is in it!"

"Or out of it, since we consider him our friend." "And I had her in my hands, note and all!"

"But with all that water there will not be any writing left on the letter." "Invisible ink is generally indelible and impervious to the action of water; at least the kind I use is. I'd give a thousand for a sight of that letter."

"And it might be worth a million," Olga suggested. "Not the least doubt of it in my mind. Olga, old girl, it does look as if my star was growing dim. We'll never get our hands on that million. I feel it in my bones. So let's settle down to a campaign of revenge, without any furbelows. I want to twist Hargreave's heart before the game winds up."

"You wish really to injure her?" "I do not wish to injure her. Far from it," he replied, smiling evilly. "You want her . . . dead?" whispered Olga, paling.

"Exactly. I want her dead. And so if all my efforts here come to nothing, so shall Hargreave's. His millions will become waste paper to him. That's revenge. The Persian peach method."

"Poison? You shall not! You shall not kill her!" vehemently. "Tender hearted!"

"No. If I must in the end go to prison, so be it; but I refuse to die in the chair."

"Very well, then. We shan't kill her, but we'll make her wish she was dead. I was only trying to see how far you would go. The basket of peaches is in the hallway. Every peach is poisoned. No man in the country knows more about subtle poisons than I do. Have I not written books on the subject?" ironically.

"And they will trace it back to you in a straight line," she warned. "I will not have it!" "I can go elsewhere," he replied coldly.

"You would leave me?" "The moment you cross my will," emphatically.

It became her turn to pace. Torn between her love of the man and the danger which stared her in the face, she was for the time being distracted. All the time he watched her with malevolent curiosity, knowing that in the end she would concur with his evil plans.

"Very well," she said finally. "But listen; we shall be found out. Never doubt that. Your revenge will cost us both our lives. I feel it."

"Bah! The law will have no hand in my end. I always carry a pellet; and that ring of yours would suffice a regiment. She will not die. She will merely become a kind of paralytic;

the kind that can move a little but not enough; always wheeled about in a chair. I'll bring in the peaches:



Just Power Enough to Keep Herself Afloat.

rosy and downy. One bite, after a given time, will do the trick. If they suspect and throw them out we have lost nothing but the peaches. A trusted messenger will carry them to the Hargreave house. And then we'll sit down and wait."

Meantime, in the library of the Hargreave house, Florence and Jim were puzzling over the blank sheet of paper.

"I'll wager," said Jim, "the water washed all the writing away. The fire does not seem to do any good. We'll turn it over to Jones. Jones'll find a way to solve it. Trust him."

"What are you two chattering about?" asked Susan, who was arranging some flowers on the table. "Secrets," said Jim, smiling.

"Humph!" Susan pattered about for a few minutes longer, then crossed to the recep-



He Went to the Telephone.

tion room, intending to go upstairs. At that moment the maid was admitting a messenger with a basket of fruit.

"For Miss Hargreave," said he. He gave the basket to the maid, touched his cap awkwardly, and swung on his heel, closing the door behind him. He was in a hurry to deliver another message.

(Continued Next Week)

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Decrease in Revenues. Washington, Feb. 3.—January federal disbursements were \$5,116,427 more than the revenue collected. The excess of disbursements in January, 1914, was only \$4,512,262. Neither customs nor internal revenue brought in the expected returns. Customs receipts amounted to \$16,558,193, compared with \$23,528,000 for the same month of 1914. To Aid Mining Industry. Washington, Feb. 3.—Under a bill passed by the senate ten mining ex-

periment stations will be constructed in the continental United States and one in Alaska as a means of further advancing the mining industry. The measure also provides for purchase of fifteen movable mine safety stations. Treason Charge is Made. Pretoria, Feb. 3.—Pitro Grobler, a member of the parliament of the Union of South Africa, and a grandson of Paul Kruger, has been committed for trial on a charge of treason.