SERIAL STORY

DUKE OF DEVIL-MAY-CARE

By HARRIS DICKSON

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CHAPTER IV.—Continued.

Duke consulted his watch and shut it with a vicious snap. He took one look at the bottomless road which led eastward through the swamp, and turned to Chalky.

"Put a saddle on old Beck; she knows that road at night. I want to catch the south-bound train at Rolling Fork."

He ran a few yards down the levee and crossed to the store by another plank. "I'm going to town, Harper," he called in at the door. "Look after things."

"Oh, Mr. Duke," the manager ran out and protested; "that rise in the river is due to hit here about tomorrow, and the levees way break; you oughtn't to—"

"Damn it, Harper, I know I oughtn't to go, but I'm going anyway."

"But, Mr. Duke—"

"That's enough, Harper; you are paid to do what I tell you, and when I want your infernal advice I'll ask for it. You and the whole place may go to the devil for what I care."

He stamped angrily out of the store. Merritt, the clerk, finished rolling up a bolt of calico, and glanced sullenly toward Harper, who was still standing where Duke had left him, in the middle of the floor.

Duke's attack on him had been so vicious and so unexpected, that for a moment or two Harper did not comprehend; he thought it must be some stupid sort of a joke.

But as the other wheeled and left the store, Harper's face flushed; then it turned very white. He took two impetuous steps toward the door, and stopped. His color came back, and his smile came back.

"I don't see how you can take that, Mr. Harper," Merritt said, resentfully, leaning across the counter.

"I couldn't—from any other man."

The two or three negroes who had been drying their feet around the stove were already slipping out of the back door—it was not wise for them to mix up in white men's quarrels.

"Come back here, boys," Harper called, peremptorily. His authority on the plantation was at stake, for a white man in the swamp must cover every inch of ground he stands on, or he cannot hope to control half a thousand negroes.

The negroes came back reluctantly, keeping their eyes on the door through which their angry master had disappeared.

"Boys," Harper said to them, "something must be wrong with Mr. Duke; you know he never talks that way to the meanest nigger on his place—and you know that I don't take foolishness from anybody."

"Yassuh, yassuh," Uncle Reggy assented. Regulus Jones was "Mister Noel's pet nigger," so the other darkies said.

"I sho did think dat was mighty curyus o' Mister Noel—he musser been kinder pestered in 'is min'! I spec—" Uncle Reggy stopped; a sudden step on the gallery put a period in the middle of his sentence.

Noel Duke reappeared in the door, corduroys, slouch hat, leggings—he plunged on, head down, not looking where he went. The negroes made ready to run. He stopped, looked up.

"Harper," he said, holding out his hand, "I made a fool of myself just now; I'm sorry—"

"That's all right, Mr. Duke, I didn't think anything about it. I knew you must be worried about something."

"I am. I must go to Vicksburg for a few days; the plantation is entirely in your charge. If the levee should break, do whatever you think is necessary to save the stock and take care of the tenants. Good-by, Harper; good-by, Merritt. Give these boys a drink; they've been working hard all day. Good night, boys."

Fifteen minutes later a man and mule turned their backs upon the river and disappeared through the mists along a road that was more passable for boat than beast. Through the dark and the mud they floundered on, the sure-footed mule picking her way unerringly to the higher ground.

"I'll go to that cock-fight just to show her that I don't care. Vance is rich; he lives in New York; he can give her—" Then his cheek grew red, even in the blackness of the swamp, that he should impute such motives to Anita Cameron. He had only to think of her clear eyes and broad fair forehead to be ashamed.

"That old woman is at the bottom of it's. I'd break every bone in her body if she were only a man."

He shut his lips very tight; and the mule stumbled on.

CHAPTER V.

THE MAN THAT DID NOT CARE.

The bitterness of night had come upon Noel Duke as suddenly as an eclipse at morning extinguishes the newly risen sun. He floundered in a rayless swamp, crossing bridges that he could not see, trusting to his mule, and struggling through the sloughs. Blue mud spattered up and stained him—stained him in body, and filled his soul with evil thoughts. Even the chivalric traditions of his race could not prevent him from swearing to himself: "It's that old woman—that old woman."

There is no swamp at Vicksburg, no slough of morbid thought, no bottomless road for man and beast to flounder in. The brilliant February sunshine glistened upon her glory-guarded hills, crowning her lordly crests with the halo of heroic yesteryears. There's a lofty deed on every summit, a radiant glamour upon her sparkling lake, a mellow reverence in every valley where unmarked graves lie hid. There's a holiness, an uplift, an exaltation in these treasures of the siege-encircled city, in these memories of the river-girdled town.

But Noel Duke was in the same surly humor when, at ten o'clock the next morning, he opened the door to Joseph Balfour's law office.

Joe was in the act of turning away from the telephone. He saw Duke and began to smile.

"Hello, Noel, you're on time, I see—thought you were due to drop in pretty soon. It's a queer coincidence."

"What coincidence?"

"It's right peculiar—" Joe began drumming on his desk with a pencil, that always maddened the other. "It's right peculiar. I say it's a queer coincidence, whenever she comes to Vicksburg you happen along at the same time."

"Oh, you mean Miss Cameron? Is she here?"

Joe threw back his head and laughed—laughed until that funny little bald patch got redder than Duke's face.

"Joe, shut up; can't a fellow get tired of the swamp and come to town to see a cock-fight without you making all that fuss? I haven't played a game of poker for four months; haven't touched a drop; haven't done a thing but worry with niggers and high water. Come along; my buggy is waiting down-stairs, and I want you to go to the chicken-fight."

Joe shook his head; the other man insisted.

"That black-breasted red of mine, Scrapper, is to be pitted in the second battle against a Georgia shawl-neck of Buster Brady's. You'd better come and see it—it'll be a great fight."

"Can't go," Joe said, regretfully. "I've got to work—got to 'buy shoes for Sally an' the chillun,' as old Judge Billings used to say."

"Come along, Joe—come along, don't be a chump; a little sport will do you good. I—" he glanced out of the window, stopped short, and snatched his hat. "Good-by, old fellow, sorry you won't go," and he bolted out.

Joe Balfour walked to the window and looked down upon the street. He knew perfectly well what he was going to see. Miss Anita Cameron and Miss Alice Ashton were standing in front of the bookstore across the street. Duke emerged from the building on the sidewalk below, and did not turn his eyes toward them, but carefully took a position where Anita would be sure to see him.

There he stood, looking uncomfortable, then moved off a few steps and joined a noisy group of men—men with glaring neckties, diamonds, disreputable-looking sweaters, and some with tall silk hats. Many of them flourished money between their fingers and offered bets. An omnibus halted at the curb, a dozen men scrambled in, calling for other to follow. Several ran back to get a last drink.

Presently Duke came up the street again, arm in arm with a particularly tough-looking fellow in a red sweater. They climbed into his buggy and drove away.

Anita saw the whole proceeding. She smiled and went on chatting.

Joe Balfour watched them both—the man and the girl—from his window, and chuckled: "Did anybody ever see such an idiot. He needn't try to fool that girl, she reads him like a Mother Goose book."

CHAPTER VI.

THE CRIME.

Joe Balfour slept soundly after the cotillion. His room was on the ground floor, scarcely ten feet from the sidewalk. The usual noises of the night did not disturb him.

About daylight he was roused by a scraping against the outer wall. A man's head and shoulders rose suddenly above the window-sill and dropped again.

Joe slipped out of bed, cocked his pistol and hid behind the curtains. "He's dragging that bench underneath the window."

Joe watched the man outside, working away, utterly unconscious of being seen.

"My Lord," he thought, "I can't shoot the fellow without giving him some kind of a chance. I'll just wait till he opens the window, then knock him in the head." With that purpose in mind, he crept to the fire-place, picked up the poker, and resumed his position.

Presently the man's fingers clutched the window-sill, and he began drawing himself up. The slouch hat reappeared. The man outside was white. He stood erect and fumbled at the sash, but could not open it. Then to Joe's great astonishment, the man tapped on the pane, and called:

"Joe! Joe! wake up; let me in; it's Noel."

"Noel!" Joe exclaimed, putting his face close to the window. "Go around to the door—"

"No; let me in; here; quick!"

Joe unlocked the sash, raised the window, and Noel Duke scrambled across the sill, looking behind him as if he were pursued. Even in the dark Joe could see that his hands were trembling, and his face was very white.

"For heaven's sake, Noel, what's the matter? You scared me to death."

Duke dropped into a chair without a word, and drew a long breath of relief. Joe struck a match.

"Please don't light the gas," Duke begged. The voice did not sound like his; all its snap and buoyancy had gone.

Joe coaxed the fire into a blaze, Duke's eyes following him vaguely without interest.

After Joe had drawn on his trousers and dressing-gown, he laid his hand upon Duke's shoulder. "Well, boy, what's the trouble?"

Then steady old Joe waited; there was something exquisitely tender in his attitude toward the younger man.

He was still standing there, looking down, when Duke began to speak, without turning his head or lifting his eyes.

"Joe, do you remember last night how you begged me to go to that cotillion, and then come home with you? I knew I ought to do it; but I was hard-headed; I had my own way. Joe, I killed a man last night."

"What! Who was he? What was it about?"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

"FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE!"

Germans Shocked at African Manners.

The natives of German East Africa have contracted the vulgar habit of drinking soda water directly out of the bottles instead of pouring it first into a glass. To check this the government officials have issued a regulation that all natives discovered drinking out of bottles will be liable to severe corporal punishment or imprisonment, lest refilled bottles so used should find their way to tables of Europeans.—Kolnische Zeitung.

ELEPHANT AT THE TELEPHONE

Animal Took Much Time to Learn Ludicrous Trick.

So perfectly is this elephant broken that he works by cues imperceptible to the audience. The trainer merely raises his shoulders and the young bull strides toward the telephone box, turn the crank, ringing the bell, picks up the receiver in his long trunk and holds it to his great, flap ear. Then he hangs it up with the suddenness of disgust, rings the bell a second time, and again holds the receiver to his ear, while he listens with the sage, bland expression which only an elephant can assume. When finished, he hangs up the receiver and "rings off."

For something like two minutes this performance lasts. Yet it required a month of steady, hard work to break the elephant into this simple, ludicrous trick. More than 2,000 times, actual count, Barlow had to grasp Tom's trunk, apply it to the the bell crank and teach the circular motion of ringing the bell, by leading the trunk just as you might lead the hand of a young child when teaching it to wind a music box. More than 1,000 times the trainer had to lead the tip of the big receiver of the telephone to teach the beast to hold it to his ear and hang it accurately back on its hook. And when these details were mastered, it took more than 500 trials to teach the succession of winding the crank and listening before Tom understood and knew enough to twist the crank without breaking it into halves at every contact.—Appleton's Magazine.

Russia After Eastern Trade.

Among the steamship lines recently subsidized by the Russian government is one from Vladivostok to Chinese and Japanese ports.

American Autos Abroad.

During the 12 months ended June 30, 1906, the value of American automobiles exported was $3,497,016, which is $1,000,000 more than during the previous year. England took the greatest proportion, $194,709, with British North America second, Mexico third and France fourth.

May Return to America.

William Waldorf Astor, Jr., who lives in England with his self-expatriated father, has been visiting in Kentucky, and it is rumored that he intends to purchase a country place in the blue grass state. Mr. Astor was accompanied by his wife, a daughter of Danby Langhorne, of Charlottesville, Va.

Vesuvius Dust Traveled Far.

Paris was overspread with a dry, yellowish fog the morning of April 11 of this year. A sicentist, believing that the fog had been caused by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius, placed upon the roof of his dwelling a series of plates covered with glycerin to catch the dust in the fog. It was found that part of the deposit on the plates was a very fine sand, completely identical with the ash sent up by Vesuvius in 1822. In addition to this sand the fog contained some perfectly spherical globules of oxidized iron.

Monkey's Bite Fatal.

Though bitten twice by a monkey and warned that a third bite would be fatal, Mrs. Powell, of Bath, England, refused to part with the animal. She was bitten again, blood poisoning set in and death from heart failure followed.

Denatured Alcohol.

Denatured alcohol is used in a hat factory at Manchester, England. The manufacturers use the spirit, recover it, and restill the product in their own factory, and use it over again until it is used up.

Mexicans Have Fine Harbor.

The Mexicans claim to have the finest harbor on the Pacific coast at Mantanillo. About $3,500,000 (gold) has been spent on it, and $2,500,000 more is to be spent in perfecting it.