

Hemming, The Adventurer

BY
THEODORE
ROBERTS

(Continued.)
CHAPTER IX.

Mr. Cuddlehead Arrives.

Mr. Cuddlehead's trip, though free from serious accident, had been extremely trying. The barcassa had cramped his legs, and the smell of the native cooking, in so confined a space, had unsettled his stomach. He had been compelled to wait three days in the uninteresting village at the mouth of the Plado, unable to hurry the leisurely crew of the launch. But at last the unendurable journey came to an end, and with a sigh of relief he issued from beneath the smoke-begrimed awning, and stretched his legs on the little wharf at Pernambuco. He looked at the deserted warehouses along the river-front, and a foreboding of disaster chilled him. The afternoon lay close and bright in the unhealthy valley, and the very peacefulness of the scene awoke a phantom of fear in his heart. What if the President were a man of the world after all, with a knowledge of men and the signs on their faces? Why, then, good-bye to all hope of the family circle.

A black boy accosted Cuddlehead, awaking him from his depressing surmises. The nigger gabbled in the language of the country. Then he pointed at the traveller's bag.

"Take it, by all means," said Cuddlehead.

There is one hostelry in Pernambuco, on a side street behind the military stables. It is small and not very clean. To this place the boy led Cuddlehead, and at the door demanded five hundred reis—the equivalent of sixpence. Cuddlehead doubled the sum for after all he had done very well of late, and a favorable impression is a good thing to make in a new stamping-ground, even on a nigger. The proprietor of the inn bowed him to the only habitable guest-chamber. Here he bathed, as well as he could with two small jugs of water and his shaving-soap, and then changed into a suit of clean white linen. With a cigarette between his lips and a light rattan in his hand, Cuddlehead was himself again. He swaggered in to the narrow street and started in search of the President's villa. He passed a group of soldiers puffing their cigarettes in a doorway, who stared after him with interest and some misgivings. "Was the place to be invaded by Englishmen?" they wondered. He saw a brown girl of attractive appearance, rolling cigars beside an open window. He entered the humble habitation, and, after examining the samples of leaf, in sign language ordered a hundred cigars.

Then he embraced the girl, and was promptly slapped across the face and pushed out of the shop.

"What airs these d-n niggers put on," he muttered, "maybe I was a bit indiscreet."

Here, already, was the hand of Hemming against him, though he did not know it; for Hemming, also, had bought cigars from the girl, and had treated her as he treated all women, thereby establishing her self-respect above the attentions of men with eyes like Cuddlehead's.

Cuddlehead found the gates open to the President's grounds without much trouble, and was halted by the sentry. He produced his card-case. The sentry whistled. The corporal issued from the guard-house, with his tunic open and his belt dangling.

Just then Captain Santos entered from the street, with, in the metaphorical phrase of a certain whist-playing poet, "a smile on his face, and a club in his hand." He swore at the corporal, who retreated to the guard-house, fumbling at his buttons. He bowed to Cuddlehead, and glanced at the card.

"You would like to see the President?" he cried. "Then I will escort you to the door." He caught up his sword and hooked it short to his belt, wheeled like a drill-sergeant, fitted his stride to Cuddlehead's.

Mr. Tetson received the visitor in his airy office. He seemed disturbed in mind, wondering, perhaps, if this were a dun from some wholesale establishment on the coast. He had been working on his books all the morning, and had caught a glimpse of ruin like a great shadow, across the tidy pages. But he managed to welcome Cuddlehead heartily enough.

"You must stay to dinner, sir,—pot-luck—very informal, you know," he said, hospitably. He leaned against the desk and passed his hand across his forehead. He could not keep his mind from working back to the sheets of ruled paper.

"Ten thousand," he pondered, "ten thousand for April alone, and nothing to put against it. The army wanting its pay, and robbing me of all I have. Gregory's coal bill as long as my leg. Sugar gone to the devil!" He sighed, mopped his face, and looked at Cuddlehead, who all the while had been observing him with furtive, inquiring eyes. He offered a yellow cigar, and lit one himself.

"Excuse me a moment," he said. "I have something to see to. Here are some English papers. I'll be back immediately. Mr. Cuddlehead, and then maybe we can have a game of billiards."

He went hurriedly from the room. "You are a foolish old party," re-

marked Cuddlehead to the closed door, "and, no doubt, you'll be all the easier for that. Hope your daughter is a little better looking, that's all."

He tossed the offensive cigar into the garden, and seated himself in the chair by the desk. His courage was growing.

At the hall door Mr. Tetson met Hemming entering. The commander was booted and spurred.

"Are you busy?" inquired the President. "There's a visitor in here."

The Englishman glared. "Yes, sir, I am busy," he replied. "I've caught my command in seven of their thieving tricks, and have ridden thirty miles to do it. I've told the whole regiment what I think of them, and now I must dine at the mess, to see that they don't concoct any scheme to murder me."

"Haven't you time for a game of billiards with Mr. Cuddlehead?" asked Mr. Tetson.

"No, sir, I have not," replied Hemming, crisply, and tramped away to change his clothes. "The old ass," he muttered, under his breath.

Dinner that night was a dull affair. Hemming and Hicks were both absent from the table. Cuddlehead had excellent manners, and all the outward signs of social grace, but a warning was marked on his face. The President tried to be entertaining, but the terror of an impending disturbance, and even of ruin, hung over him. Mrs. Tetson, guessing somewhat of her husband's troubles, sat pale and fearful. Marion was polite, with a politeness that, after two or three essays of gallantry on Cuddlehead's part, left him inwardly squinting. After dinner Miss Tetson described the visitor to Hicks, mentioning the horrible mouth, the shifting eyes, and the odious attentions.

"He may be pretty bad, for you to talk about him," said Valentine, in wonder.

"Oh, if I had never seen men like you and Mr. Hemming," she answered, "he would not seem so utterly ridiculous."

Hicks was in a chair by the window, and Marion was perched on the arm of it. His eyes were desperate. Hers were bright and daring. Her mouth was tremulous.

"I can understand your admiration for Hemming," he said. "He is the best chap on earth, barring only you."

Marion smiled.

"I wonder," he continued, presently. "I wonder if—that was all a dream?" she asked.

"What?" he asked.

"I wish I could see you," he said. "I believe you are laughing at me up there."

"I am laughing," she replied, "but I don't know why exactly."
"At my stupidity, perhaps."
"You are certainly very stupid,"
"No, I'm a coward."
"What are you afraid of?"
He leaned back as far as he could, trying to see her face.

"I am afraid you pity me, and don't love me," he said.
He breathed hard after that as if he had run a mile.

"I am not modest enough to pity you," she said, softly, "though no doubt you are deserving of pity."
"Marion," he whispered, "for God's sake, don't. I'm too blind with anxiety to read riddles. Tell me straight—do you love me? Have I even the ghost of a chance?"

"Do you believe in ghosts?" asked she, with trembling laughter, and bending forward, with a hand on either of his thin shoulders, she pressed her cheek to his.

While love and his innings in the sick-room, below curiosity led the feet of Mr. Cuddlehead toward the officers' quarters on the outskirts of the town. The night was fine, and not oppressively close. A breeze from the hills made liquid stir in the higher foliage. Cuddlehead felt in his blood a hint of something unusual, as he took his way through the President's wide gardens, and out to the road. No sentinel paced, sabre at shoulder, before the little guard-house. The troopers stood in groups along the street, smoking and talking. The smoke of their pungent cigarettes drifted on the air, and the murmur of their voices rang with a low note of menace. Unmolested, Cuddlehead reached the long white building where the officers of this inconsiderable army lodged and messed. Through the open windows glowed a subdued light from the shaped lamps above the table. The compassing verandas were but partially illuminated by the glow from within, and silent men stood here and there in the shadows, motionless and expectant. At Cuddlehead's approach the nearer ones hesitated for a moment, and then drew away.

"There is something rotten," quoth Cuddlehead, under his breath, and looked cautiously in. For a moment the array of faultless, gaudy mess-jackets startled him. In the sight of an apparently civilized military mess there was, to him, a suggestion of danger. Recovering his composure, he looked again. The faces up and down the table were dark, and for the most part, sullen. At the head of the board, with his face toward the onlooker's place of vantage, sat Hemming. His shoulders were squared. His eye-glass gleamed in the lamplight. Cuddlehead stared at the commander-in-chief with a fearful, spellbound gaze. His hands clutched at the low window-sill. His breath seemed to hang in his windpipe. At last he straightened himself, moistened his craven lips with his tongue, and went stealthily away. Safe in his own room in the quiet inn, he took a shrewd nip of raw brandy.

"What the devil," he asked himself, "brought that righteous, immaculate fool to this God-forsaken place?"

Two things were uppermost in his memory—a caning once given to a cad, and a shilling once tossed to a beggar.

CHAPTER X. The First Shot.

Mr. Cuddlehead did not go far afield during the day following his glimpse of the officers' dinner table. Instead, he kept to his room until evening, or at most took a furtive turn or two on the cobbles before the inn door. After his lonely and not very palatable dinner was over, he set out cautiously for the President's villa. He wanted to have a talk with Miss Tetson alone. She, no doubt, could explain matters to him, so that he might be able to decide on a course of action. He walked slowly, keeping always a vigilant look-out for the trim, dauntless figure of Herbert Hemming. At the great gateway the brown boy on sentry-duty saluted, and let him pass without question. In return, he treated the fellow to his blandest smile and a mile's note. He did not keep long to the drive, but turned off into a narrow path as soon as he felt that the soldier had ceased watching him. He took his time, traversing winding paths between low tropical shrubs and yellow-stemmed bamboo, but always drawing nearer to the quiet mansion. Presently his ear caught a welcome sound—the soft, frivolous strumming of a banjo. He was aware that Hemming was not musical; in fact, he remembered that his rendering of "Father O'Flynn" had once been mistaken for the national anthem.

Cuddlehead found Miss Tetson on a stone seat near her favourite fountain. At sight of him, she stopped her idle playing, and answered his salutation with the coldest of bows. Her lover's kisses still burned on her lips, and words of his impulsive wooing still rang sweetly in her ears. Even the little brown crane, that stood there watching the sparkling water with eyes like yellow jewels, reminded her of a certain evening when she had been unkind to Valentine Hicks. The hour was not for Cuddlehead.

Indisturbed by the coolness of his reception, Mr. Cuddlehead seated himself at the far end of the bench, and began to talk. He described his journey from Pernambuco to Pernambuco, and with so fine a wit that Marion smiled. He told little anecdotes of his past, very clever, and very vague as to dates and scenes. The girl almost forgot the sinister aspect of his face in the charm of his conversation, and when he mentioned Hemming, in terms of warmest respect, she confided to him something of his trouble with the army.

"Perhaps I can be of some use; one Englishman should be good for ten of those niggers," he said. He lifted the banjo from the seat, and made it dance and sing through the newest Southern melody. His touch was both dainty and brilliant. He replaced the instrument on the seat between them. He saw that the girl was more favourably impressed with him than she had been. For a little while they kept silence, and her thoughts returned to Valentine Hicks. Suddenly they heard Hemming's voice, pitched low and sharp, in anger. He was hidden from them by shrubs of tangled growth.

"I have given my orders," he said. "Do you understand?"

(To be continued.)

Catarrh of the Stomach. A Pleasant, Simple, but Safe and Effectual Cure for It.

Catarrh of the stomach has long been considered the next thing to incurable. The usual symptoms are a full or bloating sensation after eating, accompanied sometimes with sour or watery risings, a formation of gases, causing pressure on the heart and lungs and difficult breathing, headaches, fickle appetite, nervousness and a general played out, languid feeling.

There is often a foul taste in the mouth, coated tongue and if the interior of the stomach could be seen it would show a slimy, inflamed condition.

The cure for this common and obstinate trouble is found in a treatment which causes the food to be readily, thoroughly digested before it has time to ferment and irritate the delicate mucous surfaces of the stomach. To secure a prompt and healthy digestion is the one necessary thing to do and when normal digestion is secured the catarrhal condition will have disappeared.

According to Dr. Harlanston, the safest and best treatment is to use after each meal a tablet, composed of Diastase, Aseptic Pepsin, a little Nux, Golden Seal and fruit acids. These tablets can now be found at all drug stores under the name of Stuart's Dyspepsia Tablets and not being a patent medicine can be used with perfect safety and assurance that healthy appetite and thorough digestion will follow their regular use after meals.

Mr. R. S. Workman, Chicago, Ill., writes: "Catarrh is a local condition resulting from a neglected cold in the head, whereby the lining membrane of the nose becomes inflamed and the poisonous discharge there from passing backward into the throat reaches the stomach, thus producing catarrh of the stomach. Medical authorities prescribed for me for three years for catarrh of stomach without cure, but today I am the happiest of men after using only one box of Stuart's Dyspepsia Tablets. I cannot find appropriate words to express my good feeling. I have found flesh, appetite and sound rest from their use."

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All persons having any legal claims against the above estate are requested to file the same with the undersigned Solicitor, at his Office Number 100 Prince William Street, Saint John, New Brunswick; and all persons indebted to the said estate are requested to make immediate payment to the said Solicitor.

Dated the 22nd day of September, A. D. 1904.

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