

The Ring of Three

By WHITNEY PAYNE

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Clark street, Chicago, is to the pan-handlers of the country what Fifth avenue is to the aristocracy. Clark street's beer halls and rooming joints are the common meeting ground of hobodom; the common goal of all the under element when approaching winter makes the great blue canopy an insufficient bed covering. Here they congregate; the man who was and the man who never was and never cares to be.

One raw, snowy night last winter I was hurrying up Clark street, head bent to the wind, my thoughts centered on a forthcoming warm fire and hook. My thoughts were dispersed by a sudden hurried tapping on my shoulder; I turned to find a creature miserably clad, one blue, knotted hand clutching his ragged coat together at the throat, looking at me with eyes such as I had never seen before; hectic, gleaming, shifting eyes which held me fast.

"For God's sake, sir, give me the price of a bowl of soup; it's a bad night to be hungry, sir," he muttered, his teeth chattering, his body trembling convulsively from the cold. I reached in my pocket for a coin, but something in those gleaming eyes held me.

"If you are hungry come with me," I said, and started across the street to an all-night restaurant and lunch counter. He followed me silently as I crossed and entered the place, stumbled into the chair opposite me at the rough little table. What he told me that night as we ate in that dingy little restaurant I tell to you now, but without the pauses and wanderings of speech, the nervous twitching of hands and head; without the shifting, hectic gleam of those eyes as he stole the story into your brain as it is mine.

"It is a bad night, sir—thank you—yes, it is true had you given me a quarter I would have spent it for whiskey. It has been a long time, sir, since I have eaten at a table—a long time—longer than is good for a man to live the way I live. Good God, sir, how the snow blows outside. It was a night like this—the last time till now that I have eaten at a table—that the Ring of Three had its last meeting. He! he! he! the Ring of Three—poor old Duckie was stabbed by a nigger down south—poor, fat, old Duckie always ate butter on his pie. The Ring of Three? I've forgotten much of it, sir—whiskey and tramping the streets makes a man forget. I try to figure out sometimes, sir, just when it all happened, but it's hard to keep things past straight. It must have been a long time ago, ten, maybe 20, years, for it was before I was in prison in 'Frisco—prison—God, sir, the fifth and crawling things—the fostering sores—the men there—they weren't men, they were what I am now. Yes, it must have been a long time ago, because Duckie was alive then. Duckie wasn't dead at the Ring of Three. Duckie was president—he ordered the smoke and got the iron ready. I'm trying to think, sir. Yes, there was Duckie and Joe and me and Him. I won't tell His name. Maybe I have forgotten it, maybe I haven't; I don't know. I've forgotten what He did to Joe, but Duckie—Duckie could drink a pint without stopping—oh, yes, He lied at some trial and sent Duckie to prison for ten years—ten years of filth and crawling things, sir; but Duckie never forgot—not Duckie. I've forgotten where Duckie met Joe, but He had ruined both of them and they were waiting to settle with him. Me? What did He do to me? Ha! Way back there in the past, sir, there was a young college professor married to a girl he loved more than his life. He had little money but a great love—a woman needs money before love—this one did—and He, sir, He took her away from that young professor—from me. He, rich, successful, my friend, a lawyer of note, came to my house and took her away in the dark of night. It was not well for Him, sir, that Duckie and Joe met me. For a long time after she left me I forgot. Someway I recall being in 'Frisco. All night I smoked the dope in a musty little cellar in Jackson street. After my second pipe I used to dream of a man who had stolen another man's wife. Perhaps I talked out loud; perhaps I laughed; perhaps I cried. Who knows? I had money—the smoke was good—I forgot. I always saw as I went into Tien's a fat, greasy little chink, Tien, but he sold the best smoke in 'Frisco, and that's why I went, for good smoke makes you forget, and you aren't so sick after. Oh, yes, I always saw a fat little man in a lower berth as I went into Tien's—that was Duckie. Smoke never hurt Duckie. Funny, too, 'cause it usually goes hard with fat men; but Duckie took six or seven pipes every evening, Duckie did. One evening, I remember it was raining and I was cold, Duckie and another man—that was Joe—never liked Joe much, but he hated Him so we were pals. Joe could sing, too, only he sang bad songs about—yes, yes, Duckie and Joe and I were away from Tien's over in some basement, the next I remember, drinking bad whiskey—red it was, yellow whiskey is the best—and then Duckie told me they had heard me talking in my smoke about Him, and then—well, next we were all shaking hands and Duckie was saying:

"I was smoking five pipes then—and after my first pipe it all came to me, what Duckie had said. He had ruined all three of us and we were banded together to settle with him. Queer, sir, how a pipe of good smoke makes everything easy and clear. It was good, sir, to be in Tien's, always nice and warm, and dream of settling up with Him. I could always plan a way to settle with Him, but in the morning when I woke up I had forgotten—the smoke makes it hard to remember. One night—a cold, snowy night like this, sir, Duckie and Joe and I were eating in a restaurant—we didn't eat much—whisky and the smoke save a lot of eating—and we were talking of Him. 'We don't want to kill Him; we can't get His money away, so we've got to do something that will remind Him of us every day he lives—we've got to make Him a marked man,' said Duckie, and then the idea came to me. I told it quick before I forgot it. I guess I didn't tell it the way I thought it, but Duckie got the idea—he was clever that way, Duckie was. I remember once—yes, Duckie repeated it all after me and it sounded just the way I had thought it—clever man, Duckie—a nigger stuck him in—well, sir, Duckie had two tins made—somebody had them made—yes, it must have been Duckie—and then it must have been two or maybe five years from then till the end that the Ring of Three had prepared for Him came. Duckie wouldn't let me take the smoke much all that time—he said we all had to be in at the finish. We followed Him from—from—well, I forgot where, but we saw two oceans and a hundred cities, but I never found any smoke as good as Tien's—but we never could get Him. He traveled in fast trains with his money, and we—poor old Duckie and George and me—rode the rods and walked. We followed Him back to 'Frisco, where we started from. Tien was dead and his place was full of women. I never went there again—poor old Tien—and there in 'Frisco, sir, we rented an old house out of town, for Duckie said we would get Him sure. We got Him. He! he! he! we got Him. Every night Duckie would hang around His club waiting for Him to come out alone, and every night Joe and I would stay in the dark old house smoking the black smoke waiting, but Duckie would always come alone. Then we would cool the iron. I smoked eight pipes then before I slept. One night Duckie went out and came back late, very late, with Him. He was drunk and thought that Duckie was bringing Him home. Home! Ha! ha! Well, Duckie was bringing Him home—the home the Ring of Three had prepared for Him. And when I heard his voice, sir, God, I thought my heart would burst—the black smoke is bad for the heart—they say that's how old Tien—yes, and Duckie led Him into the back room and we lifted Him onto a table and strapped His arms and legs down tight—very tight we strapped Him. Duckie had tended to that. Duckie hadn't forgotten those crawling, filthy years in prison. Duckie hadn't forgot, so he fixed the straps tight. His head was strapped down tight, too. Then Duckie took the iron from me—my hands were trembling so I couldn't hold it steady—and held it over the gas jet for hours—or, maybe, it was only a few minutes, but it seemed longer than any time I can remember. Then when it was white hot—it blazed when Duckie spit on it—he gave it to Joe to hold—he never let me do anything—and went over and waked Him up. When He tried to get up and found He couldn't I laughed and rolled on the floor. He couldn't get up—we had Him—good old Duckie and Joe and I had Him. Duckie gagged His mouth. Then he reminded Him who we were—reminded Him of how He had taken my wife and then deserted her; reminded Him that He stole ten years of Duckie's life; reminded Him that He started Joe to hell. You have stepped on a worm, sir, and seen it lying there all pink and wiggy—that's how He looked all pink and crawling. Then Duckie took the iron and laid it on his forehead—then I remember a scream—God, sir, that scream walks the streets with me nights—and a smell of frying flesh. Then Duckie and Joe and I were standing beside Him as He lay there all quiet, and a circle about as big round as a quarter with three up-and-down lines inside it scared on His forehead—and Duckie and I were laughing and Joe was singing one of his bad songs—well, the Ring of Three had done its work and I was glad, because then Duckie would let me take all the smoke I wanted. Well, good old Duckie is gone and Joe is gone—nobody to smoke with now—but then the smoke is poor now—they put bran in it. Yes, He lived—Duckie wrote a letter to His folks and they found Him next day with the mark of us—the Ring of Three—on Him. I guess they never understood, but He did. No, He killed himself long ago—just after Duckie was stabbed. Yes, we had better be going—thank you, sir, it will more than buy a bed for many days. Ugh! it's cold. Duckie's warm to-night. Ha! ha! Good old Duckie was stabbed in the back by a black wench. Good night, sir. Thank you for the dinner and the money. Good night."

Godliness First. It is vanity to wish for a long life and to take little care of leading a good life.—A Kempis.

CRIPPLED WITH SCIATICA

Caused by 'Disordered Action of the Kidneys.

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Sold by all dealers. 50 cents a box. Foster-Milburn Co., Buffalo, N. Y.

A JUSTIFIABLE EXPRESSION.



Inexperienced Caddie (after Mr. Toole's fifteenth mile)—Shall I make the 'ole a big bigger, sir?

TORE HIS SKIN OFF

In Shreds—Itching Was Intense—Sleep Was Often Impossible.

Cured by Cuticura in Three Weeks.

"At first an eruption of small pustules commenced on my hands. These spread later to other parts of my body, and the itching at times was intense, so much so that I literally tore the skin off in shreds in seeking relief. The awful itching interfered with my work considerably, and also kept me awake nights. I tried several doctors and used a number of different ointments and lotions but received practically no benefit. Finally I settled down to the use of Cuticura Soap, Cuticura Ointment and Cuticura Pills, with the result that in a few days all itching had ceased and in about three weeks' time all traces of my eruption had disappeared. I have had no trouble of this kind since. H. A. Kruttschov, 5714 Wabash Ave., Chicago, Ill., November 18 and 25, 1907."

Pater Drug & Chem. Corp., Sole Props., Boston.

Iron Ore Fields in Finland.

Though Finland has been regarded up to the present time as being extremely poor in iron ore, recent research has proved the existence of ore fields in South Finland (Nyland), and above all in the Ladoga lake district, which seem to be worth the expense of mining. For research purposes a company has been formed.

Rough on Rats, unbeatable exterminator

Rough on Hen Lice, Nest Powder, 25c. Rough on Bedbugs, Powder or Liquid, 25c. Rough on Fleas, Powder or Liquid, 25c. Rough on Roaches, Pow'd, 15c, Liq'd, 25c. Rough on Moth and Ants, Powder, 25c. Rough on Sheetlers, agreeable to use, 25c. E. S. Wells, Chemist, Jersey City, N. J.

Good to Remember.

Physical defects can be turned into incentives to success instead of drawbacks, what we look upon as handicaps in the end may prove spurs to enable us to reach the goal of desire, if we know but how to use them. We make our own happiness, we carve our own success.—Exchange.

No Others.

It is in a class by itself. It has no rivals. It cures where others merely relieve. For aches, pains, stiff joints, cuts, burns, bites, etc. it is the quickest and surest remedy ever devised. We mean Hurst's Lightning Oil. 50c and 25c bottles.

Athleticism Extraordinary.

"Why," said the first athletic boaster, "every morning before breakfast I get a bucket and pull up 90 gallons from the well." "That's nothing," retorted the other. "I get a boat every morning and pull up the river."—Universal Leader.

The King of blood purifiers is Dr. Stimson's Sarsaparilla.

It rids the system of the winter's accumulation of impurities. It makes the young feel well—the old young. Now is the time to renovate yourself. Stimson's Sarsaparilla cannot be excelled. Price 50c and \$1.00.

For a Round Sum.

"How did Smith get on with that new apartment house he built?" "It is a fat failure."

For Colds and Gripp—Capudine.

The best remedy for Gripp and Colds is Hicks' Capudine. Relieves the aching and feverishness. Cures the cold—Headaches also. It's Liquid—Effects immediately—10, 25 and 50c at Drug Stores.

A girl never likes to admit she was kissed unless she wasn't.

Smokers find Lewis' Single Binder 50c cigar better quality than most 10c cigars.

Love may be blind, but simony is an eyespener.

Never Falls. There is one remedy, and only one I have ever found, to cure without fail such troubles in my family as Eczema, Ringworm, and all others of itching character. That remedy is Hunt's Cure. We always use it and it never fails. W. M. CHRISTIAN, Rutherford, Tenn. 50c per box.

Men Can Care for Themselves. A coal company in the Hocking valley, O., employs both men and mules. One mule costs \$200, and in point of work equals six men. The company has this order standing on its books, "When the roof gets weak, take out the mules."—Vancouver Mining Exchange.

Red, Weak, Weary, Watery Eyes. Relieved by Murine Eye Remedy. Composed by Experienced Physicians. Conforms to Pure Food and Drug Laws. Murine Doesn't Smart; Soothes Eye Pain; Try Murine in Your Eyes. At Drugists.

Magnetism. First Dancer—She's a very attractive girl. Second Sufferer—Yes, her father was a big steel magnate.

For Headache Try Hicks' Capudine. Whether from Colds, Heat, Stomach or Nervous troubles, the aches are speedily relieved by Capudine. It's Liquid—pleasant to take—Effects immediately. 10, 25 and 50c at Drug Stores.

Succinct. Justice O'Halloran—Have you any children, Mrs. Kelly? Mrs. Kelly—I hav two living an' wan married!—July.

There is no need to suffer with soreness and stiffness of joints and muscles. A little Hamlin Wizard Oil rubbed in will liber them up immediately.

A man is praised too much when he is dead, and abused too much when he is living.

Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup. For children teething, softens the gums, reduces inflammation, allays pain, cures whooping cough, croup, and colic.

How to catch fish is a study. How to lie about it comes natural.

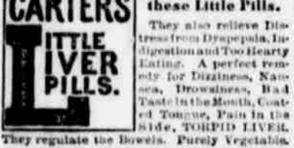
Lewis' Single Binder straight 50c cigar. You pay 10c for cigars not so good.

The way of the can't-guesser is hard.



SICK HEADACHE

Positively cured by these Little Pills. They also relieve Discomfort from Dyspepsia, Indigestion and Too Heavy Eating. A perfect remedy for Dizziness, Nausea, Headaches, Bad Taste in the Mouth, Coated Tongue, Pain in the Side, TORPID LIVER. They regulate the bowels. Purely Vegetable. SMALL PILL. SMALL DOSE. SMALL PRICE.



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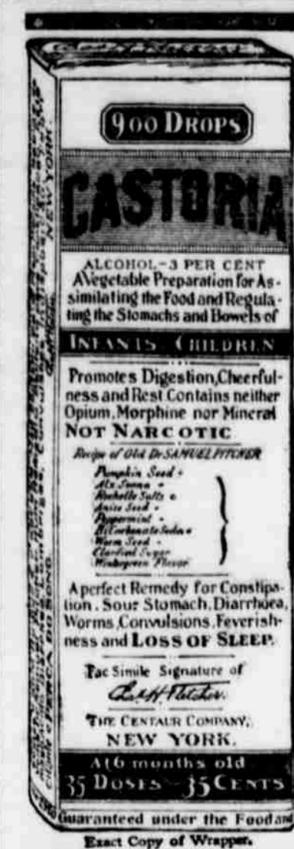
Look for the spear.

Frightful. First—Panic at the Fuller last night. Second—Leading lady have a stage fright! First—No. Was.

Dysentery, Cholera morbus Cured

By a trial of Dr. Riggers Huckleberry Cordial. At Drugists 25c and 50c per bottle.

It's a safe rule to pass up two-thirds of human philosophy.



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For Infants and Children. The Kind You Have Always Bought

Bears the Signature of

Dr. J. C. Hatcher In Use For Over Thirty Years CASTORIA



Dainty, Crisp, Dressy Summer Skirts

are a delight to the refined woman everywhere. In order to get this result see that the material is good, that it is cut in the latest fashion and use

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in the laundry. All three things are important, but the last is absolutely necessary. No matter how fine the material or how daintily made, bad starch and poor laundry work will spoil the effect and ruin the clothes. DEFIANCE STARCH is pure, will not rot the clothes nor cause them to crack. It sets at too a sixteen ounce package everywhere. Other starches, much inferior, sell at too for twelve ounce packages. Insist on getting DEFIANCE STARCH and be sure of results.

Defiance Starch Company, Omaha, Nebraska.

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"My father has been a sufferer from sick headache for the last twenty-five years and never found any relief until he began taking your Cascarets. Since he has begun taking Cascarets he has never had the headache. They have entirely cured him. Cascarets do what you recommend them to do. I will give you the privilege of using his name."—E. M. Dickson, 1120 Resner St., W. Indianapolis, Ind.

Pleasant, Palatable, Potent, Taste Good. Do Not Hurt. Never Sickens. Weakens or Irritates. 25c, 50c, 100c. Beware of cheap imitations. The genuine tablet stamped C. C. Guaranteed to cure or your money back.

Piles Cured or Money Back

Itching, bleeding or protruding Piles cured by "Piles Suppositories." 20 years in use and never had a failure. Endorsed by medical men everywhere. Enclose 25c in stamps for trial treatment or \$1.00 for full box to Piles Medical Co., Birmingham, N. Y.

DAISY FLY KILLER



Paralysis Locomotor Ataxia CHASE'S BLOOD AND NERVE TABLETS

CART LOAD OF FUN—Jokes by Mark Twain, Bill Bryer, Josh Billings, Tom Swain, etc. 10c per copy. Parker-Pulver Co., Cooper, Texas.

PATENTS

W. N. U. DALLAS, NO. 23-1909.

You Look Prematurely Old

Because of those ugly, grizzly, gray hairs. Use "LA OROLE" HAIR RESTORER. PRICE, 50c, Retail.