

# THE BEST MAN

by HAROLD MACGRATH

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## SYNOPSIS.

Carrington loved Kate Cavanaugh, daughter of Multi-Millionaire Henry Cavanaugh. The latter liked Carrington, but refused him as a son-in-law. Young Carrington, a lawyer, held evidence of criminal financial operations, of which Cavanaugh was guilty. It was Carrington's duty to prosecute the rich man, but he decided to lay the whole matter before Kate. He did so the next day. The young woman decided that to drop the case would be cowardly even though the accused was her father. Cavanaugh offered Carrington a position at \$17,000 a year. He refused it. He hid his evidence in the Cavanaugh safe, after being introduced to the millionaire's father. The evidence was stolen that night. Kate's sister Norah confided that she had told her grandfather the combination to the safe. Carrington and Kate went riding.

## CHAPTER III.—Continued.

"Not more than I," sadly.

"Nothing like, is there, girl?"

"I hate automobiles," she answered, irrelevantly.

The old, old sea quivered murmuringly at their feet, and the white gulls sailed hither and thither, sometimes breasting the rollers just as they were about to topple over into running creamy foam. The man and the girl seemed perfectly content to remain voiceless. There was no sound but the song of the sea; the girl dreamed, and the man wondered what her dream was. Presently he glanced at his watch. He stood up, brushing the sand from his clothes.

"Half an hour between us and breakfast, Kate. All aboard!"

The night before might have been only an idle dream.

So they took the road back. Only the sea and the gulls saw the tender kiss.

The pariah sauntered in at two o'clock that afternoon, just as the family were sitting down to luncheon. He was a revelation. There was nothing shabby about him now. He wore a new suit, spats, a new straw hat, and twirled a light bamboo. There was something jaunty and confident in his air, a bubbling in his eyes; altogether, he was in fine fettle about something. He cast aside his hat and came with a flourish.

"Aha! just in time," he said. "Another chair, William."

The butler sent a dubious glance at his master; there was the usual curt nod and the frown. So grandpa sat down beside Norah, whose usual effervescence had strangely subsided; he pinched her cheek, and deliberated between the cold ham and chicken.

"A fine day! A beautiful day! A day of days!" he cried, surrendering to the appetitious lure of both meats.

Nobody replied to this outburst of exuberance; nobody had the power to. A strange calm settled over every one. This was altogether a new kind of grandpa. There was nothing timid or hesitant here, nothing meek and humble; neither was there that insufferable self-assurance and arrogance of a disagreeable man. Grandpa's attitude was simply that of an equal, of a man of the world, of one who is confident of the power he holds in reserve; that was all. But for all that, he was a sensation of some magnitude. Carrington was seized with a wild desire to laugh. The truth came to him like an illumination; but he wisely held his peace.

"There is something in the air today that renews youth in old age; eh, my son?" with a sly wink at Cavanaugh.

Cavanaugh's expression of wonder began to freeze and remained frozen to the end of the meal. So all the honors of conversation fell to grandpa, who seemed to relish this new privilege.

"Father," said Cavanaugh, holding back his accumulated wrath, "I want to see you in my study."

"Immediately, my son. I was just about to make that same request." Grandpa looked at Kate, then at Carrington. "I suppose you young persons will invite poor old grandpa to the wedding?"

"Father!" This was altogether too much for patrician blood. Cavanaugh's face reddened and his fists closed ominously. "You will do me the honor, father, not to meddle with my private affairs. Kate is my daughter, and she shall marry the man it pleases me to accept."

Carrington felt this cut dart over grandpa's shoulder. He stirred uneasily.

"Oh, if that's the way you look at it!" with a comical deprecatory shrug. Grandpa touched Carrington on the arm. "Young man, do you love this girl? No false modesty, now; the

truth, and nothing but the truth. Do you love her?"

"With all my heart!" Carrington grandpa.

felt the impulse occur. Something whispered that his whole future depended upon his answer.

"And you, Kate?"

"I love him, grandpa," bravely.

"That's all I want to know," said Cavanaugh released one of his fists; it fell upon the table and rattled things generally.

"Am I in my own house?" he bawled.

"That depends," answered grandpa, suavely. "You've got to behave yourself. Now, then, let us repair to the secret chamber of finance. It is the day of settlement," grimly.

Mrs. Cavanaugh was gently weeping. The dread moment had come, come when she had been lulled into the belief that it would never come. Kate understood, and longed to go to her and comfort her; and she trembled for her father, who knew nothing of the pit that lay at his feet. Carrington eyed the lighted end and sighed with satisfaction.

"If you but knew what they were about, these papers, you would pay a cool million for their possession. My word, it is a droll situation; reads like the fourth act in a play. If you have a duke picked out for Kate, forget him."

"She will never marry Carrington!" Cavanaugh's voice rose in spite of his effort to control it.

"My son, they will hear you," the pariah warned. He blew a cloud of smoke into the air and sniffed it. "You never offered me this particular brand," reproachfully.

"Enjoy it," snapped the other, "for it is the last you will ever smoke in any house of mine."

"You don't tell me!"

"Those papers, instantly!"

"Be it known by these presents, et cetera, et cetera," said the old man. He rose suddenly, the banter leaving his lips and eyes, and his jaw setting hard. "You had better get your check book handy, my son, for when I'm through with you, you'll be only too glad to fill out a blank for fifty thousand. I consider myself quite moderate. This young Carrington is a mighty shrewd fellow; and I'd rather have him as a friend than an enemy. He has made out his case so strongly that it will cost you a pretty penny to escape with a whole skin."

"What are you talking about?"

"The case of the people versus Cavanaugh et al. It concerns the clever way in which you and your partners slid under the seven per cent. dividend due your investors; which caused a slump in the price of the shares, forcing thousands to sell their stock; which you bought back at a handsome profit. Moloch! The millions you have are not enough; you must have

hereafter. Fifty thousand! You make me laugh!"

"I shall make you laugh, my son; but not on the humorous side." The old man reached out his hand and struck the bell.

"What do you want?" asked Cavanaugh, mystified.

"I want the author of the document. I propose to take the family skeleton out of the closet and dangle it up and down before the young man's eyes. You will laugh, I dare say."

Cavanaugh fell back in his chair again. The door opened and William looked in.

"You rang, sir?" to Cavanaugh fils.

"No, William," said Cavanaugh pere, affably; "I rang. Call Mr. Carrington." The butler disappeared. "It is my turn, Henry, and I have waited a long time, as you very well know. Ha! Sit down, Mr. Carrington, sit down."

Carrington, who had entered, obeyed readily.

"You left some papers in the dining room safe last night," began grandpa.

"I was about to ask you to return them," replied Carrington, with assumed pleasantry.

The two Cavanaugh's looked at each other blankly. Finally grandpa laughed.

"I told you he was clever!"

"It is true, then," snarled the millionaire, "that you have been meddling with affairs that in no wise concern you. I warn you that your case in court will not have a leg to stand on."

"I prefer not to discuss the merits of the case," said Carrington, quietly.

"I have been your host, sir; you have eaten at my table," Cavanaugh, as he spoke, was not without a certain dignity.

"All of which, recognizing the present situation, I profoundly regret."

"Good!" said grandpa. "Henry, if you had been the general they give you credit for, you would have offered Mr. Carrington that seventeen thousand two or three years ago. There is nothing so menacing to dishonesty as the free lance. Now, listen to me for a space. We'll come to the documentary evidence all in good time. I spoke of Caliban uplifted," ironically.

"For years I have been treated as a pariah, as a beast of burden, as a messenger boy, as a go-between to take tricks that might have soiled my son's delicate hands. Father and son, yes; but in name only. Blood is thicker than water only when riches and ambition are not touched in the quick. This dutiful son of mine could easily have elevated me along with himself; but he would not do so. He was afraid that people might learn something of my past which would greatly hinder his advancement. He prospered, he grew rich and arrogant; he put his heel on my neck, and I dared not revolt. You wouldn't believe it, would you, Mr. Carrington, that I was graduated with honors from Oxford university. I speak three tongues fluently, and have a smattering of a dozen others; am a doctor of philosophy, an Egyptologist. But I was indolent and loved good times, and so, you see, it came about that I fell into evil ways. Formerly, I was a burglar by profession."

(TO BE CONCLUDED.)

**Medical Fees in Old Times.**

The remuneration of physicians originally consisted in presents, but at the time of Hippocrates payment in money was already customary. Physicians received also public praise, the "crown of honor," the freedom of the city, the privilege of eating at the king's table. Physicians employed by the state received a yearly salary, as high as \$2,000 in some instances. Rich people would pay enormous sums for a successful treatment, and a case is recorded in which \$200,000 was paid.—New York Medical Journal.

**What It Reminded Him Of.**

When Gen. Schenck, whose greatest fame rests upon his having introduced the game of poker into England, first arrived in London as American minister to the court of St. James he took a little of his spare time to visit the sights of the British capital. Among other places he visited Mme. Tus-saud's wax works.

"And what do you think of our great wax work exhibition?" asked a friend.

"Well," replied the general, "it struck me as being very like the ordinary English evening party."

**Baskets of Straw.**

Baskets containing butter shipped from Queensland to Great Britain are now made of straw. A company has been formed to work the business of straw-box making in Australia. Butter boxes hitherto have been made of pine, but the drain upon this timber owing to the heavy exports has been so severe that the wood is rapidly going up in price. At present 3,000,000 boxes are used in Australia annually, costing \$1,000,000. The new box will save the dairy industry about \$200,000 a year.

Jane—Why, Mabel, your hair is in frightful disorder. Did you forget to brush it?

Mabel (coldly)—If you knew a little more, Jane, you wouldn't be so hasty. This is the latest thing in coiffures—and it took me two hours to get it.



"Hand Them Over."

rington dabbled with his fork; he wished he were anywhere in the world but at the Cavanaugh table. The desire to laugh recurred to him but he realized that the inclination was only hysterical.

Cavanaugh was already heading for the study. He was in a fine rage. Grandpa was close on his heels. At the threshold he turned once more to Carrington.

"You know your 'Tempest,' young man, I'm sure," he said. "Well, this is the revolt of Caliban—Caliban uplifted, as it were."

The door closed behind them, and father and son faced each other.

"I'll trouble you for those papers you took from the safe last night," said the son, heavily.

"Ah, indeed!" said grandpa.

"At once; I have reached the limit of my patience."

"So have I," returned grandpa. "Perhaps you know what these papers are about?"

"I know nothing whatever, save that they belong to Mr. Carrington. Hand them over."

Grandpa helped himself to a cigar and sat down. He puffed two or three

more. There are about twelve of you in all, not one of you worth less than three millions. What a beautiful chance for blackmail!"

Cavanaugh stepped back, and his legs, striking a chair, toppled him into it. His father had become Medusa's head!

"Aha! That jars you some," chuckled grandpa.

It took Cavanaugh some time to recover his voice, and when he did it was faint and unnatural.

"Is this true?" he gasped.

"It is so true that I'll trouble you for the check now."

"Come, father, this is no time for nonsense." Cavanaugh waved his hand impatiently. "Let me see the document."

"Hardly. But the moment you place the check in my hands I shall be pleased to do so. But there must be no reservation to have payment stopped."

"I will not give you a single penny!"

The mere suggestion of giving up so large a sum without a struggle seemed preposterous. "Not a penny! And furthermore, I am through with you for good and all. Shift for yourself

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## HER COMPLAINT.



"Only think, Mrs. Blivons! Every time I hear a scandal, and run post-haste over to share the latest news with that Mrs. Spitzenfest, I find she knows every detail already—the shameless thing!"

## A NURSE'S EXPERIENCE.

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