54-40 OR FIGHT

BY EMERSON HOUGH

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ILLUSTRATIONS by MAGNUS G. KETTNER

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SYNOPSIS.

The story is told by Nicholas Trist. His chief, Senator John Calhoun, offered the portfolio of secretary of state in Tyler's cabinet, is told by Dr. Ward that his time is short. Calhoun declares that he is not ready to die, and if he accepts Tyler's offer it means that Texas and Oregon must be added to the Union. He plans to learn the intentions of England with regard to Mexico through Baroness Von Ritz, secret spy and reputed mistress of the English ambassador, Pakenham. Nicholas is sent to bring the baroness to Calhoun's apartments and misses a meeting with his sweetheart, Elizabeth Churchill. While searching for the baroness' house a carriage dashes up and Nicholas is invited to enter.

CHAPTER IV.—Continued.

"Your name?" she again demanded. I told her the first one that came to my lips—I do not remember what. I did not deceive her for a moment.

"Of course that is not your name," she said, "because it does not fit you. You have me still at disadvantage."

"And me, madam? You are taking me miles out of my way. How can I help you? Do you perhaps wish to hunt mushrooms in the Georgetown woods when morning comes? I wish that I might join you, but I fear—"

"You mock me," she retorted. "Very good. Let me tell you it was not your personal charm which attracted me when I saw you on the pavement. 'Twas because you were the only man in sight."

I bowed my thanks. For a moment nothing was heard save the steady patter of hoofs on the rugged pavement. At length she went on.

"I am alone. I have been followed. I was followed when I called to you—by another carriage. I asked help of the first gentleman I saw, having heard that Americans are all gentlemen."

"True," said I; "I do not blame you. Neither do I blame the occupant of the other carriage for following you."

"I pray you leave aside such flattery," she exclaimed.

"Very well, then, madam. Perhaps the best way is for me to be more straightforward. If I cannot be of service, I beg you to set me down, for I have business which I must execute tonight."

She dismissed this with an impatient gesture and continued.

"See, I am alone," she said. "Come with me. Show me my way. I will pay. I will pay anything in reason." Actually I saw her fumble at her purse, and the hot blood flew to my forehead.

"What you ask of me, madam, is impossible," said I, with what courtesy I could summon. "You oblige me now to tell my real name. I have told you that I am an American gentleman—Mr. Nicholas Trist. We in this country do not offer our services to ladies for the sake of pay. But do not be troubled over any mistake—it is nothing. Now, you have perhaps had some little adventure in which you do not wish to be discovered. In any case, you ask me to shake off that carriage which follows us. If that is all, madam, it very easily can be arranged."

"Hasten, then," she said. "I leave it to you. I was sure you knew the city."

I turned and gazed back through the rear window of the carriage. True, there was another vehicle following us. We were by this time nearly at the end of Washington's limited pavements. It would be simple after that. I leaned out and gave our driver some brief orders. We led our chase across the valley creeks on up the Georgetown hills, and soon as possible abandoned the last of the pavement and took to the turf, where the sound of our wheels was dulled. Rapidly as we could we passed on up the hill, our going, which was all of earth or soft turf, now well wetted by the rain. When at last we reached a point near the summit of the hill I stopped to listen. Hearing nothing, I told the driver to pull down the hill by the side street and to drive slowly. When we finally came into our main street again at the foot of the Georgetown hills, not far from the little creek which divided that settlement from the main city, I could hear nowhere any sound of our pursuer.

"Madam," said I, turning to her, "I think we may safely say we are alone. What now is your wish?"

"Home!" she said.

"And where is home?"

She looked at me keenly for a time, as though to read some thought which perhaps she saw suggested either in the tone of my voice or in some glimpse she might have caught of my features as light afforded. For the moment she made no answer.

"Is it here?" suddenly I asked her, presenting to her inspection the sealed missive which I bore.

"I cannot see; it is quite dark," she said hurriedly.

"Pardon me, then." I fumbled for my case of lucifers and made a faint light by which she might read. She pursed her lips and shook her head.

"I do not recognize the address," said she, smiling, as she turned toward me.

"Is it at this door on M street, as you go beyond this other street?" I asked her. "Come—think!"

Then I thought I saw the flush deepen on her face, even as the match flickered and failed.

I leaned out of the door and called to the negro driver: "Home, now, boy—and drive fast!"

She made no protest.

CHAPTER V.

One of the Women in the Case.

There is a woman at the beginning of all great things.—Lamartine.

A quarter of an hour later we slowed down on a rough brick pavement which led toward what then was an outlying portion of the town—one not precisely shabby, but by no means fashionable. There was a single lamp stationed at the mouth of the narrow little street. As we advanced I could see outlined upon our right, just beyond a narrow pavement of brick, a low and not more than semi-respectable house, or rather row of houses, tenements for the middle class or poor, I might have said. The neighborhood, I knew from my acquaintance with the city, was respectable enough, yet it was remote and occupied by none of any station. Certainly it was not to be considered fit residence for a woman such as this who sat beside me. I admit I was puzzled.

"This will do," she said softly at length. The driver already had pulled up.

So, then, I thought, she had been here before. But why? Could this indeed be her residence? Was this indeed the covert embassy of England?

There was no escape from the situation as it lay before me. I had no time to ponder. My duty was here. This was my message; here was she for whom it was intended; and this was the place which I was to have sought alone. I needed only to remember that my business was not with Helena von Ritz the woman, [illegible] perhaps larger [illegible] as they said of her, but with the Baroness von Ritz, [illegible] of my chief, the ally, and something more than ally, of Pakenham, in charge of England's fortunes on this continent.

I descended at the edge of the narrow pavement and was about to hand her out at the step, but as I glanced down I saw that the rain had left a puddle of mud between the carriage and the walk.

"Pardon me, madam," I said; "allow me to make a light, or [illegible] your shoes."

I lighted another match just as she hesitated at the step. She made as though to put out her right foot, and withdrew it. Again she shifted and extended her left foot. I faintly saw proof that nature had carried out her scheme of symmetry and had not allowed wrist and arm to [illegible] themselves. I saw also that this foot was clad in the daintiest of white slippers, suitable enough as part of the ball costume, as I doubted not was this she wore. She took my hand without hesitation and rested her weight upon the step, an adorable ankle now more frankly revealed. The briefness of the lucifers was merciful or merciless, as you like.

"A wide step, madam; be careful," I suggested. But still she hesitated.

A laugh, half of annoyance, half of amusement, broke from her lips. As the light flickered down, she made as though to take the step, then, as luck would have it, a bit of her loose drapery, which was made in the wide-skirted and much-hooped fashion of the time, caught at the hinge of the carriage door. It was a chance glance, and not intent on my part, but I saw that her other foot was stockinged, but not shod!

"I beg madam's pardon," I said gravely, looking aside, "but she has perhaps not noticed that her other slipper is lost in the carriage."

"Nonsense!" she said. "Allow me your hand across to the walk, please. It is lost, yes."

"But lost—where?" I began.

"In the other carriage!" she exclaimed, and laughed freely.

Half hopping, she was across the walk, through the narrow gate, and up at the door before I could either offer an arm or ask for an explanation. Some whim, however, seized her; some feeling that in fairness she ought to tell me now part at least of the reason for her summoning me to her aid.

"Sir," she said, even as her hand reached up to the door knocker, "I admit you have acted as a gentleman should. I do not know what your message may be, but I doubt not it is meant for me. Since you have this much claim on my hospitality, even at this hour, I think I must ask you to step within. There may be some answer needed."

"Madam," said I, "there is an answer needed. I am to take back that answer. I know that this message is to the Baroness von Ritz. I guess it to be important, and I know you are the Baroness von Ritz."

"Well, then," said she, pulling about her half-clad shoulders the light wrap she wore, "let me be as free with you. If I have missed one shoe, I have not lost it wholly. I lost the slipper in a way not quite planned on the program. It hurt my foot. I sought to adjust it behind a curtain. My gentleman of Mexico was in wine. I fled, leaving my escort, and he followed. I called to you. You know the rest. I am glad you are less in wine, and are more a gentleman."

"I do not yet know my answer, madam."

"Come," she said, and at once knocked upon the door.

I shall not soon forget the surprise which awaited me when at last the door swung open suddenly at the hand of a wrinkled and brown old serving woman, not one of our colored women, but of some dark foreign race. The faintest trace of surprise showed on the old woman's face, but she stepped back and swung the door wide, standing submissively, waiting for orders.

We stood now facing what ought to have been a narrow and dingy little room in a low row of dingy buildings, each of two stories and so shallow in extent as perhaps not to offer space to more than a half dozen rooms. Instead of what should have been, however, there was a wide hall—wide as each building would have been from front to back, but longer than a half dozen of them would have been! I did not know then, what I learned later, that the partitions throughout this entire row had been removed, the material serving to fill up one of the houses at the farthest extremity of the row. There was thus offered a long and narrow room or series of rooms, which now I saw beyond possibility of doubt constituted the residence of this strange woman whom chance had sent me to address, and whom still stranger chance had thrown in contact with me even before my errand was begun!

She stood looking at me, a smile flitting over her features, her stockinged foot extended, toe down, serving to balance her on her high-heeled single shoe.

"Pardon, sir," she said, hesitating, as she held the sealed epistle in her hand. "You know me; perhaps you follow me. I do not know. Tell me, are you a spy of that man Pakenham?"

Her words and her tone startled me. I had supposed her bound to Sir Richard by ties of a certain sort. Her bluntness and independence puzzled me as much as her splendid beauty enraptured me. I tried to forget both.

"Madam, I am spy of no man, unless I am such at order of my chief, John Calhoun, of the United States senate—perhaps, if madam pleases, soon of Mr. Tyler's cabinet."

In answer she turned, hobbled to a tiny marquetry table, and tossed the note down upon it, unopened. I waited patiently, looking about me meantime. I discovered that the windows were barred with narrow slats of iron within, although covered with heavy draperies of amber silk. There was a double sheet of iron covering the door by which we had entered.

"Your cage, madam?" I inquired. "I do not blame England for making it so secret and strong. If so lovely a prisoner were mine, I should double the bars."

The swift answer to my presumption came in the flush of her cheek and her bitten lip. She caught up the key from the table and half motioned me to the door. But now I smiled in turn and pointed to the unopened note on the table. "You will pardon me, madam," I went on. "Surely it is no disgrace to represent either England or America. They are not at war. Why should we be?" We gazed steadily at each other.

The old servant had disappeared when at length her mistress chose to pick up my unregarded document. Deliberately she broke the seal and read. An instant later, her anger gone, she was laughing gaily.

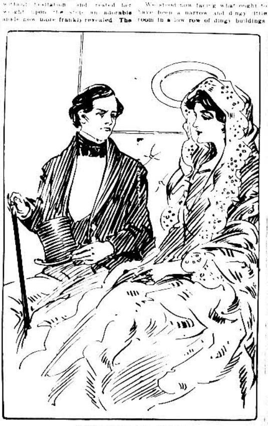
"See," said she, bubbling over with her mirth. "I pick up a stranger who should say gossipy at my curb, my apartments are forced, and this is what this stranger asks: that I shall go with him tonight, alone and otherwise unattended, to see a man, perhaps high in your government, but a stranger to me, at his own rooms—alone! Oh, la! la! Surely you Americans hold me high!"

"Assuredly we do, madam," I answered. "Will it please you to go in your own carriage, or shall I return with one for you?"

She put her hands behind her back, holding in them the opened message from my chief. "I am tired. I am bored. Your impudence amuses me; and your errand is not your fault. Come, sit down. You have been good to me. Before you go I shall have some refreshments brought for you."

I felt a sudden call upon my resources as I found myself in this singular situation. Here, indeed, more easily reached than I had dared hope, was the woman in the case. But only half of my errand, the easier half, was done.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



'And Where Is Your Home?'

Sense of Direction in Animals.

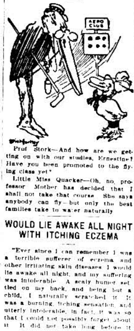
The remarkable faculty which cats, dogs, pigeons and other animals possess of returning in a straight line to a point of departure has awakened much curiosity on the part of naturalists. Some refer it to instinct, some to intelligence similar to man, some to an internal mechanism which makes the animal simply automata, but none of these attempted explanations does anything toward solving the mystery. One of our ablest modern scientific writers supposes that when an animal is carried to a great distance in a basket its fright makes it very attentive to the different odors which it encounters upon the way, and that the return of these odors, in inverse order, furnishes the needful guide.

In Fig-Leaf Days.

First Prehistoric—Where did Adam get such an awful grouch?

Second Ditto—He's kicking because his spring clothes don't make him look as broad shouldered as the fellows in the advertisements.—Puck.

FAMILY PRIDE.



Prof Stork—And how are we getting on with our studies, Ernestine? Have you been promoted to the flying class yet?

Little Miss Quacker—Oh, no, professor. Mother has decided that I shall not take that course. She says anybody can fly—but only the best families take to water naturally.

WOULD LIE AWAKE ALL NIGHT WITH ITCHING ECZEMA

"Ever since I can remember I was a terrible sufferer of eczema and other irritating skin diseases. I would lie awake all night, and my suffering was intolerable. A scaly humor settled on my back, and being but a child, I naturally scratched it. It was a burning, itching sensation, and utterly intolerable, in fact, it was so that I could not possibly forget about it. It did not take long before it spread to my shoulders and arms, and I was almost covered with a mass of raw flesh on account of my scratching it. I was in such a condition that my hands were tied.

"A number of physicians were called, but it seemed beyond their medical power and knowledge to cure me. Having tried numerous treatments without deriving any benefit from them, I had given myself up to the mercy of my dreadful malady, but I thought I would take the Cuticura treatment as a last resort. Words cannot express my gratitude to the one who created 'The Cuticura Miracles,' as I have named them, for now I feel as if I never suffered from even a pimple. My disease was routed by Cuticura Soap and Ointment, and I shall never cease praising the wonderful merits they contain. I will never be without them, in fact, I can almost dare any skin diseases to attack me so long as I have Cuticura Remedies in the house. I hope that this letter will give other sufferers an idea of how I suffered, and also hope that they will not pass the Cuticura Life Saving Station." (Signed) C. Louis Green, 929 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, Pa., Aug. 29, 1910.

A Matter of Size.

Wife—I want a cap, please, for my husband.

Shopkeeper—Yes, madam. What size does he wear?

Wife—Well, I really forget. His collars are size sixteen, though I expect he'd want about size eighteen or twenty for a cap, wouldn't he?

Important to Mothers

Examine carefully every bottle of CASTORIA, a safe and sure remedy for infants and children, and see that it

Bears the Signature of Chas. H. Fletcher.

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The Kind You Have Always Bought.

Fortunate.

Mrs. Woggs—She is enormously wealthy.

Mrs. Boggs—Yes. She was an only wife, you know!

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To render your neighbor a service willingly shows the generosity of your character; to preserve silence over it, the grandeur of your soul.—Puysieux.

You will sneeze, perhaps feel chilly. You think you are catching cold. Don't wait until you know it. Take a dose of Hamlins Wizard Oil and you just can't catch cold.

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Her savings are the saving of many a business girl.

Lewis' Single Binder straight 5c cigar. You pay 10c for cigars not so good.

Loud apparel naturally proclaims the man.

IMPORTANT CHANGES IN PASSENGER DEPARTMENT GRAND TRUNK RAILWAY SYSTEM.

On account resignation Geo. W. Vaux, Mr. Harry G. Elliott has been appointed general passenger agent at Montreal and is succeeded in Chicago by Mr. J. D. McDonald as assistant general passenger agent.

Mr. McDonald has a wide acquaintance with the railway and newspaper fraternity, having for many years represented his company at Buffalo as agent in charge Niagara Frontier, and for the past eight years as district passenger agent at Toronto, where his territory embraced the Highlands of Ontario resorts, including Muskoka, Lake of Bays, Temagami and the Cobalt region.

Mr. McDonald was secretary of the entertainment committee at Buffalo when meeting of the American Association of General Passenger Agents met there prior to opening of Pan-American exposition, was one of Geo. T. Bell's aids in looking after the general passenger agents at their Portland, Me., trip, and also two years ago when they had two special trains to the Canada resorts.

Mr. McDonald's territory embraces what is known as the western division, being that portion of the Grand Trunk Railway System lying west of Detroit and Port Huron, and also all territory west of Chicago to the Pacific coast and southwest to the Gulf of Mexico.

Modern application is likely to extract the teeth of an old saw.

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Backache

is only one of many symptoms which some women endure through weakness or displacement of the womanly organs. Mrs. Lizzie White of Memphis, Tenn., wrote Dr. R. V. Pierce, as follows:

"At times I was hardly able to be on my feet. I believe I had every pain and ache a woman could have. Had a very bad case. Internal organs were very much diseased and my back was very weak. I suffered a great deal with nervous headaches, in fact, I suffered all over. This was my condition when I wrote to you for advice. After taking your 'Favorite Prescription' for about three months can say that my health was never better."

Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription

Is a positive cure for weakness and disease of the feminine organism. It allays inflammation, heals ulceration and soothes pain. Tones and builds up the nerves. Do not permit a dishonest dealer to substitute for this medicine which has a record of 40 years of cures. "No, thank you, I want what I ask for."

Dr. Pierce's Pleasant Pellets induce mild natural bowel movement once a day.