

# Hemming, The Adventurer

BY THEODORE ROBERTS

(Continued)

"My mother in New York taught me to," replied Tetson, "and then this business is different. I did it, as you Englishmen say, off my own bat. A pile of money, a lot of gall, a little knowledge of the weakness of men in office,—this is all about it. Even now most of my friends think me a fool. He gravely relit his yellow cigar. The rack of it was worse than jerked beef to Hemming. "I will tell you my story some day, but now you want a shower bath and a change. Please consider yourself at home. Sudden friendships may not be good form in England, but they are all right back here."

"Ah," said Hemming, "I have brushed about a bit, I'm not such a—so English as I look."

Tetson turned to the servant: "Tell Smith to look after Mr. Hemming. Smith is a handy man. You will find all kinds of cigars in his keeping, and we shall dine at eight. If you feel hungry in the meantime, tell Smith."

He arose and shook hands. Hemming followed the servant, inwardly wondering, outwardly calm. He had met many strange people in his adventurous life, and had become accustomed to luck of every kind, but this big President, with the yellow cigar, was beyond anything he had ever dreamed.

"I am glad I was born with imagination, and have enjoyed the enlightening society of O'Rourke in so many strange places," he thought.

Smith proved to be a clean-shaven man, all in white and brass buttons. Hemming surveyed him with interest. "I see that you are an Englishman Smith," he said.

"No, sir," replied Smith, in faultless tones. "I was born on the Bowery. But I have been in London, sir, yes, sir, with Mr. Tetson. We haven't always lived in this 'ere 'ole."

It seemed to Hemming that the big man had dropped with a certain amount of effort on the man's part, and that his eyes twinkled in a quite uncalculated way. But it did not bother him now. Even a valet may be allowed his joke.

Soon he was enjoying the luxury of a shower-bath in a great, cool room, standing by itself in a vineyard and rose garden. The shower fell about six feet before it touched his head. The roof of the building was open to the peak, and a subdued light, softly filtered, came down through a glass tile set in among the earthen ones. The walls and floor were of white and blue tiles. The bath was of marble, as large as an English billiard-table, and not unlike the shallow basin of a fountain.

Cool and vigorous, Hemming stepped from the bath, replaced his eye-glass, and lit a cigarette. Swathed in a white robe, with his feet in native slippers, he unlocked the door and issued into the scented garden air. Smith awaited him in the vine-covered alley, holding a "swizzle" on a silver tray. He drained the glass, and, lifting up the hem of his robe, followed the valet back to the dressing-room. Chameleons darted across his path, and through the palms floated the ringing notes of a bugle-call.

"I found your razors and your brushes in the saddle-bags," announced Smith, "and these shirts, sir, I bought, guessing at your size, and—"

"What is this?" interrupted Hemming, holding aloft a white jacket heavy with gold.

"Mess jacket of our regiment, sir. The President would feel honored if you would wear it. And these trousers were sent in by one of the native officers, with his compliments," replied the valet.

Hemming curtly intimated his readiness to dress. Smith closed the shutters, turned on the lights, and presented a couple of razors.

Twenty minutes later, Herbert Hemming, in the mess uniform of a colonel in the President of Pernambuco's army, was ushered into the presence of the family, and a certain Mr. Valentine Hicks.

### CHAPTER II.

The Sporting President.

The President's name was Harris William Tetson. His wife had been Mary Appleton, born of cultured parents in Philadelphia. She welcomed Hemming in the most friendly manner. The third member of the family was a tall girl, with a soft voice and an English accent. She shook hands with Hemming, and he noticed that the pressure of her hand was firm and steady, like that of a man's. She wore glasses. The light from the shaded candles glowed warm on her white neck and arms. Hemming had not expected to find any one like this in the interior of South America. He used to know girls like her at home, and one in particular flashed into his memory with a pang of bitterness. In his agitation, he almost overlooked the extended hand of Mr. Valentine Hicks.

The dinner was of great length. A few of the dishes were American, but most were of the country. Two dusky servants waited upon the diners. The claret was to Hemming's taste, and, as he listened to Miss Tetson describe an incident of her morning's ride, a feeling of rest and homeliness came to him. A little

wind stole in from the roses and fountains, and the man of wars and letters, great dreams and unsung actions, saw, with wondering eyes, that it loosened a red petal from the roses at her shoulder and dropped it upon her white arm. He looked up sharply, and only the light of genial friendship remained in the eyes that met those of Valentine Hicks. But Hicks looked sulky; understanding came to the hear of Hemming. At last the dinner came to an end, and Tetson dropped the subject of freight on sugar, and took up the lighter one of real estate. Coffee was brought; no one listened to Tetson, but he pressed on, his good-natured face turned toward the shadows in the ceiling, a yellow cigar stuck jauntily in his mouth. Hemming was busy with his own thoughts, wondering into what nest of lunatics his free-lance had brought him. He longed for O'Rourke's help. The girl drew something from her bodice, and laid it before him. It was a cigarette-case.

"You may take one, if you do not bore us by looking shocked," she said.

Hemming drew forth a cigarette, and lit it at the nearest candle. "As to being shocked," he replied, "why, I used to know a girl who—"

He stopped suddenly and glanced down at his coffee. "Of course it is quite the thing now," he added, in stilted tones.

Hicks refused a cigarette from the silver case, and moodily puffed at a black native cigar. Mrs. Tetson did not smoke, but entertained the others with a description of her first and only attempt at the recreation.

The little wind died away. Outside, the fountain splashed sleepily. The blood-red petal fell from the girl's arm to the white cloth. A flame-bellied moth binged into the President's coffee. Hemming's workaday brain was lulled to repose, and now he was only Hemming the poet. He looked into the eyes across the table. But he had lived so long with men, and the foolish, evident affairs of generals and statesmen, that Miss Tetson's glances wore as weapons for which he knew no manual of defence.

They touched him more than he liked awaking in his hitherto disciplined memory a hundred fibres of broken dreams. And every fibre tingled like a nerve with a sweetness sharp as pain,—and time swung back, and all the healing of his long exile was undone.

When the ladies rose from the table, Mr. Tetson came over to Hemming and nudged him confidentially. He looked very sly. "What d'ye say to a game of billiards?" he whispered.

"Delighted," murmured Hemming,

relieved that his strange host had not suggested something worse.

"I like the game," continued Tetson, "but as Hicks is a damn fool at it, I don't indulge very often. Hicks is too young, anyway—a nice fellow but altogether too young for men to associate with. Trotting round with the girls is more in his line."

"Really," remarked the newcomer, uneasily. He was not quite sure whether or not Hicks had got out of car-shot.

"Fact," said the President,—"cold truth. Marion can't play, either. I've had Santosa up several times for a game, but he's too dashed respectful to beat me. You'll not be that way, Hemming?"

"I should hope not," replied Hemming, absently, his eyes still turned toward the door through which the rest of the party had vanished.

"What d'ye say to five dollars the game?" Tetson whispered. The adventurer's heart sank, but he followed his host to the billiard-room with an unconcerned air. They played until past midnight, the President in his shirt-sleeves, with the yellow cigar smouldering always. A servant, marked for them, and another unmarked, the soda-water. After the last shot had been made, Valentine Hicks strolled in, with his hands in his pockets and his brow clouded.

"Did the old man do you?" he inquired of Hemming.

The free-lance shook his head. "I took ten pounds away from him," he said.

The secretary whistled.

### CHAPTER III.

The Post of Honour.—The Secretary's Affair.

Hemming awoke with a clear head, despite the President's whiskey, and remembered, with satisfaction, the extra ten pounds. His windows were wide open, and a cool dawn wind came in across the garden. He threw aside the sheet and went over to the middle window, and, finding that the ledge extended to form a narrow balcony, stepped outside. Away to the right, he could mark a bend of the river by the low-lying mist. He sniffed the air. "There is fever in it," he said, and wondered how many kinds of a fool Mr. Tetson was. He was sorry for the ladies. They did not look like the kind of people to enjoy being shut away from the world in such a God-forsaken hole as this. Why didn't the old ass start a town on the coast? he asked himself.

While engaged in these puzzling reflections, Smith rapped at the door, and entered. He carried coffee, a few slices of dry toast, and a jug of shaving-water.

"Will you ride this morning, sir?" he asked.

"Why, yes," replied Hemming, and said he would be shaved before drinking his coffee. As the valet launched his chin, he asked if the President rode every morning.

"Not 'e, sir," replied the man, "but Miss Tetson, does, and Mr. Hicks."

Hemming found his well-worn riding breeches brushed and folded, his boots and spurs shining like the sun, and a new cotton tunic ready for him. He looked his surprise at sight of the last article.

"You didn't give me any order,

explained the man, "but, being as I'm a bit of a tailor myself, I thought as 'ow you wouldn't mind—"

Hemming interrupted him with uplifted hand.

"It was very kind of you," he said, "and I am sure it is an excellent fit. See if you can't find a sovereign among that change on the table."

As he rode through the great gates Hemming caught sight of Miss Tetson along the road. At sound of his horse's hoofs, she turned in her saddle and waved her hand.

He touched his little white stallion into that renowned sliding run that had made it famous in Pernambuco. They rode together for over an hour. Hicks did not turn out that morning.

Mr. Valentine Hicks was young, and an American. Though he had been born in Boston, he lacked something in breeding—a very shadowy something that would correct itself as life took him in hand. Though he had been an undergraduate of Harvard University for two years, he displayed to Hemming's mind a childish ignorance of men and books. No doubt he had practised the arts of drop-kicking and tackling with distinction, for he was big and well muscled. He was distantly connected with the Tetsons, and had joined them in Pernambuco soon after their arrival in the country, and two years previous to the opening of this narrative, to act as Tetson's private secretary. At first Mr. Hicks looked with suspicion upon the wandering Englishman. He was in an unsettled frame of mind at the time, poor fellow. He saw in Hemming a dangerous rival to his own monopoly of Miss Tetson. Already the lady was talking about some sort of book the dufer had written.

A few days after Hemming's arrival, the army, to the number of four hundred rank and file and twenty-six officers, was drawn up for the President's inspection. Hemming rode with Tetson, and the little brown soldiers wondered at the frosty glitter of his eye-glass. His mount was the same upon which he had entered the country,—a white, native bred stallion, the gift of one McPhey, a merchant in Pernambuco. Miss Tetson and Hicks, each followed by a groom, trotted aimlessly about the waiting ranks, much to Hemming's disgust. Tetson lit the inevitable yellow weed.

(To be Continued.)

By the return of Rufus Isaacs for Reading, the number of Jewish members of Parliament is brought up to eleven—a record number for the British House of Commons.

RUSHING BUSINESS.

Druggist—Done any business this morning? Clerk—Oh, pretty well. A boy came in early to buy a two-cent postage stamp, a woman came next to talk through our phone to her grocer, and a man followed soon after to look at the directory. Upon the whole, it has been a fairly busy day.—Boston Transcript.

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The experience of this lady is that of thousands of others who have been assured that nothing short of an operation would rid them of this distressing complaint. On the face of it, it appears as if too many surgeons operate in order that they may keep their hand in, and lose no portion of their skill; then, again, too many surgeons are anxious to experiment (like the scientific man in Mark Twain's pathetic story of the dog and her little puppy), and do not have proper regard for a patient's physical welfare or condition.

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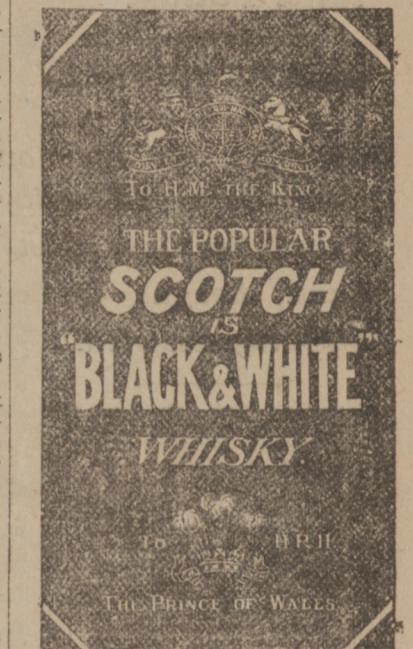
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