

THE KIDNAPPED MILLIONAIRES

A TALE OF WALL STREET AND THE TROPICS

By FREDERICK U. ADAMS.

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CHAPTER I.

KIDNAPPED.

"All about the Kidnapped Millionaires! Record Extra! All about the Great Mystery! Record Extra! Hundreds of newshyos poured from an alley and dashed into the human currents which surge at the confluence of Nassau street and Park Row. In a moment the air was aflame with the red headlines of the "Record Extra." It was not necessary to buy a paper. The type was so large that it told the news to the passerby. For a week the Wall street boom had been the sensation of New York and of the country. The perpetual excitement which reigns within the shadow of Trinity church had permeated office and counting room. It was the whispered topic of conversation among clerks, and the noisy subject of debate in hotel lobby and corridors. The jargon of the Stock Exchange was incorporated into metropolitan English. The tales of fortunes made to the clicking music of the ticker, aroused the cupidity of thousands, who saw in the whirl of speculative frenzy the prospect of wealth without work. Newspapers and narrating the golden exploits of magnates and operators.

KIDNAPPED!

Four Multimillionaires Mysteriously Missing!

Palmer J. Morton, Andrus Carmody, Simon Pence and R. J. Kent cannot be found.

Fears that they have been Kidnapped, or have met with Foul Play.

Excitement on Wall Street.

Palmer J. Morton, R. J. Kent, Andrus Carmody and Simon Pence have mysteriously disappeared. They did not appear at their offices this morning. Inquiries by telephone at their houses disclose the astounding fact that though they were not seen home last night, various rumors are in circulation, but at this writing nothing is known, except that they did not come home and have completely disappeared. Their combined wealth is estimated at \$70,000,000.

The street crowds received the news calmly. They did not believe it. But they thought the papers.

The news came by the way of Wall Street. Strange rumors had been in circulation all the morning. A series of independent reports indicated the crowd of brokers which clustered around the standards on the floor of the Stock Exchange. The curb brokers on Broad street were uneasy, as they waited for the hour of ten. The market opened strong and then sagged. It was a few minutes past eleven o'clock when the ticker in the thousands of offices stopped in their task of recording quotations.

There was a splutter of dashes on the tape. Customers gathered around the pedestals. There was news coming. They anticipated the announcement of an important failure. It had been rumored that a Consolidated Exchange house was in liquidation.

The following message spread itself about the tape:

"107 a. m.—Palmer J. Morton, R. J. Kent, Andrus Carmody and Simon Pence have not appeared at their offices. They did not return to their residences last night. Relatives are alarmed and have notified the police. They were last seen at a conference held at the office of Palmer J. Morton at four o'clock yesterday afternoon. No trace since. Foul play is feared."

The murmur of the Stock Exchange swelled into a roar which vibrated above the rattle of traffic and the hum of the streets.

This was the morning of the third of May, memorable in the records of Wall street.

CHAPTER II.

TWO NAPOLEONS OF JOURNALISM.

Robert Van Horne was the owner and editor of the New York Record. He was a leading light in a much-esteemed school of journalism. He was the exemplar of the theory that the modern newspaper should "do things" to quote the idiomatic expression of Mr. William Chalmers, his managing editor.

Robert Van Horne was the millionaire son of a departed millionaire father. He was born in his school years, and at the age of 25 he found himself the sole owner of the immense Van Horne estate, roughly estimated as having a value of \$20,000,000. His cattle ranged on a thousand hills in New Mexico and Texas. The drills of his mining machinery were boring into the rocks in scores of productive mines in Colorado, the Dakotas and Montana.

With the traditional "Van Horne" luck he had been among the first to strike a rich vein in the snow-swept valleys of the Klondike. At an opportune moment he had invested a small fortune in Tennessee iron lands, and before this story opens had smiled at the confusion of those friends who chided him as the purchaser of a "gold brick."

Soon after the death of his father, Van Horne bought the New York Record; a paper which had survived a checked career in the arena of metropolitan journalism. From the first issue under the Van Horne management the Record was a publication which could not be ignored. Like Minerva it sprang into life full-grown, and paroled in new and startling armor. It commanded attention and respect. It was one who were blind, deaf and dumb he could remain unaware of the fact that the Record was being published.

Mr. William Chalmers, his managing editor, was a tall, smooth-shaven, clear-cut young man, who had passed

his 35 summers. He had acquired no gray hairs in the accumulation of a vast and varied fund of experience. He was possessed of an easy confidence; was handsome without knowledge; and had that grasp of every detail of the newspaper business which made him invaluable as an executive. He had traveled in every part of the globe; had interviewed the nation's heroes on railroads and emperors in palaces; knew the language of the slums and the graces of a court; could report a murder case or dictate a message for a president.

Mr. Van Horne thoroughly understood the great reading public to which his paper made a bid for support. It wished to be amused. The Record amused it. It wished to be thrilled. The Record thrilled it. It hungered for sensations. The Record had a never-ending supply of sensations. It clamored for pictures. The Record had them. It stood ready to print instantly reproductions of photographs of past, present or future events.

Mr. Walter B. Hester was a friend of Robert Van Horne. He was a young man with a fortune and a hobby. His hobby was journalism. His fortune was conservatively estimated at \$3,000,000, and he was in a position to indulge in any fancy which attracted him. The New York Record under the Van Horne management dazzled him. Its method of handling great news events appealed to Hester. At one time he contemplated founding a rival paper, and surpassing, if possible, the bewildering strokes of enterprise which were displayed in the pages of that paper. On reflection he decided it meant too much work. He realized that the management of a great newspaper entailed an enormous amount of detail. Though possessed of much energy and persistence, Walter B. Hester was introspective enough to realize that he was not fitted for the task of supervising a metropolitan newspaper. He therefore abandoned the idea.

He had no difficulty in forming a close acquaintance with Robert Van Horne. They were fellow-members of several clubs, and both were fitted by wealth and education to move in the same social circles. Hester had no time in confiding his ambitions to Mr. Van Horne. He wished to make his mark in the world as a journalist. Mr. Van Horne readily perceived that Hester was a genius in his line of thought and action. The ambitious amateur would listen to no proposition involving pay for his services. All he asked was a chance to plan and execute those journalistic commissions which gave play to his genius as an initiator and to his skill as a writer.

Mr. Van Horne was delighted to accept the volunteer services of the brilliant but erratic Walter B. Hester. At the time this story begins, Hester was about 32 years old. He was a member of a New York family which traced its wealth and ancestry to the sixteenth century. His fortune was an independent one; and though his tastes were expensive, he did not live up to his income.

It would take a volume to recount the journalistic exploits of Walter B. Hester. He built the splendid steam yacht the "Shark," and employed it in his worldwide search for sensational news. He took 200 passengers from a slinking liner, and was decorated by four governments for bravery. In every war the "Shark" was in the foreground. It was the Hester yacht that ran the batteries at Havana and escaped from the harbor with valuable news and information. At every signal of trouble Hester and the "Shark" were sure to be on hand long before the representatives of other papers were aware that news was brewing. At his own expense he established a system of espionage on all the courts of Europe. Hester was known in every place of royalty, and in a few years became recognized as the most brilliant newspaper correspondent in the world.

At the time this story opens Mr. Hester had returned to New York after a cruise in Philippine waters. He was interviewed by all the newspapers, and his portrait flashed from hundreds of prints in all parts of the country. He was proud and happy of his success. His mind was ever alert for some scheme which would emphasize his fame. He regarded his foreign triumphs as hot stepping stones to some great coup which would immortalize his name.

Hester was disappointed when he learned that Mr. Van Horne had departed recently on a secret mission to Europe. At first he thought of

intruding on his time, and his friends grew to know just how long Sidney would tolerate their company in preference to his books.

Hester tipped a glass of wine; knickerbockered from his cigar, and extended an emmeled cigar case to Hammond.

"How long does our famous correspondent intend to remain in New York?" asked Sidney Hammond. "It must seem dull here after what you have been through."

"It seems good to be here," replied Hester. "I am going to quit roaming around and stay in this country for awhile. The taps here are more big than on the battle lines anywhere in the world. I believe there is some sensational news about the trusts if it could be obtained and properly handled."

"They are getting big enough and bold enough to attract attention," said Hammond. "There will be plenty of news about them some day."

"How do you like the Record's leading editorial to-day?" he asked.

"The one about the big steel combine, do you mean?"

"Yes."

"I am glad to see you again, Mr. Hester. Take a chair. You will find that one more comfortable. I trust you do not intend to interview me. You know my rule. Mr. Morton looked sternly at Hester, who smiled and replied that he had long ago abandoned that enterprise as a vain pursuit.

"I have called on a matter of business," said Mr. Hester, briskly, as he removed his gloves, and leaned slightly forward in his chair. "You are a busy man and I will attempt to state my proposition as concisely as possible. According to popular report and to general knowledge you have been kept the moving spirit in those great financial undertakings which have resulted in the reorganization of various industries. Your standing is such that your name is critically forward in his chair. You will find that one more comfortable. I trust you do not intend to interview me. You know my rule. Mr. Morton looked sternly at Hester, who smiled and replied that he had long ago abandoned that enterprise as a vain pursuit.

"I am going to form a trust," said Hester suddenly.

"You need not laugh, I am. I am going to form a newspaper trust."

"All right, Walter," rejoined Hammond, who was familiar with Hester's mood. "I shall have for you to begin to-night. Let me know when you are ready to draw up the papers and I will render you my best services as your attorney. Thus far I have been more successful in organizing trusts than fighting them."

"I will need your services in a short time," said Hester, with some excitement, which Hammond attributed to the wine. "I am not jesting. Of course this is confidential."

"Certainly. I am going to Chicago to-morrow, and will be back in about a week."

"Let me see you when you get back. I shall wish to talk with you."

"I will do so, Olive, by dear," said Hammond, addressing his sister, "it is time your aged brother was on his way home. I shall ask the permission of the ladies, and of our excellent host to depart, as I have a long journey ahead of me to-morrow—or more properly to-day—it now being past two o'clock."

"You and Walter are as ungallant as you can be," said Miss Le Roy, as Mr. Hester gave the signal for the party to disperse. "Just because you have talked all you wish, we must all run along home like good little girls. I am going to give a supper party soon, and it will last until everybody has talked as much as they care to. And with this awful threat Miss Le Roy was captured by Mr. Hester and led away to her carriage, nor did her smiling face show that her resentment was deep or lasting.

"There is no industry in the country offering so great an opportunity for trust management as that of the newspaper press," said Mr. Hester, with earnestness. "It is true that we have the Associated Press service,

which is a co-operative affair, but this, while an invulnerable adjunct, is really a small item in the total expense of a great paper. It simply does on a small scale what can and should be done on a large scale."

"You would have a syndicate of papers—one paper in each of the large cities," suggested Mr. Morton.

"I would have a syndicate which would own two papers in all cities having populations in excess of 100,000," replied Mr. Hester.

"Yes, I see. One republican and one democratic paper in each city. Ah—um—That would be quite a plan," said Mr. Morton, drawing his hand slowly over his stubbled chin. "Both under one general management, I suppose?"

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the theaters and some of his newspaper exploits were made the subject of a topical song and rendered with great success at a leading vaudeville hall. For some time he had led a life free from care in company with congenial spirits, who were glad to shine in his reflected fame.

At the office of The Record Mr. Hester had a luxurious private room, as befitting his rank as the special envoy of the paper. One afternoon he received a message from his old friend Sidney Hammond, stating that he would be in the city for two days, at the end of which time he would be compelled to make a western trip on important business. Hester was delighted to hear from Sidney Hammond, and arranged to meet him at a theater and supper party in his honor.

A party of eight occupied the Hester box at the opera and thoroughly enjoyed "La Boheme." Walter B. Hester and Miss Edith Le Roy; Sidney Hammond and Miss Olive, his sister; Mr. Converse and Miss De Neuville; Mr. Blake and Miss Meredith, constituted the merry group, which at the conclusion of the opera, lingered in the fashionable mob, and after the usual details and annoyances found themselves in carriages speeding toward Fifth avenue.

There was a crush of carriages in front of Delmonico's. It was the night hour when New York attains the height of its feverish activity. The avenue was alive with swift-moving equipages. An army of lackeys was busy receiving the arriving guests. Inside the massive doors, the strains of an orchestra thrashed in an air of heavy perfume. The glare of light from thousands of electric globes was reflected from glass and marble, but subdued by palms and masses of roses.

A table had been reserved for Mr. Hester and his guests—brave in its array of linen and flowers, and its glitter of cut glass. As Mr. Hester entered the hall he was recognized by scores of friends and for a few moments held an impromptu reception.

When this social duty was ended, Miss Edith Le Roy took prompt charge of certain details—as was the wont of this vivacious young woman. Mr. Hester had seated himself next to Sidney Hammond. Miss Le Roy had no idea of consenting to such an arrangement.

"You are the host, Mr. Hester," she said, and you must take the head of the table. Miss Meredith will sit at your right, and Mr. Hammond will take his place next to her. I am not going to permit you and Mr. Hammond to monopolize each other's conversation. I can trust you, Miss Meredith, to keep Sidney and Walter from entering into any discussion of their dreary schemes for reconstructing the universe.

The dinner went on merrily and a general conversation in which a limitless number of topics were introduced, discussed, and dismissed. Terrapin followed boudin, and canvas back ducks were served with some rare old Burgundy. The spacious dining halls had in the meantime become crowded, and the orchestra encountered a noisy rival in the laughter and conversation which mingled with the strains of the music.

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faction, the success which had been attained in this terpsichorean diversion Mr. Chalmers, the managing editor, entered the room.

"By the way, Chalmers," said Hester, as he paced up and down the room, "why wouldn't it be a good scheme to let the women of New York assume entire charge of the Record for a week. Get some well-known society women to act as editor-in-chief, and advertise for women writers of all kinds. Of course you will have to look after the mechanical and routine part of the paper, but let them collect and write all the stuff. Select young women to report the horse races, prize fights, the police news, the courts and to handle all departments of the paper. They could run just as much or as little foreign and out-of-town stuff as they pleased. They would write all of the editorials and draw all of the pictures. Great scheme—don't you think so?"

"You talk like a political platform, Walter," replied Hammond. "You believe nothing of the kind. You are perfectly well aware that no effective anti-trust law will be affirmed by the courts. Every time a test is made, the various courts pronounce such laws unconstitutional. Twenty states have passed anti-trust enactments, and all have met the same fate. I do not believe it is possible by law to prevent any two men, 20 men or 100 men from consolidating their interests and thereby saving and increasing their profits. The trust is the inevitable result of revolutionary forces. It possesses certain advantages. These must be conserved. On the other hand, the trust of today possesses certain features which menace our very existence as a people. A remedy must be found; but it must be a natural remedy. You know your views on this subject, and I do not propose to abuse your hospitality by inflicting anew on you the details of my pet theory, which may or may not be worthy of consideration.

"If we could but devise some plan to bring about a national or international congress of such men," said Hester, taking out his pencil and jotting down a list he had in mind. "I can imagine the headlines, 'College of Financial Giants.' 'Millionaires as Reformers.' 'Standardize the Income Tax.' 'Trusts Tremble.' 'Wealth Willing to Compromise.' It would be great! If we could get some foreign financiers with titles to stand sponsor for the idea, our home product would be more likely to follow their lead. It is worth thinking about. I am going to cable Van Horne and suggest it to him."

"No, I do not think it possible to bring such a body of men into a conference," continued Hammond, as Hester resumed silent with a familiar expression in his eyes. "In the first place they would not meet; in the second place, they would not talk. They are not willing even to defend their methods, to say nothing of taking the initiative towards reforming them. We must possess our souls in patience; do the best we can, and let the sequence of events work out its destiny. It is our good fortune that we can better afford to wait than most men. You know that they have reason to complain of a millionaire lawyer with a good practice, and the millionaire correspondent and special envoy of a newspaper, should be able to withstand the onslaughts of trust magnates for a considerable period."

"I am going to form a trust," said Hester suddenly.

"You need not laugh, I am. I am going to form a newspaper trust."

"All right, Walter," rejoined Hammond, who was familiar with Hester's mood. "I shall have for you to begin to-night. Let me know when you are ready to draw up the papers and I will render you my best services as your attorney. Thus far I have been more successful in organizing trusts than fighting them."

"I will need your services in a short time," said Hester, with some excitement, which Hammond attributed to the wine. "I am not jesting. Of course this is confidential."

"Certainly. I am going to Chicago to-morrow, and will be back in about a week."

"Let me see you when you get back. I shall wish to talk with you."

"I will do so, Olive, by dear," said Hammond, addressing his sister, "it is time your aged brother was on his way home. I shall ask the permission of the ladies, and of our excellent host to depart, as I have a long journey ahead of me to-morrow—or more properly to-day—it now being past two o'clock."

"You and Walter are as ungallant as you can be," said Miss Le Roy, as Mr. Hester gave the signal for the party to disperse. "Just because you have talked all you wish, we must all run along home like good little girls. I am going to give a supper party soon, and it will last until everybody has talked as much as they care to. And with this awful threat Miss Le Roy was captured by Mr. Hester and led away to her carriage, nor did her smiling face show that her resentment was deep or lasting.

"There is no industry in the country offering so great an opportunity for trust management as that of the newspaper press," said Mr. Hester, with earnestness. "It is true that we have the Associated Press service,

which is a co-operative affair, but this, while an invulnerable adjunct, is really a small item in the total expense of a great paper. It simply does on a small scale what can and should be done on a large scale."