

Hemming, The Adventurer

BY
THEODORE
ROBERTS

(Continued.)

The four revolvers jumped and split—once—twice—and the wounded slipped back against their comrades' legs. More men entered the hall below, and fled wildly into the darkness above and around. Then Hicks, Santosa, and Smith left their windows and pumped lead into the houseroom. The noise was deafening. The air was unfit to breathe. O'Rourke wondered at something hot and wet against his leg. Hemming was angry because none would come within cutting distance. Smith felt very sick, but did not mention the fact. He knelt against the banisters, and fumbled with the hammer of his revolver, and the blood from a great furrow in his neck ran down one of the polished rounds that supported the carved hand-rail. But it was dark, and he could not see it. But presently he dropped his revolver and felt the blood with his fingers and wondered, in a dim way, who it was dared to make such a mess in Mr. Tetson's house.

The firing outside the house, which had died away for a minute, increased suddenly, and cries of warning and consternation rang above it. More men came to the open doorway. They were armed with rifles instead of the short carbines of the Pernambuco army. They discharged a volley or two into the backs of the scrambling soldiers on the stairs.

"That ends the revolution," remarked Hemming calmly, removing his monocle from his eye.

"I think we could have done it without help," said Santosa.

The men on the stairs cried for mercy.

"Are you all safe, up there?" asked a voice from the door.

Smith clung to the rounds of the banisters and closed his eyes, and O'Rourke leaned against the wall with one knee drawn up.

"The same leg," he muttered, and twisted his face at the pain of it.

CHAPTER XV.

Rest in Pernambuco.

Miss Tetson and Mr. Valentine Hicks were married in the little English church in Pernambuco. The ex-President gave the bride away, the ex-commander-in-chief supported the groom, and the major supported the clergyman officiating. Mrs. McPhey supplied the wedding breakfast, and McPhey made all the speeches. Then the Tetsons and Hicks sailed away for New York, leaving Herbert Hemming to nurse Mr. O'Rourke and Smith.

The invalids were housed in cool rooms in the McPhey mansion, on the outskirts of the city, and they and Hemming were guests of honour

for as long as they would stay in the country.

O'Rourke's leg was in a bad way, but poor Smith's neck was in a worse. For the first week of his attendance the clever American surgeon who had them both in charge felt anxious enough for the valet's life. But modern methods and unflinching care won the day, and a wound that, in the time of the Crimean War, meant certain death, left nothing but a sunken-white scar.

A couple of months passed quietly. Hemming worked at a series of short stories, and learned the gaudy-colored, easy-going city by heart. He received several letters from Hicks, and heard that the diamond had been sold at a good price. O'Rourke pulled on his riding-boots again, and exercised McPhey's stable, night and morning.

Hemming's white stallion was once more an inmate of this stable. Smith recovered his strength slowly, and spent his days in careful meditations and unnamed regrets for the good time of fighting and comradeship.

One day, Captain Santosa (who, through the influence of McPhey and the major, had procured a commission in the cavalry regiment stationed in Pernambuco) brought news of Penthouse's death to Hemming. Penthouse had been found in a dying condition in the hut of a poor woman, on the trail above Pernambuco, by a party of government troops. He had been shot during the attack upon the President's villa, and, crawling away from the fight, had been found by the peasant woman, and tended by her through his weeks of suffering. She had explained to the officer in command that an Englishman had been kind to her, and for his sake she had housed and nursed this other Englishman. Thus, through Hemming's kindness, had his enemy received kindness.

End of Part II.

PART III

CHAPTER I.

The Real Girl.

Hemming and O'Rourke, with Smith as valet-in-common, reached New York in November, and shivered in their tropical underclothes. The dismal aspect of the great city, as viewed at nine o'clock of a drizzly morning, daunted even the valet. At sight of the wide, wet streets and soaring office buildings, depressing memories of Dodder's death came to Hemming. The chill brought a twinge to O'Rourke's leg, and the swinging, clanging cars and hustling crowds offended his sense of the fitness of things.

In a four-wheeler they went direct to a bachelor apartment-house on Washington Square, in which their friend, Mr. Valentine Hicks, had engaged for them an airy suite of rooms. As they passed under the white archway, entering the old square, their moods lifted.

"I believe I'll feel all right, when I get into a woollen undershirt," said O'Rourke.

Hemming soon settled down to his work. He was more systematic about it than O'Rourke, working several hours every morning at articles for the magazines, and part of every evening at a novel. O'Rourke, who had many friends and acquaintances in and about Newspaper Row, spent but little of his time at home, and did his work when he had to. Both O'Rourke and Hemming were frequent visitors at another house on the square, where the Hickses and Tetsons lived in company. Hemming's novel was built up, chapter by chapter, and relentlessly torn down, only to be rebuilt with much toil. The general outline of the story had come to him years before, one night while he was playing poker in the chart-room of an ocean tramp. He had written a few pages next morning, behind the canvas dodgers of the bridge. Then it had been pushed aside by the press of other work; but he had returned to it now and then, in many parts of the world. The chapters done in Pernambuco were the only ones that did not seem to require rewriting. By this time the original plot was almost forgotten, and a more satisfactory one had developed.

One Thursday night, having finished the twentieth chapter as well as he knew how, he chafed his clothing and went over to call on Mrs. Hicks. It was her evening. He went alone, for O'Rourke had dined out, and had not returned. About a dozen people were already there. While he was talking to McFarland of the Gazette, he noticed a girl talking to their hostess. Just why she attracted him he could not say for a moment. Mrs. Hicks was more beautiful, and there were at least two women in the room as tastefully gowned. She looked girlish beside her stately hostess. But there was a jaunty, gallant air about the carrying of her head and shoulders, which seemed to Hemming particularly charming. Her voice was deep, and her laughter was unaffected as that of a boy.

"You too?" laughed McFarland.

"I never saw her before," said Hemming.

"Then let me tell you now," said the editor, "that it is no use. Even your eyeglass could not awaken her from her romantic dream."

"Count me out," replied Hemming,

dryly, "but tell me something about it."

"All I know," said McFarland, "is that there are ten of us—eleven counting the lucky unknown. We ten used to hate one another, but now we are as brothers in our common misery. But tell me, is it true that you are working on a novel? I don't see what you want to go messing with fiction for, when you can do stuff like that Turkish book."

While Hemming and the journalist chatted aimlessly in Mrs. Hicks's drawing-room, O'Rourke made history across the square. He had returned to his quarters only a few minutes after his friends had left; and had scarcely got his pipe well lighted when Smith announced "a gentleman to see Captain Hemming, very particularly." O'Rourke got to his feet and found the gentleman already at the sitting-room door. The caller was in evening clothes. His ulster hung open, and in his hand he carried an opera-hat.

"Hemming is out for the evening," said O'Rourke, "but perhaps I can give him your message. Come in, won't you?"

The stranger entered and sat down by the fire. He glanced about the walls of the room, and then fixed an intent, though inoffensive, gaze on O'Rourke.

"I heard, only this morning, that Hemming was in town," he said. "We saw a good deal of each other, once, in Porto Rico."

"In Porto Rico?" exclaimed O'Rourke, knitting his brow.

"Yes. Have you ever been there?"

"No though I've sampled most of the islands. But go on—I interrupted you. I beg your pardon."

"Don't speak of it. I only came for the address of a friend of Hemming's, but perhaps you could tell me in what quarter of the globe Mr. O'Rourke hangs out? He's a literary chap, and maybe you know him."

"Bertram St. Ives O'Rourke?"

"Yes."

"Yes, I know him. He is in town just now, at 206 Washington Square."

"Why, that must be very near here."

"It is," replied O'Rourke, with a strange light in his eyes and a huskiness in his voice.

"Let me see," mused the other. "This is the Wellington, number two hundred and—Lord, this is the place."

His dark face paled suddenly.

"My name is O'Rourke," remarked the big man with the pipe.

"And mine is Ellis," said the other.

They eyed each other squarely for several seconds.

"I have heard of you," said O'Rourke, in modulated tones. But all the while the blood was singing in his ears, and splashing wisps of light crossed his eyes.

"And I of you," replied Ellis, quietly. He had not yet regained his colour. O'Rourke, outwardly calm, turned in his chair and searched among the papers on the table. He found a leather cigar-case, opened it, and extended it to his visitor.

"Try one of these. We like them immensely," he said.

Now the red surged into Ellis's face, and he hesitated to receive the cigar.

"Don't you know—how I have

treated you?" he whispered.

"Please try a smoke—and then tell me why you came for my address. The past is done with. I am only afraid of the future now."

Ellis drew the long black weed from the extended case, and deliberately prepared it for smoking. When it was burning to his satisfaction, he said:

"Do you know where the Hickses live?"

"Yes. Hemming is there to-night."

"So is Miss Hudson," remarked Ellis.

O'Rourke jumped from his chair, and grasped the other by both hands. Then he dashed into his bed-room and shouted for Smith. When he was half-dressed he remembered that he had forgotten to ask any questions, or even to be excused, while he changed his clothes. He looked into the sitting-room.

"Forgive my bad manners, Mr. Ellis. You see I'm in rather a rush," he said, guiltily.

"Oh, certainly," exclaimed Ellis, starting up from a gloomy contemplation of the fire. He crossed over and smiled wanly at O'Rourke.

"If you don't mind," he said, "I wish you'd keep quiet about my part in this affair. She would despise me, you know—and I couldn't stand that."

"But I can tell her about tonight—about your kindness," suggested O'Rourke.

Ellis shook his head and smiled bitterly.

"She may not look at it in so charitable a light as you do," he replied. "So please put it all down to chance. She does not know that I have ever heard of you, except from her."

O'Rourke promised, and, after shaking hands, Ellis left his rival to complete his toilet. This he did in short order.

To return to the drawing-room across the square, by degrees Hemming drifted half around the room, and at last found himself against the wall, between the door from the hallway and the table containing the punch-bowl.

He was feeling a bit weary of it all, and sought refreshment in the bowl. He had almost decided to go home, when the door at his elbow opened, and to his surprise O'Rourke entered, resplendent in white breast, black tails, and eager smile. This comrade tried and true passed him without a glance—worse still, strode between his host and hostess without a sign of recognition. Glass in hand, and monocle flashing, Hemming wheeled and stared after him. Others looked in the same direction. Valentine and Marion smiled sheepishly at their empty, extended hands. But the lady of the gallant, shapely shoulders and unaffected laughter faced the late arrival with the most wonderful expression in the world on her face. For a moment she seemed to waver. Then strong hands clasped.

"Bertram," she sighed.

"Dearest—am I too late?"

"But—oh, what do you mean? See, they are all looking."

"I love you. Didn't I ever tell you? And I have searched the world for you."

(To be continued.)

OPERATIONS A FAD

Public Gradually Awakens to the Fact. The latest fad in operations has been the appendicitis fad; before that the fad for rectal operations (piles, etc.) held sway. Hundreds of patients were frightened and hurried into hospitals, operated upon and robbed of their last dollar, when the trouble was a simple case of hemorrhoids or piles only, easily cured at home with a simple remedy costing but fifty cents a box.

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MONUMENT TO LORD DUFFERIN.

Belfast, Oct. 24.—The memorial to the late Lord Dufferin, which is to be erected in front of the new City Hall will not be completed before June of next year. The two figures representing India and Canada, and which are to form part of the work, have been on exhibition in London for some time, where they have been much admired by all who have seen them. They are ready for sending to Belfast at any time, and the sculptor Mr. Pomeroy, would forward them to Belfast as soon as a suitable store-room could be found where they could be on view. The Dowager Marchioness of Dufferin, has already inspected and approved of the clay bust of the late Marquis.

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