OF THE BY EMERSON HOUGH

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SYNOPSIS.

Senator John Calhoun is offered the portfolio of secretary of war. He declines but if he accepts it means that Texas and Oregon must be added to the Union. He plans to leave the Methodist church and Nicholas Van Zandt, the richest Baptist, Barnabas Van Zandt, his grandsire and reputed miser, of the Legislative ambassador, Pakenham, and sends his secretary, Nicholas Van Zandt, to Washington to his apartment, bring a packing box with these books, to barrage drives up and he is invited to enter. The occupant is the Senator's mistress who she is being pursued. Nicholas is a Texan and has come to Washington on his own. Calhoun, Nicholas discovers, also has lost a slipper. She gives Nicholas the remaining slipper. It will be important. She will call Calhoun's attention to it. Nicholas has given her a trinket he intended for his sweetheart, Elizabeth Charteris. Nicholas is ordered to leave at once for Montreal on the secretary of the slipper. He will be married that night. Tyler warns Pakenham that interference with England in the affairs of this continent will not be tolerated. Nicholas and Pakenham are in both occasions. Some days later with Great Britain cease, and has joined the "Fifty-Fifty" party of Texas. The baroness tells Nicholas that she is to be married that night. Nicholas requests the baroness to delay the marriage. He requests the baroness to delay the marriage until he can return her slipper. Nicholas enlists the services of Pakenham. Pakenham is a rejected suitor of Elizabeth Charteris. Pakenham is ordered for the wedding and entrusts him with the return of the slipper to the baroness. The congressman gets drunk and is arrested. Pakenham is released and Nicholas is detained, but escapes. He is ordered from the house by Elizabeth's father. Nicholas is ordered to gain access to a meeting of the Hudson Bay Company. Nicholas is ordered to England's secretary, Pakenham. Nicholas escapes from the baroness leave the diplomatic corps in Montreal. Nicholas is had failed to gain admission. She warns that that he is in Montreal. Nicholas accepts an invitation to pass the night at her house.

CHAPTER XVI—Continued.

"Yet you spoke of others who might come here. What others? Who are they? The representatives of Mexico? Some attache of the British embassy? Some of the Russian minister from England itself, sent here direct?"

She smiled at me again. "I told you not to go back to your hotel, did I not?"

I got no further with her, it seemed.

"You mistake me sometimes," she went on slowly, at last, "yet you seem to have so little brain! Now, in your employment, I should think that brain would be somewhat useful at times."

"I do not get that suggestion, madam."

"But you are unable to analyze. Thus, in the matter of yourself. I suppose if you were told of it, you would say that you forgot to look in the toe of the slipper you had.

"Did you credit the attache of Mexico with being nothing more than a drunken rowdy, to follow me across town with a little shoe in his carpetbag?

"But you said he was in wine."

"True, but would that be a reason? Continually you show your lack of brain in accepting as conclusive results which could not possibly have occurred. Granted he was in wine, granted he followed me, granted he had my shoe in his possession—what then? Does it follow that at the ball at the White House he could have removed that shoe? Does monsieur think that I, too, was in wine?"

"I agree that I have no brain! I cannot guess what you mean. I can only beg once more that you explain."

"Now listen. In your most foolish, full and charming innocence I presume you do not know much of the capabilities for concealment offered by a lady's apparel? Now, suppose I had a messenger, a man, a boy, who could hide it; granted, of course, the conditions obtaining at a ball in the White House—

"Then you did have a message! It came to you there, at that time?"

She nodded. "Certainly, Mr. Van Zandt had almost no other opportunity to meet me, and I had a message of the utmost interest. So, what Pakenham said was true! Mr. Van Zandt is the sleuth of Texas. Van Zandt is pleading with Mr. Calhoun that he shall take the secretaryship. Van Zandt promises us the friendship of Texas if we will stand out for the annexation of Texas. Van Zandt promises us every effort in his power against England. Van Zandt promises us the eternal enmity of Texas against treacherous Mexico. Van Zandt is known to be interested in this fair Dona Lucresia, too, as I think. Now, Dona Lucresia has, with his secret message slipped into the hand of madam at the annexation's ball—madam, the friend of England! The attache of Mexico is curious—furious—to know what Texas is saying to England! And that message must be concealed! And madam concealed it in—"

She smiled at me brilliantly. "You tone-deaf," she said. "Should your head be opened and analyzed, yes, I think a trace of brain would be found, given by good chemistry."

I resumed impatiently. "You put his message in your slipper?"

She nodded. "Yes," she said, "in the toe of it. There was barely chance to do that. You see, our adytis are full and wide; there are curtains in the east room; there was wine by this time; there was music; so I effected that trick. But when you took

"Then You Think There is a Chance of Trouble Between Our Country and Our Own?"

the slipper, you took Van Zandt's note! You had it. It was true, what I told Pakenham before the grandsire: I did not know what note! You had it. At least, I thought you had it, till I found it crumpled on the table the next day! It must have fallen there from the shoe when we made our little exchange that night. Ah, you hurried me. I scarce knew whether I was glad or sad, until the next afternoon—after I left you at the White House grounds. So you hastily departed—to your wedding!"

"So small a shoe could not have held an extended epistle, madam," I said, ignoring her question.

"No, but the little roll of paper caused me anguish. After I had danced I was on the point of fainting. I hastened to the cover of the nearest curtain, where I might not be noticed. Senor Vurrio of Mexico was somewhat vigilant. He wished to know what Texas planned with England. He has long made love to me—by threats, and jewels. As I stood behind the curtain I saw his face. I fled; but one shoe—the empty one—was not well fastened, and it fell. I could not walk. I reached down, removed the other shoe with the note, hid it in my handkerchief—thank Providence for the fashion of so much lace—and ran. Ah, monsieur, as you may believe, abd somewhat anxious, as you also believe, expecting to hear at once of an encounter between Van Zandt and the Mexican minister, Senor Almonte, or his attache Yturrio, or between one of them and some one else, I made my adieux—I will warrant the only woman in her stocking feet who bowed for Mr. Tyler at the ball that night!"

"Yes, so far as I know, madam, you are the only lady who ever left the room quite precisely as she did. And so you got into your own carriage—alone—after awhile? And so, when you were there you put on the shoe which was left? And so Yturrio of Mexico got the other one—and found nothing in it! And so, he wanted this one?"

"You come on," she said. "You have something more than a trace of brain."

"And that other shoe, which I got from you?"

Without a word she smoothed out a bit of paper which she had secured from her desk, and handed it to me. "This was in yours! As I said, in the confusion I suppose, I did not see it."

I spread the pages upon the cloth before me, my eyes upon her face. I frowned. I did not make further reply to her.

"Madam," went on the communication, "say to your august friend Sly Sam Houston, that we have reached the end of our endurance of these late delays. The promises of the Texan government mean nothing. We can trust neither Whig nor Democrat any longer. There is no one party to power, nor will there be. There are two sections in America and there is no union, and Texas knows not where to go. We have offered to Mr. Tyler to join the union if the union will allow us to join. We intend to reserve our own lands and reserve the right to organize later into four or more states. If our people shall so direct. But as a great power we will join the union if the union will accept us. That, we also know.

"England now beseeches us not to enter the union, but to stand apart, either for independence or for alliance with France and England. The proposition has been made to us to divide into two governments, one free and one slave. England has proposed to us to advance us moneys to pay our debts if we will agree to this. Settled by hold men from our mother country, the republic, Texas has been averse to this. But now our own mother repudiates us, not once but many times. We get no decision. This then, dear madam, is from Texas to England by your hand, and we know you will carry it safe and secret. We shall accept this proposal of England, and avail ourselves of the richness of her generosity.

"If within thirty days action is not taken in Washington for the annexation of Texas, Texas will never in the history of the world be one of the United States. Moreover, if the United States shall lose Texas, also they lose Oregon, and all of Oregon. Carry this news—I am persuaded that it will be welcome—to that gentleman whose ear I know you have; and believe me always, my dear madam, with respect and admiration, yours, for the state of Texas, Van Zandt."

I drew a deep breath as I saw this proof of our place in the plans of this representative of the republic of the southwest. "They are traitors!" I muttered. "But there must be action—something must be done at once. I must not wait; I must go. I must take this, at least, to Mr. Calhoun."

"Have I been fair with you thus far?" she asked at length.

"More than fair! I could not have asked this of you. In an hour I have learned the news of years. But why you not also tell me what is the news from Chateau Ramsey?"

"Well, I could go home feeling I had done very much for my chief.

"Monsieur, I cannot do so. You will not tell me that other news."

"Of what?"

"Of your nuptials."

"Madam, I cannot do so. But for you, madam, I owe you, I would like to wring your neck. I would like to take your arms in my hands and crush them, until—"

"Until what?" Her face was strange. I saw a hand raised to her throat.

"Until you told me about Oregon!" said I.

I saw her arms move—just one instant—her body incline. She gazed at me steadily, somberly. Then I spoke to her.

"Ah, God! how I hate you both!" she said. "Yes, I love you. You were married, after all! Yes, it can be, it can be! A woman may love one man—even though he could give her only a bed of husks! And a man may love another woman, though I had not known."

"Monsieur, adieu!" she added swift.

I bent and kissed her hand. "Madam, au revoir!"

"No, adieu! Go!"

CHAPTER XVII.

A Hunter of Butterflies.

I love men, not because they are men, but because they are not women.—Jean Christina.

There was at that time in Montreal a number of news room and public exchange, which made a place of gathering for men. It was supplied with newspapers and the like, and kept up by subscriptions of the town merchants—a spacious room made out of the old Methodist chapel on St. Joseph street. I knew the lay of the town pretty well, and hoped I might go there unobserved to do my errand, which was no more than begun, it seemed. Entering the place shortly before noon, I made pretense of reading, all the while with an eye and an ear out for anything that might happen.

As I stared in pretense at the pages before me, I fumbled idly in a pocket, with unthinking hand, and chance led to place before me on the table, an object of which at first I was uncomfortable—the little Elizabeth Charteris. As it lay before me I felt seized of a sudden hard for it, and let fall on it a heavy hand. As I did so, I heard a voice at my ear.

"Mein Gott, man, do not! You break it, surely."

I started at this. I had not heard any one approach. I discovered now that the speaker had taken a seat near me at the table, and could not fail to see this object which lay between me.

"I beg pardon," he said, in a broken speech that showed his foreign birth; "but it is so beautiful; to break it was wrong."

I pushed the trinket along the table towards him.

"Its of little value," I said, "and is always in the way when I would find anything in my pocket."

"But once some one has made it, madam, it is a thing of value. Tell me once it has been value, where you fit it?"

"North of the Platte, in our western territories," I said. "I once traded in that country."

"You are American?"

"Yes, sir."

"So," he said thoughtfully. "So, a great country, a very great country. Me, I also live in it."

"Indeed?" I said. "In what part?"

"It lies five years since I cross the Rockies."

"You have crossed the Rockies? I envy you."

"Ah, mesaundermand me. I live west of them for five years. I am now come east."

"I am afraid my eyes showed my interest; but he went on.

"I had been in the Columbia country, and in the Willamette country, for five years. I have returned, and settled I know somewhat of California. Mr. Howard, of the Hudson Bay co., I know; also of the country of California. He said to those King Louis, I have met, that I spend last night that England should half some thing to obtain California, this was said, because, though Mexico claims California, the Yankees really make the land, and take there yet more. He has right; but they laughed at him."

"Oh, I think little will come of all this talk," I said carelessly. "It is very far, out to Oregon." Yet all the time my heart was leaping. Who had been there, and what was meeting of which I could learn nothing!

"You know much of what you say. A thousand men came into Oregon last year. It is like the coming of the nations of the peoples of Asia, or Europe. I say to you, it is a great much. Texas, I know, is nothing such as we but not seen since the days of the Inca, the Toltec, the Aztec, since the Cimri movement. P ies an epoch, my friend! It is fate that lies in it."

"So, then, it is a great country?" I ventured.

"It is so great, these traders do not with it known. They say, it is too big! It may be strange; also that their posts and their harems may be unlike those of Texas, if they live with. These Scots go wild again, in the mountains, and marry with the Indian! but, it is not homes they build. Sir George Simpson—one of the Hudson's Bay people—he is east of the Rockies. That lies all—

"They do not speak so of Dr. McLaughlin," I began tentatively.

"Ah, Mr. McLaughlin! McLaughlin, believe me! But he has not Mr. Kay; he has not Simpson; he not Douglas. And I say to you, as I said to Mr. Howard, when he asked me also to tell what I knew of Oregon—I said, I know that Dr. McLaughlin was deposed. He has in charge no more—so soon as they can get rid of him, he goes in place of Vancouver."

"After a lifetime in the service!" I commented.

"Yes, after a lifetime; and Mr. Laughlin had brain and heart, too. If England would listen to him, she would know sometimes. He plows, he plows, he has gardens and mills and houses and ships. Yes, if they let McLaughlin alone, they would have a civilization on the Columbia, and not a fur-trading post. Then they could oppose your civilization there. Yes, he has brain, he has heart