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The Cableman

AN EXCITING PRESENT-DAY ROMANCE

— BY —

WEATHERBY CHESNEY

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He sat down on the edge of the packing-case and chewed a straw reflectively. He did not look excited, and there was a humorous twinkle in his eyes which suggested that he was not so angry as he pretended. Varney laughed, and continued the process of settling the angles of his tie before a fragment of mirror.

"And the worst of it is, sir," continued the self-styled master of metaphor to Scarborough, "that I have been hugging a serpent to my bosom. Your friend there—Pampas Joe, the English Revolver King—is no longer loyal to his salt."

"What have you been doing, Phil?" asked Scarborough, smiling.

"What has he been doing?" thundered Val B. Montague, in the same voice of excitement, and with the same placid manner and twinkling eye, belying the vehemence of his words. "He has been fomenting rebellion! He has bitten the hand that fed him! He has—well, in short, you had better get him to tell you what he has been doing. I am busy, and must go."

He got down from the packing-case and opened the door. As he was going out, he turned, and said in quite a different tone—a tone in which there was a note of real worry.

"By the way, Varney, I've settled the fire out the ringmaster. It was that I came to tell you."

Varney nodded. "I think you're right," he said gravely. "It's one or the other."

"It is so, sir, unless we want murder to be done. The clown is really the worse, but I can't replace him, so the ringmaster must go. Unless," he added, turning suddenly to Scarborough, "by some lucky chance I could find another clown. Can you clown, sir?"

"Not sufficiently well to be of use to you," said Scarborough, laughing.

"No, it's harder than it looks. That's why good clowns are scarce—and dear, very dear, let me tell you. Good-day to you sir. Honored by meeting you."

And this time he went out finally.

Varney turned with a comically twisted face to his friend, and Scarborough, as soon as he judged that Val B. Montague was out of earshot, burst into a roar of laughter.

"You asked me just now how I have spent the last two years," said Varney. "Now that you've met the man, you

have a faint idea of what it means when I say—in the company and service of Val B. Montague! But he's a good sort, mind you."

"Is he always like this?"

"More or less, yes. The degree of absurdity varies, but he's never ordinary. During the first six months we quarrelled. I daresay I was a bit rickit, and I didn't like his hectoring; then I got to understand him; and for the last year and a half I've been his right hand man. We had a row royal this morning, and you see how little he bears malice."

"He said you were a serpent he had been hugging to his bosom," said Scarborough, laughing.

"Yes, that's his way. When he abuses you in metaphor, you know that you are forgiven and you start afresh on the old footing. It's his notion of making an apology. Mona de la Mar was the cause of our dust-up this morning. She said she wasn't going to perform to-night, that she wanted a holiday, and had private business to attend to. I didn't in the least know what her reason was, but Mon ague began to bluster, so I backed her up, and said I wouldn't perform either. I make a point of standing up to him whenever he starts in to play the bully. I fancy that's partly why we're such good friends."

"A bit inconsiderate of the lady, wasn't it?" said Scarborough.

"Oh, very," agreed Varney, "but the point was that Montague couldn't be allowed to bluster to a lady. We have to treat him on a system, you see. We allow him to wag a free tongue as a rule, but this was outside the limits. See?"

"I see," said Scarborough, "that you are an interesting crew, and I want to hear more."

"Then lead the way to your restaurant! And if you're in funds, let it be fizz!"

"Fizz it shall be. Come along."

Over dinner Varney told his tale, picking up the thread where he and Scarborough had been pupils together at an army crammer's near Henley. Both had been working—with no great earnestness, they admitted mutually now—for the entrance exam. at Sandhurst; and now one was a telegraph man and the other was a circus performer. There were things in this which called for explanation, for neither knew wholly the reasons why the other had given up his earlier ambition.

In Scarborough's case the explanation was easy and ordinary. He had failed in the examination, and the uncle who was paying for his education refused to allow him to try again.

"I don't think he was really sorry," said Scarborough. "He had the notion that I had trains, if I cared to use them; and he didn't think the army was a useful field for their exercise. He is a self-made man, you see, and has a prejudice against what he calls a butterfly life. That was before the war. He's a bit more ready to admit that a soldier may be a man now. He wanted me to go into the city."

"You struck at that?"

"Yes."

"And then?"

"Well, then, as I didn't take what he offered, he told me to do the best I could without him. The only thing he stipulated for was that it should be something in which I could earn a definite salary, and he promised to add three sovereigns to every one that I saved at the end of a year."

"Not a bad arrangement, either!" exclaimed Varney.

"No, a very good one for me. The dear old man is by way of being religious, but he contrives to preach the gospel of Mammon too, and in a way that makes converts. He'd be honestly surprised, though, if anyone pointed that out to him. Now how about you, Phil?"

"Wait a bit," said Varney. "What made you choose the cable service?"

"For one thing the exam. was easy; for another, I'm rather keen on electricity and electrical machines; for a third, it seemed a good way of seeing a little bit of the world. Curiously enough the service is rather crowded with men who originally intended to be something else. Somebody has dubbed us 'the legion of the ploughed'; but on the whole, I think we're rather good sorts. I'm quite satisfied with my life and with my colleagues."

The other man's explanation of his position was equally simple. Scarborough was what he was because he had failed in an examination. Varney had never sat for the examination, because the misfortune or crime of others had thrown him suddenly on his own resources, and had changed his destiny from that of spending an allowance to that of earning a living. These two causes between them account for many a curious choice of profession.

"You remember the smash?" he asked.

"Yes," said Scarborough. "Carrington and Varney, a bookbinder—everybody knew about it; but I never understood it."

"Few did, and I think the poor old governor least of all. He had trusted Carrington in everything, and Carrington used him as a tool. The man was a thorough-paced backguard."

"So I understand. Why wasn't he brought to book?"

"Too clever. Slipped through the lawyers' fingers on a technicality, and left his partner as the scapegoat. The poor old governor's only crime was over-trust in a scoundrel—even the prosecuting counsel accused him of nothing more heinous than an easy-going incompetency—but the disgrace killed him. When things had got as straight as they ever would get, I went out to ranch in Brazil; found that the family luck stuck to me in that it yoked me to another scoundrel, the man I was ranching with; cut him after a month; fell in with Val B. Montague at Rio; joined him, and because I found that he was honest, stuck to him. I had been with him a year when the news of the governor's death reached me; but I didn't go back. There was nothing to go back for, and—well, that's about all."

"What became of Carrington?"

For a moment Varney did not answer. Then he said slowly:

"Till to-day I knew nothing about him. To-day two things have happened that make me suspect that he is in this island of San Miguel. Shall I tell you what they are?"

Scarborough was crumbling a piece of bread with nervous fingers. He knew what his friend was going to say, and he could not feel the same certainty as he had felt an hour ago that the suggestion was absurd. Elsa had told him that she felt a rush of shame when she heard the name of Page on his lips. Might this, after all, be the reason?

"Yes," he said quietly.

"One is that Elsa Carrington was with you to-day," said Varney.

"Can you prove that to me?"

"I can tell you that I am sure. Three years ago I met her often at her father's house. She wore her hair in a pigtail then, and her frocks were short, but otherwise she has not altered much. Also, I can describe Carrington to you, and you can judge for yourself if he is the man you know as Page. He is about five feet seven, rather fat, and his skin hangs loosely over his cheek bones, as though he had once been much fatter. There is something wrong with one of his fingers, but I forget which."

Scarborough drew in his breath quickly, and looked hard at the crumbs he was making. He remembered that when Mr. Page played chess he always made the moves with his left hand. The last joint of the middle finger of the right hand was missing, and Elsa had once explained that her father had lost it from the bite of a horse when he was a boy.

"And the other thing?" he asked huskily.

"The other thing is that Mona de la Mar refused to perform to-night," said Varney.

"Why, how does she come into it?"

When he had heard his friend's explanation of his reasons for thinking that Mona de la Mar did come into the story, Scarborough rose suddenly and said:

(To Be Continued.)

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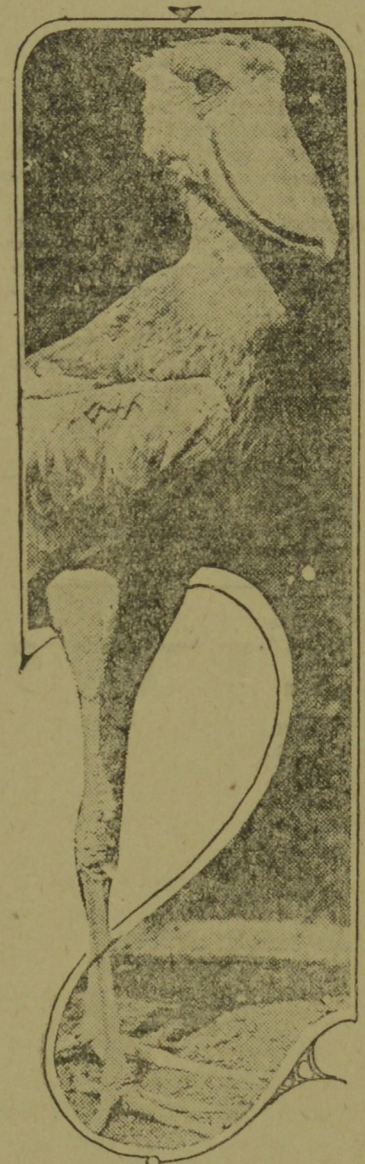
ABOUT EMERALDS

The emerald was the gem most highly prized by the ancients. Not who was near-sighted, looked at the contests of gladiators through an eye-glass of emerald, and concave glasses of emerald seem to have been particularly esteemed among the Romans. The emerald is supposed to bestow hope, constancy, and fidelity in love affairs and in friendship, and is much prized as a betrothal ring. The power of bestowing faith, immortality, and wealth has also been attributed to the emerald, as well as the of revealing falsehood and treachery.

Emeralds were said at one time to have strong medicinal virtues. Reduced to powder and swallowed, they were believed to cure the bites and stings of all venomous creatures, and to be a remedy for fever and other ailments. An emerald hung round the neck was supposed to be efficacious in melancholia, and to restore sight and memory, dispel terror, guard against epilepsy, and drive away so-called evil spirits, and if applied to the mouth it was said to stop hemorrhage.

If the jewel turned dull or pale, however, it was thought an ill omen for the wearer, and it was also considered unlucky if the stone fell from its setting. At the coronation of George III., a large emerald dropped from the crown; this was considered an omen of the loss of America, and the madness of the unhappy monarch in later years. Old writers dwell much on the beauty of the stone, which "passeth all green thing in greenness." Pliny related many curious things about the stone, which he highly esteemed, and Chaucer mentions "emeraudes" among the gems in the sparkling circlet which adorned the head of Blanche.

A Quercus Bird



The shoe-bill is the Mona Lisa of the Zoo. Born to blush unseen in the almost inaccessible swamps of the White Nile this wonderful bird has a face that brings a fortune to its captor. Perched on one leg like patience on a monument, the shoe-bill smiles and smiles and winks its pale blue eyelids like camera shutters. Whether the rare old bird is a heron or a stork no man can tell, but anyway his smile makes him a valuable catch for a circus man and a prize for the Zoo.

Manuring Young Trees

The common practice of using large quantities of stable manure in planting fruit trees cannot be recommended. When a tree is planted its activity should be the development of a strong and extensive root system. If large amounts of fertilizer are placed around the roots of a tree, the root growth will naturally not be so extensive as under normal conditions because there will be no necessity of its searching far for sustenance, and when the supply of food materials provided at planting by the addition of stable manure is exhausted, the root system will not have grown sufficiently to secure food enough to keep up normal conditions in the growing tree. What was done with the idea of helping the tree will thus only serve to retard its growth.

The Gold Dust Twins' Philosophy

THE floors and doors appear to wait until the dust germs congregate; the housewife hails each dawning day with grim and harrowing dismay. Says she: "My work will NEVER end; o'er dusty stretches I must bend, until, with aching back and hands I finish what the day demands."

The "Floor-and-Door-a" Girl

work and the endless doors, until when Hubby saw them, too, reflections said: "Why, howdy-do!"

"The Gold Dust Twins," said she, "I find, help leave the woes of dust behind. Each mark of sticky hands on doors, each tread of muddy feet on floors, all fade before the slightest touch of Gold Dust, and the work is such that, when the woodwork has been done, I find said work was only fun." This line of reasoning must show that those who've tried it OUGHT to know. If you, in one day's duties, find that there's a Grouch in ev'ry Grind, invite the Gold Dust Twins to share such tasks as tire and fret and wear.



From kitchen floor to bedroom suite, these tireless little chaps make neat, and best of all, the sum expense is measured up in meager cents. They put both dust and dirt to rout and run the last old microbe out.

The Gold Dust Twins

MR. JOHN T. KAY WRITES ANOTHER BREEZY LETTER

(Continued from Page 3.)

old Government House restored for a session of the house, wanted to have residence for the governor. He evidently has his eye on that position, but may God deliver us. Or perhaps he was thinking of some day's work for his kind. Now, I think that the building should be restored and it should be done by contract and when restored it should be used as a boarding-house for the Normal School students. They should get their board at cost. The grounds around should be cultivated and the government should buy the Odell land across the road and make a farm of it; and I would suggest right here that Mr. R. P. Gorham be placed in charge for he is worth all the province pays him and more too. I have seen him work and he is not afraid to sweat. If my ideas were properly carried out a student should and could get a thorough education in every branch of the farming industry from making maple sugar to baking bread.

Both boys and girls should have a thorough practical education and get their board at cost. With a good mason and manager it should be a blessing to the whole province. It costs money for a farmer to send his boy or girl to Fredericton to be educated for a teacher.

The farmers as a whole, throughout this province, are poor people. I can't see why Mr. Guthrie and his kind should wish to squander the people's money, restoring a residence for the governor who is well able, with the salary he received, to find a residence for himself.

And the sooner our teachers are educated in a thorough practical manner the better. We are too poor people to be putting on airs.

This country can be made a home for many thousands but we want men at the head of our affairs who have the courage to administer the affairs of the country in an honest manner, men elected without the use of men or money and we can get such men if the electors of the country will vote for only honest men, regardless of creed or party.

Now, in conclusion, Mr. Editor, I would recommend to the careful attention of The Gleaner and its clique Paul's epistles to the Ephesians.

Yours respectfully,
JOHN T. KAY.
Nortondale, York Co., May 25.

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