

SEVEN KEYS TO BALDPATE

BY EARL DERR BIGGERS

Copyright, 1913, by the Bobba-Merrill Company

CHAPTER XXIII. Excent Omnes.

THE professor looked up from his griddlecakes. "Why limit it to the country?" he asked. "I should say you were too parsimonious in your judgment."

Mrs. Quimby, detecting in the old man's words a compliment, flushed an even deeper red as she bent above the stove.

"It's so seldom anything really happens around here," she said. "I just been hungering for news of the strange goings on up there. And I must say Quimby ain't been none too newsworthy on the subject. I threatened to come up and join in the proceedings myself, especially when I heard about the book writing cook Providence had sent you."

"You would have found us on the porch with outstretched arms," Mr. Magee assured her.

It was on Kendrick that Mrs. Quimby showered her attentions, and when the group rose to seek the station, amid a consultation of watches that recalled the commuter who rises at dawn to play tag with a dippant train, Mr. Magee heard her say to the railroad man in a heartfelt aside:

"I don't know as I can ever thank you enough, Mr. Kendrick, for putting new hope into Quimby. You'll never understand what it means when you have given up and your life seems all done and wasted, to hear that there's a chance left."

"Won't it?" replied Kendrick warmly. "Mrs. Quimby, it will make me a very happy man to give your husband his chance."

The first streaks of dawn were in the sky when the hermits of Baldpate fled through the gate into the road, waving goodbye to Quimby and his wife, who stood in their doorway for the farewell.

In the station Mr. Magee encountered an old friend—be of the mop of ginger colored hair. The man who had complained of the slowness of the village gazed with wide eyes at Magee. "I figured," he said, "that you'd come this way again. Well, I must say you've put a little life into this place. If I'd known when I saw you here the other night all the exciting things you had up your sleeve I'd gone right up to Baldpate with you."

"But I hadn't anything up my sleeve," protested Magee.

"Maybe," replied the agent, winking. "There's some pretty giddy stories going around about the carryings on up at Baldpate—shots fired and strange lights flashing. Doggone it! The only thing that's happened here in years, and I wasn't in on it. I certainly wish you'd put me wise to it."

Two drooping figures entered the station—the mayor and his faithful lieutenant, Max. The dignity of the former had faded like a flower, and the same withered simile might have been applied with equal force to the accustomed faintness of Lou.

They fled out upon the platform, Mr. Magee carrying Mrs. Norton's luggage amid her effusive thanks. On the platform waited a stranger equipped for travel. It was Mr. Max who made the discovery.

"By the Lord Harry!" he cried. "It's the hermit of Baldpate mountain!"

And so it was, his beard gone, his hair clumsily hacked, his body garbed in the height of an old and ludicrous fashion, his face set bravely toward the cities once more.

"Yes," he said, "I walked the floor, thinking it all over. I knew it would happen, and it has. The winters are hard, and the sight of you—it was too much. The excitement, the talk—it did for me, did for my oath. So I'm going back to her—back to Brooklyn."

"You're going to her?" growled Cargan.

"Maybe," replied Mr. Peters. "Very likely, if she's feeling that way. I hope so. I ain't giving up the hermit job altogether—I'll come back in the summers to my postcard business. There's money in it if it's handled right. But I've spent my last winter on that lonesome hill."

"As author to author," asked Magee, "how about your book?"

"There won't be any mention of that," the hermit protested. "In Brooklyn. I've packed it away. Maybe I can work on it summers if she don't come up here with me and insist on running my hermit business for me. I hope she won't. It would sort of put a crimp in it, but if she wants to I won't refuse. And maybe that book'll never get done. Sometimes as I've sat in my shack at night and read it's come to me that all the greatest works since the world began have been those that never got finished."

Reuton train roared up to them through the gray morning and paused impatiently at Upper Asquewan Falls. Aboard it clambered the hermits, amateur and professional. Mr. Magee from the platform waved goodbye to the agent standing forlorn in the station door. He watched the building until it was only a blur in the dawn, a kindly feeling for it was in his heart. After all, it had been in the waiting room—Then he started for the smoker. On his way he paused at the seat occupied by the ex-hermit of Baldpate and fixed his eyes on the pale blue necktie Mr. Peters had resurrected for his return to the world of men.

"Pretty, ain't it?" remarked the hermit, seeing whither Mr. Magee's gaze drifted. "She picked it. I didn't exactly like it when she first gave it to me, but I see my mistake now. I'm wearing it home as a sort of a white flange of truce—or almost white. Do you know, Mr. Magee, I'm somewhat nervous about what I'll say when I come into her presence again—about my inaugural address, you might put it. What would be your conversation on such an occasion? If you'd been away from a wife for five years what would you say when you drifted back?"

"That would depend," replied Magee, "on the amount of time she allowed me for my speech."

"You've hit the nail on the head," replied Mr. Peters admiringly. "She's quick. She's like lightning. She won't give me any time if she can help it. That's why I'd like to have a wonderful speech all ready—something that would hold her spellbound and tongue tied until I finished. It would take a literary classic to do that."

"What you want," laughed Magee, "is a speech with the punch."

"Exactly," agreed Mr. Peters. "I guess I won't go over to Brooklyn the minute I hit New York. I guess I'll study the lights along the big street and brush elbows with the world a bit before I reveal myself to her. Maybe if I took in a few shows—but don't think I won't go to her. My mind is made up. And I guess she'll be glad to see me too, in her way. I got to fix it with her, though, to come back to my postcard trade in the summers. I wonder what she'll say to that. Maybe she could stay at the inn under an assumed name while I was harmiting up at the shack."

He laughed softly.

Then Mr. Magee went forward into the smoking car. Long rows of red plush seats, unoccupied save for the mayor and Max, greeted his eye. He strolled to where they sat, about halfway down the car, and lighted an after breakfast cigar.

Max slouched in the unresponsive company of a cigarette on one side of the car; across the aisle the mayor of Reuton leaned heavily above a card table placed between two seats. He was playing solitaire.

Magee looked on, only half interested. Then suddenly his interest grew. He watched the mayor build in two piles; he saw that the deck from which he built was thick. A weird suspicion shot across his mind.

"Tell me," he asked, "is this the admiral's game of solitaire?"

"Exactly what I was going to ask," said a voice. Magee looked up. Kendrick had come in and stood now above the table. His tired eyes were upon it, fascinated; his lips twitched strangely.

"Yes," answered the mayor, "this is the admiral's game. You'd hardly expect me to know it, would you? I don't hang out at the swell clubs where the admiral does. They won't have me there. But once I took the admiral on a public service board with me—one time when I was a sort of dignity and no brains piece—bad—and he sort of come back by teaching me his game in the long dull hours when he had nothing to do but serve the public. The thing gets a hold on you somehow. Let's see—now the spade—

and soggy. But the story they told was new and live and startling. "The Mayor Trapped," thrilled the headlines. "Attempt to Pass Big Bribe at Baldpate Inn Follied by Star Reporter. Hayden of the Suburban Committed Suicide to Avoid Disgrace."

"Give me a paper, boy," said the mayor. "Yes—a Star." His voice was even, his face unmoved. He took the sheet and studied it, with an easy smile. Clinging in fear to his side, Max read too. At length Mr. Cargan spoke, looking up at Magee.

"So," he remarked, "so—reporters, eh—you and your lady friend? Reporters for this lying sheet—the Star?" Mr. Magee smiled up from his own copy of the paper.

"Not I," he answered, "but my lady friend—yes, it seems she was just that. A Star reporter you can call her and tell no lie. Trapped?"

It was a good story—the story which the mayor, Max, the professor and Magee read with varying emotions there in the smoking car. The girl had served her employers well, and Mr. Magee, as he read, felt a thrill of pride in her. Evidently the employers had felt that same thrill. For in the headlines and in a first page editorial, none of which the girl had written, the Star spoke admiringly of its woman reporter who had done a man's work—who had gone to Baldpate inn and had brought back a gigantic bribe fund "alone and unaided."

"Indeed?" smiled Mr. Magee to himself.

In the editorial on that first page the triumphant cry of the Star arose to shatter its fellows in the heavens. At last, said the editor, the long campaign which his paper alone of all the Reuton papers had waged against a corrupt city administration was brought to a successful close. The victory was won. How had this been accomplished? Into the Star office had come rumors a few days back of the proposed payment of a big bribe at the Baldpate mountain. The paper had decided that one of its representatives must be on the ground. It had debated long whom to send. Miss Evelyn Rhodes, its well known special writer, had got the tip in question; she had pleaded to go to the inn. The editor, considering her sex, had sternly refused. Then gradually he had been brought to see the wisdom of sending a girl rather than a man. The sex of the former would put the guilty parties under a surveillance of good. So Miss Rhodes was dispatched to the inn. Here was her story. It convicted Cargan beyond a doubt. The very money offered as a bribe was now in the hands of the Star editor and would be turned over to Prosecutor Drayton at his request. All this under the disquieting title, "Prison Stripes For the Mayor."

The girl's story told how, with one companion, she had gone to Upper Asquewan Falls. There was no mention of the station waiting room nor of the tears shed therein on a certain evening, Mr. Magee noted. She had reached the inn on the morning of the day when the combination was to be phoned. Bland was already there. Shortly after came the mayor and Max.

"You got to get me out of this," Magee heard Max pleading over Cargan's shoulder.

"Keep still!" replied the mayor roughly. He was reading his copy of the Star with keen interest now.

"I've done your dirty work for years," whined Max. "Who puts on the rubber shoes and sneaks up dark alleys hunting votes among the garbage, while you do the Old Glory stunt on Main street? I do. You got to get me out of this. It may mean jail, I couldn't stand that. I'd die."

A horrible parody of a man's real fear was in his face. The mayor shook himself as though he would be rid forever of the coward hanging on his arm.

"Hush up, can't you?" he said. "I'll see you through."

"You got to," Lou Max wailed. Miss Rhodes's story went on to tell how Hayden refused to phone the combination; how the mayor and Max eyed him a trifle narrower than before. "You haven't got me yet," he cried, standing up. "By the eternal, I'll fight to the last ditch, and I'll win. I'll show Drayton he can't play this game on me. I'll show the Star. That dirty sheet has hounded me for years. I'll put it out of business. And I'll send the reformers howling into the alleys, sick of the fuss they started themselves."

"Perhaps," said Professor Bolton, "but only after the fight of your life, Cargan."

"I'm ready for it," cried Cargan. "I ain't down and out yet. But to think a woman—a little bit of a girl I could have put in my pocket—it's all a big joke. I'll beat them. I'll show them. The game's far from played out. I'll win, and if I don't—"

He crumbled suddenly into his seat, his eyes on that unpleasant line about "Prison Stripes For the Mayor."

"If I don't," he stammered pitifully, "well, they sent him to an island at the end. The reformers got Napoleon at the last. I won't be alone in that."

At this unexpected sight of weakness in his hero, Mr. Magee set up a renewed babble of fear at his side. The train was in the Reuton suburbs now. At a neat little station it slowed down to a stop and a florid policeman entered the smoking car. Cargan looked up.

"Hello, Dan," he said. His voice was lifeless; the oldtime ring was gone and shifted it nervously.

"I thought I'd tell you, Mr. Cargan," he said. "I thought I'd warn you. You'd better get off here. There's a big crowd in the station at Reuton. They're waiting for you, sir; they've heard you're on this train. This lying newspaper, Mr. Cargan, it's been talking tales—I guess you know about that. There's a big mob. You better get off here, sir, and go downtown on a car."

If the mighty Cargan had looked limp and beaten for a moment he looked that way no more. He stood up and his head seemed almost to touch the roof of the car. Over that big patrolman he towered; his eyes were cold and hard again; his lips curved

and soggy. But the story they told was new and live and startling. "The Mayor Trapped," thrilled the headlines. "Attempt to Pass Big Bribe at Baldpate Inn Follied by Star Reporter. Hayden of the Suburban Committed Suicide to Avoid Disgrace."

"Give me a paper, boy," said the mayor. "Yes—a Star." His voice was even, his face unmoved. He took the sheet and studied it, with an easy smile. Clinging in fear to his side, Max read too. At length Mr. Cargan spoke, looking up at Magee.

"So," he remarked, "so—reporters, eh—you and your lady friend? Reporters for this lying sheet—the Star?" Mr. Magee smiled up from his own copy of the paper.

"Not I," he answered, "but my lady friend—yes, it seems she was just that. A Star reporter you can call her and tell no lie. Trapped?"

It was a good story—the story which the mayor, Max, the professor and Magee read with varying emotions there in the smoking car. The girl had served her employers well, and Mr. Magee, as he read, felt a thrill of pride in her. Evidently the employers had felt that same thrill. For in the headlines and in a first page editorial, none of which the girl had written, the Star spoke admiringly of its woman reporter who had done a man's work—who had gone to Baldpate inn and had brought back a gigantic bribe fund "alone and unaided."

JACK LONDON, AUTHOR OF The Abysmal Brute



Life among two fisted men is Jack London's text, and he sticks to it. He tells of existence and of men as he has found them—from the Bering sea to the south sea islands.

The experiences of his characters have been his own. That is what makes them real men.

Add to his contact with life and his capacity of making vivid impressions of it a power to make his readers feel with him and you catch hold of the secret of his great power over his readers.

Few living men equal London in "getting down to facts." He has the ability of making the word fit the scene, of telling a story in a phrase, of revealing a life in a chapter.

When you finish a London story you have lived with the characters. They are not men and women of straw, set up to fill out an idle hour.

They are living, breathing, feeling, suffering, triumphant human beings.

Jack London is only thirty-eight years old. In twenty years he has crowded more real life than most men do in a long lifetime.

He left college to go to the Klondike, and his farewell to book schools was permanent. Since then he has learned his lessons before the mast, in Japan, seal hunting in the arctic, tramping through the United States and Canada, and as a war correspondent in the Russo-Japanese war.

Thousands of men and women have heard him lecture and have felt as they heard his strong, sincere voice that they were listening to a real man among men.

In "The Abysmal Brute" he has chosen a novel theme and handled it with an art that holds the reader's interest from first word to "finis."

This Newspaper Has Succeeded in Securing the Serial Rights of Jack London's New Story, and It Will Be Published Soon Read "The Abysmal Brute"

And who immediately on his arrival became involved in the surprising drama of Baldpate.

"I'm an amusing feature," reflected Magee.

"Mr. Magee," continued Miss Rhodes, "will doubtless be one of the state's chief witnesses when the case against Cargan comes to trial, as will also Professor Thaddeus Bolton, holder of the Crandall chair of comparative literature at Reuton university, and David Kendrick, formerly of the Suburban, but who retired six years ago to take up his residence abroad. The latter two went to the inn to represent Prosecutor Drayton and made every effort in their power to secure the package of money from the reporter for the Star, not knowing her connection with the affair."

"Well, Mr. Magee?" asked Professor Bolton, laying down the paper which he had been perusing at a distance of about an inch from his nose.

"Once again, professor," laughed Magee, "reporters have entered your life. The old man sighed.

"You got to get me out of this," Max was still telling the mayor.

"For God's sake," cried Cargan, "but up and let me think! He sat for a moment staring at one point, his face still lacking all emotion, but his eyes a trifle narrower than before.

"You haven't got me yet," he cried, standing up. "By the eternal, I'll fight to the last ditch, and I'll win. I'll show Drayton he can't play this game on me. I'll show the Star. That dirty sheet has hounded me for years. I'll put it out of business. And I'll send the reformers howling into the alleys, sick of the fuss they started themselves."

"Perhaps," said Professor Bolton, "but only after the fight of your life, Cargan."

"I'm ready for it," cried Cargan. "I ain't down and out yet. But to think a woman—a little bit of a girl I could have put in my pocket—it's all a big joke. I'll beat them. I'll show them. The game's far from played out. I'll win, and if I don't—"

He crumbled suddenly into his seat, his eyes on that unpleasant line about "Prison Stripes For the Mayor."

"If I don't," he stammered pitifully, "well, they sent him to an island at the end. The reformers got Napoleon at the last. I won't be alone in that."

At this unexpected sight of weakness in his hero, Mr. Magee set up a renewed babble of fear at his side. The train was in the Reuton suburbs now. At a neat little station it slowed down to a stop and a florid policeman entered the smoking car. Cargan looked up.

"Hello, Dan," he said. His voice was lifeless; the oldtime ring was gone and shifted it nervously.

"I thought I'd tell you, Mr. Cargan," he said. "I thought I'd warn you. You'd better get off here. There's a big crowd in the station at Reuton. They're waiting for you, sir; they've heard you're on this train. This lying newspaper, Mr. Cargan, it's been talking tales—I guess you know about that. There's a big mob. You better get off here, sir, and go downtown on a car."

If the mighty Cargan had looked limp and beaten for a moment he looked that way no more. He stood up and his head seemed almost to touch the roof of the car. Over that big patrolman he towered; his eyes were cold and hard again; his lips curved

And who immediately on his arrival became involved in the surprising drama of Baldpate.

"I'm an amusing feature," reflected Magee.

"Mr. Magee," continued Miss Rhodes, "will doubtless be one of the state's chief witnesses when the case against Cargan comes to trial, as will also Professor Thaddeus Bolton, holder of the Crandall chair of comparative literature at Reuton university, and David Kendrick, formerly of the Suburban, but who retired six years ago to take up his residence abroad. The latter two went to the inn to represent Prosecutor Drayton and made every effort in their power to secure the package of money from the reporter for the Star, not knowing her connection with the affair."

"Well, Mr. Magee?" asked Professor Bolton, laying down the paper which he had been perusing at a distance of about an inch from his nose.

"Once again, professor," laughed Magee, "reporters have entered your life. The old man sighed.

"You got to get me out of this," Max was still telling the mayor.

"For God's sake," cried Cargan, "but up and let me think! He sat for a moment staring at one point, his face still lacking all emotion, but his eyes a trifle narrower than before.

"You haven't got me yet," he cried, standing up. "By the eternal, I'll fight to the last ditch, and I'll win. I'll show Drayton he can't play this game on me. I'll show the Star. That dirty sheet has hounded me for years. I'll put it out of business. And I'll send the reformers howling into the alleys, sick of the fuss they started themselves."

"Perhaps," said Professor Bolton, "but only after the fight of your life, Cargan."

"I'm ready for it," cried Cargan. "I ain't down and out yet. But to think a woman—a little bit of a girl I could have put in my pocket—it's all a big joke. I'll beat them. I'll show them. The game's far from played out. I'll win, and if I don't—"

He crumbled suddenly into his seat, his eyes on that unpleasant line about "Prison Stripes For the Mayor."

"If I don't," he stammered pitifully, "well, they sent him to an island at the end. The reformers got Napoleon at the last. I won't be alone in that."

At this unexpected sight of weakness in his hero, Mr. Magee set up a renewed babble of fear at his side. The train was in the Reuton suburbs now. At a neat little station it slowed down to a stop and a florid policeman entered the smoking car. Cargan looked up.

"Hello, Dan," he said. His voice was lifeless; the oldtime ring was gone and shifted it nervously.

"I thought I'd tell you, Mr. Cargan," he said. "I thought I'd warn you. You'd better get off here. There's a big crowd in the station at Reuton. They're waiting for you, sir; they've heard you're on this train. This lying newspaper, Mr. Cargan, it's been talking tales—I guess you know about that. There's a big mob. You better get off here, sir, and go downtown on a car."

If the mighty Cargan had looked limp and beaten for a moment he looked that way no more. He stood up and his head seemed almost to touch the roof of the car. Over that big patrolman he towered; his eyes were cold and hard again; his lips curved

And who immediately on his arrival became involved in the surprising drama of Baldpate.

"I'm an amusing feature," reflected Magee.

"Mr. Magee," continued Miss Rhodes, "will doubtless be one of the state's chief witnesses when the case against Cargan comes to trial, as will also Professor Thaddeus Bolton, holder of the Crandall chair of comparative literature at Reuton university, and David Kendrick, formerly of the Suburban, but who retired six years ago to take up his residence abroad. The latter two went to the inn to represent Prosecutor Drayton and made every effort in their power to secure the package of money from the reporter for the Star, not knowing her connection with the affair."

"Well, Mr. Magee?" asked Professor Bolton, laying down the paper which he had been perusing at a distance of about an inch from his nose.

"Once again, professor," laughed Magee, "reporters have entered your life. The old man sighed.

"You got to get me out of this," Max was still telling the mayor.

"For God's sake," cried Cargan, "but up and let me think! He sat for a moment staring at one point, his face still lacking all emotion, but his eyes a trifle narrower than before.

"You haven't got me yet," he cried, standing up. "By the eternal, I'll fight to the last ditch, and I'll win. I'll show Drayton he can't play this game on me. I'll show the Star. That dirty sheet has hounded me for years. I'll put it out of business. And I'll send the reformers howling into the alleys, sick of the fuss they started themselves."

"Perhaps," said Professor Bolton, "but only after the fight of your life, Cargan."

"I'm ready for it," cried Cargan. "I ain't down and out yet. But to think a woman—a little bit of a girl I could have put in my pocket—it's all a big joke. I'll beat them. I'll show them. The game's far from played out. I'll win, and if I don't—"

He crumbled suddenly into his seat, his eyes on that unpleasant line about "Prison Stripes For the Mayor."

"If I don't," he stammered pitifully, "well, they sent him to an island at the end. The reformers got Napoleon at the last. I won't be alone in that."

At this unexpected sight of weakness in his hero, Mr. Magee set up a renewed babble of fear at his side. The train was in the Reuton suburbs now. At a neat little station it slowed down to a stop and a florid policeman entered the smoking car. Cargan looked up.

"Hello, Dan," he said. His voice was lifeless; the oldtime ring was gone and shifted it nervously.

"I thought I'd tell you, Mr. Cargan," he said. "I thought I'd warn you. You'd better get off here. There's a big crowd in the station at Reuton. They're waiting for you, sir; they've heard you're on this train. This lying newspaper, Mr. Cargan, it's been talking tales—I guess you know about that. There's a big mob. You better get off here, sir, and go downtown on a car."

If the mighty Cargan had looked limp and beaten for a moment he looked that way no more. He stood up and his head seemed almost to touch the roof of the car. Over that big patrolman he towered; his eyes were cold and hard again; his lips curved

DANDRUFF AND FALLING HAIR Prevented by



Treatment with CUTICURA SOAP

And Cuticura Ointment. Directions: Make a parting and rub gently with Cuticura Ointment. Continue until whole scalp has been gone over. Next morning shampoo with Cuticura Soap. Shampoos alone may be used as often as agreeable, but once or twice a month is generally sufficient for this special treatment for women's hair.

Advertisement

OF LOCAL INTEREST

Some People We Know and We Will Profit by Hearing About Them. This is a purely local event.

It took place in Rock Island. Not in some faraway place. You are asked to investigate it. Ask to believe a citizen's word; To confirm a citizen's statement.

Any article that is endorsed at home is more worthy of confidence. Than one you know nothing about. Endorsed by unknown people.

L. Range, 728 Seventeenth street, Rock Island, Ill., says: "In 1897 I gave a public statement recommending Doan's Kidney Pills. Since then I have used them once in awhile and they have kept me free from kidney complaint. For many years my back was in such bad shape that I could hardly move. The action of my kidneys was irregular and painful and I was in bad shape when I began using Doan's Kidney Pills. I got them at the Harper House pharmacy and they restored my kidneys to a normal condition."

For sale by all dealers. Price 50 cents. Foster-Milburn company, Buffalo, N. Y., sole agents for the United States.

Remember the name—Doan's—and take no other. (Advertisement.)

We Want the Wage Earner.

This Strong Bank is the banking home of the wage earner.

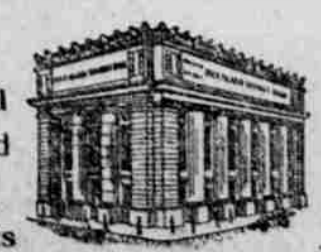
A Savings Account of \$1.00 or more is welcome, and draws 4% interest.

The wage earner finds a welcome here.

Bank open this evening from 7 to 8 o'clock.

Rock Island Savings Bank

Commercial Savings and Trust Departments



H. S. Cable, Pres. P. P. Hull, V. Pres. P. Greenawalt, V. P. W. G. Johnston, A. Cash. A. J. Lindstrom, Cash. I. J. Green, A. Cash.

Cor. 10th St and 3rd Ave.