

ROYAL BAKING POWDER

There are many mixtures offered as a substitute for ROYAL NONE OF THEM IS THE SAME IN COMPOSITION OR EFFECTIVENESS OR WILL MAKE SUCH FINE FOOD OR IS SO ECONOMICAL

THE WEAPONS OF MYSTERY

BY JOSEPH HOCKING.

Author of "All Men are Liars," "Fields of Fair Renown," etc., etc.

(Continued)

Soon after Kaffar began to talk fluently to one of the Misses Temple, while several members of the party prepared for a charade. Then, when the attention of the guests was drawn towards those who displayed their powers at acting, I saw Voltaire rise and go out, and soon after he was followed by his friend.

Acting upon sudden impulse, which I think was caused by the remembrance of the meaning glances that passed between them after Voltaire had looked at Miss Forrest, I followed them out into the silent night. Somehow I felt that this fascinating man did not like me, while I was sure he had been deeply impressed by the woman who had that day travelled with me from London.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

Chapters I and II—Justin Blake and Gertrude Forrest meet in a railway carriage, and, quite unknown to each other, travel from London to be the Christmas guests of Tom Temple, the master of an old family estate in Yorkshire. A large party is gathered on Christmas Eve, and among them two rather strange individuals, Herod Voltaire and an Egyptian known as Abu Wady Kaffar. It is quite evident that Justin has fallen in love with Gertrude; also that Herod, in league with Kaffar, is determined to thwart her and win Gertrude for himself in order to become possessed of her ample fortune. Thus the reader at once becomes absorbed in the encounters which take place between these very energetic, enthusiastic, and determined young persons.

CHAPTER III.—CHRISTMAS MORNING.

When I got out on the lawn, I accused myself of doing a very foolish thing. "Why," I thought, "should I follow these men? I know nothing about them. They have as much right here as I have, and surely two friends can leave the house and come out for a stroll without being watched?"

With this thought in my mind I turned to go back again, when I heard voices close by me. Evidently they were behind some laurel bushes which hid them from my sight. I stopped again for an instant, but, knowing I had no right to listen to what might be private conversation, I started a second time for the house, when I heard the name of Gertrude Forrest, and then I seemed called to the ground.

"You have inquired about her?" said a voice, which I recognised as belonging to Voltaire.

The answer was in Arabic and was spoken by Kaffar.

Five years prior to the time of which I am writing I had been engaged in a work that required a knowledge of the Arabic language, and although it cannot be said I had become anything like proficient in that tongue, I had been taught by an Arabian and could enter into ordinary conversation. Thus I understood the Egyptian's reply.

"With regard to Miss Forrest," he said, "I answer not in the language which everyone here knows. Miss Forrest must be yours, and that for several reasons. She is a flower in herself. She is an orphan. She has a large fortune. She has absolute control over it. She has a fine house in England's capital. She has a large estate and a grand country mansion in the South of this country. Win her, Herod Voltaire, and you can be a little king, and I your prime minister. We heard much about her before we came; but we did not think to find such a queen. Win her, man, and our fortunes are made."

This was said quickly, and with all the fervour of an Eastern.

"Yes, Kaffar. It would be well if it

could be done. To be an English gentleman, with an entree into the best English society, is what I have long longed for. It will not only satisfy my taste, but give me power, and power is what I must have. It is by good luck we are here, but neither of us have the means to pass as English aristocrats very long. As you say, something must be done, and upon my honor, I have very nearly fallen in love with her. But she must be won, and won fairly. She is evidently strong and determined, and can be forced to do nothing."

"Nonsense," snarled the Egyptian. "Use all your seductive arts first, and if you fail to win her by those, trust me to weave such a chain of events as shall make her become Mrs. Voltaire."

"Up to this point," I listened attentively, and then a minute's silence on their part aroused me to myself. Was it right to stand listening thus? And yet a thousand things justified the act.

They moved on from the spot where they had been standing, but I was too much stunned to follow them. At that moment I realised that I had given my heart to Gertrude Forrest, and that another man had designs concerning her.

This sudden falling into love may appear foolish, especially when it is remembered that I had passed the age of boyhood, and yet I have never known several similar to my own. Anyhow, I, who had never loved before, loved now—loved, perhaps, foolishly; for I knew nothing of the lady I loved, and, of course, had not the slightest hope of her caring for me.

Thus it was with a throbbing heart that I stood there alone upon the lawn, with the knowledge of my newfound love just breaking upon me, and more than that, I had every reason to fear that she was to be made the dupe of two clever villains.

I turned to follow them, but they were gone. I knew not whither, and so I went to the house determined that, if I could be nothing else, I would be Miss Forrest's protector.

I had been back in the drawing-room perhaps ten minutes, when Voltaire and Kaffar returned, and apparently entered with great zest into the festivities of the evening. There is no necessity that I should write of what took place during the remainder of Christmas Eve. It was held in good old English style, and, to most, I am sure, it was very enjoyable.

I got an opportunity of speaking to Miss Forrest, but only for a very short time; the same time, I noticed that Voltaire took note of the slightest notice of her.

When I awoke the following morning and looked out, I saw that the great York shire hills were covered with snow, the air was biting cold, and the leaden sky promised us some real Christmas weather.

I was soon dressed and ready to go down to the house determined that, if I found I had an hour to spare before breakfast, arrangements had been made for us to breakfast at ten, and thus be just in time for service at the little village church.

On my way downstairs I saw Tom Temple, who told me to find my way to the library, where I should be able to pass the time pleasantly. I entered the room, an old-fashioned dark place lined on every side with books. I felt in no mood for looking at them just then, however, and so walked to a window and looked out on the snow-draped landscape that stretched away on every hand. It was a wondrous scene. The snow had fallen steadily all through the night, and no breath of wind had stirred the feathery flakes. Thus trees and bushes were laden with snow crystals, while the spotless white was relieved here and there by some shining evergreen leaves which peeped out amidst their snowy mantles. Ordinarily I should have been impressed by it. Now, however, I could not help thinking of other matters. One face was ever before me, and I constantly wondered whether she were in real danger from these strange men, and whether I should have any part in the labor of delivering her from them. As yet I could do nothing. I knew nothing wrong of them. They might be impostors, they might be penniless adventurers, but I could not prove it. Neither could I tell Miss Forrest what I had heard, while certainly Voltaire had as much right as I had to seek to win her affection.

These thoughts had scarcely passed through my mind when, hearing a sound behind me, I turned and saw Miss Forrest, who met me with a bright "Good-morning" and the compliments of the season. I blushed almost guiltily at the sound of her voice—I, who had for years declared that no woman could interest me enough to make my heart throb one whit the quicker.

"This is a pleasant surprise," I said, after responding to her greeting. "I quite

expected to be alone for an hour at least. You see, we all remained up so late last night that it was too late to settle matters that none of you would appear until it was time to start for church."

"I hope I am not disturbing you in your morning's meditations, Mr. Blake," she replied. "I would have stayed in my room had I thought so."

"On the other hand I am delighted to see you here. Whether you know it or not, I rode from London to Leeds with you yesterday, and I have thought ever since I should like to know you."

She looked straight at me as if she would read my thoughts, and then said pleasantly, "I was on the point of asking you whether such was not the case. I was not sure, because you had your travelling cap pulled over your face."

"How strange, though, that we were both bound for the same place!" I said. "Yes, it does seem remarkable; and yet it is not so wonderful after all. I am an old friend and schoolfellow of Emily Temple, while you, I am told, are an old friend and schoolfellow of her brother. Thus nothing is more natural than that we should be invited to such a gathering as this."

"Do you know any of the people who are here?" I asked.

"I have met nearly all the young ladies, but only two of the gentlemen—Mr. Voltaire and Mr. Kaffar. I saw them on the Continent."

"Indeed?" I said, while I have no doubt a dark look passed over my face. "Do you not like them?" she asked. "I do not know enough of either," I replied. "To give an answer, reasonably, either in the affirmative or the negative, I think my failing is to form hasty judgments concerning people, which, of course, cannot be fair."

I said this rather stammeringly, while she watched me keenly.

"That means that you do not like them," she said.

"Are you quite justified in saying that?" I replied, scarcely knowing what else to say.

"Quite," she said. "You feel towards them just as I do. I was introduced to them in Berlin. Mr. Tom Temple had formed their acquaintance somehow, and seemed wonderfully fascinated by them. I scarcely spoke to them, however, as I left Germany the next day, and was rather surprised to see them here last night."

"Mr. Voltaire is a very fascinating man," I suggested.

"There can be no doubt about that," was her reply.

"And yet I fancy much of his high-flown talk about spiritualism was mere imagination."

"I was inclined to think so at first, but I have heard strange things about him. However, it is perhaps scarcely fair to talk about him thus."

All this time we had stood looking out of the window upon the wintry landscape, and I, at least, was oblivious to all else but the fact that I was talking with the woman whose interest for me was paramount, when a lump of coal fell from the grate upon the fire-irons.

We both turned, and saw Herod Voltaire standing by a bookcase with an open volume in his hand. A disinterested person might have fancied he had not heard a word of our conversation, but I was sure I saw a steely glitter in his eyes, and a cruel smile playing around his mouth.

"Then you go to church this morning?" I said, seeking to turn the conversation as naturally as I could.

"Yes, I always do on Christmas morning," he replied, as if thankful I had given her an opportunity of speaking about other matters.

"I hope I shall have the pleasure of escorting you," I replied.

"Ordinarily I should not have dared to mention such a matter to a lady I had seen so little of, but the request slipped out unthinkingly; and she, no doubt, confused by the presence of Voltaire cheerfully assented."

Our embarrassment came to an end just then, for several others came into the room, and the conversation became general.

As the reader may guess, I was highly elated at the turn matters were taking, and in my heart I began to laugh at Voltaire's idea of winning Gertrude Forrest.

Moreover, she had willingly consented to walk to church with me, and had expressed a dislike for the man I, in spite of myself, was beginning to fear.

Only a very few of the party found their way to the old time village church, and I, too, was among the number. I was to join in the Christmas service that morning. Some were tired and remained in their rooms, while others enjoyed sitting around the cheerful fires. I was not sorry, however, for I was enabled to enjoy more of Miss Forrest's society. Need I say that my morning was truly enjoyable? I think not. I found in my companion one who was in every way delightful. Widely read, she was able to converse about books she loved, and possessing a mind that was untrammelled by society notions, it was refreshing to hear her talk. Far removed from the usual chatter of the remainder of Christmas Eve, it was yet full of mirth and pleasantness. Ready-witted, she was quick at repartee; and possessing a keen sense of humor, she saw enjoyment in that which to many would be commonplace.

(To Be Continued)

Was Troubled With Weak Back For Years.

Could Not Perform Household Duties. Doctors Attended Without Avail.

Mrs. Arch. Schnare, Black Point, N.B., writes: "For years I was troubled with weak back. Oftentimes I have lain in bed for days, being scarcely able to turn myself, and I have also been a great sufferer while trying to perform my household duties. I had doctors attending me without avail and tried liniments and plasters, but nothing seemed to do me any good. I was about to give up in despair when my husband induced me to try Doan's Kidney Pills, and after using two boxes I am now well and able to do my work. I am positive Doan's Kidney Pills are all that you claim for them, and I would advise all kidney sufferers to give them a fair trial."

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A medicine that strengthens the kidneys so that they are enabled to extract the poisonous uric acid from the blood and prevent the chief cause of Rheumatism.

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At the present time so far as the board of health reports show, there are fourteen cases of diphtheria in the city and county of St. John. During the present month thirty cases have been reported so far. Sixteen have recovered and the placards have been taken down from the houses. There have been no deaths from the disease.

In November there were sixty-six cases reported to the board of health.

Fashion Hint for Times Readers



A DIRECTOIRE COAT-DRESS.

With all the grace and slender lines of a daintily cut frock, this costume has really the warmth of an out-of-door garment and may be worn over a shirtwaist if desired. The frock fastens all the way down the front like a coat, the big draped silk girdle, carried around to the back, giving the effect of a dress rather than a coat. The jabot of pleated net is a neck arrangement much favored just now.

BESET BY PLAGUE OF HORSES

Whoever heard of a plague of horses?

Such a thing seems an absurdity, scarcely credible. Yet at the present time a very serious affliction of the kind is disturbing the comforts and welfare of people out in Nevada, and to some extent neighboring States, the mischief being so alarming that appeals are being made to the government for help.

The situation is particularly bad in the so-called Toiyabe forest, which embraces an area of about one hundred miles square in Nye and Lander counties, Nevada. This is a reservation set aside some time ago as a national forest, and, of course, is under the administrative control of the United States Forest Service. Within its limits, as would appear, there are fifteen thousand or twenty thousand wild horses—beasts of no value whatever, not only devour the herbage, but entice away many domestic horses that are good and useful.

The country is right admirably adapted for horse raising, and the people out there are anxious to develop the business; but it is practically out of the question to engage profitably in this sort of enterprise while the region is infested by numerous roving bands of equine outlaws. Every sort of expedient has been tried for destroying them, and at the present time ranch owners are paying the Indians a dollar for every wild horse they can kill. Nevertheless, the animals are rather increasing in numbers than otherwise.

The difficulty of the problem will be realized to some extent when it is understood that the natural increase of the number of horses mentioned would be from five thousand to six thousand a year. They are absolutely wild, and have to be hunted much in the same way as antelope, being not less difficult to approach. To try to run them down, even with the fastest horses, has been found impracticable, the most experienced roughriders and marksmen having been vainly employed in this kind of work.

The most successful method adopted thus far has been to drive bands of the animals into canons, and then to set traps with portable corrals. Such a trap consists of an enclosure solidly built of tall posts, from which wings of wire net, about eight feet high, are extended for miles. It is a simple matter under such circumstances to drive the wild horses into the corral, and there to shoot them to death. They are so terrified by capture that often they kill themselves by dashing against the walls of the prison pen.

There would be no use in trying to capture the animals, instead of killing them, because they are utterly worthless. They are terribly little beasts, weighing from five hundred to eight hundred pounds—a sort of mongrel breed, such as inevitably results from the propagation of horses under natural conditions without control by man. It is only when the horses are properly bred, with the aid of artificial selection, that they develop into the noble creature we so much admire, whether it be a trotter, the Percheron type for draft, or what not.

Accordingly, the problem has assumed a decidedly serious aspect. So long as the plague of wild horses continues, nobody can raise the breed, and there is, therefore, necessary, then, that the wild animals shall be destroyed. But how? That is the puzzle. Meanwhile despite all effort to get rid of them, they are increasing faster than they are killed.

Hence the appeal for help addressed to the government. It is a question of sending a small army of people into the horse-ridden country and wiping out the animals, a task that might take several years to accomplish. The Forest Service may be obliged to undertake it; but as yet it feels reluctant.

One reason for its disinclination is that news of the wholesale destruction of wild horses in Nevada would be sure to stir up a great deal of disapproval in the east. Such disapproval might be due to misconception of the facts; but it would be none the less likely to injure the forest service.

Half a dozen years ago Nevada made a law permitting anybody to kill the wild horses. Thus the animals were literally made outlaws. But, though a great many were destroyed, it was found necessary to repeal the law, because a few good horses which belonged to the inhabitants were being incidentally and accidentally shot. Since then the mischief has been getting steadily worse, and today there seem to be just about as many wild horses as ever.

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roaming the mountains and plains in that part of the country.

There is no question that it is a wonderful region for horse-raising. Horses can run outdoors the year round. In the summer they can range in bunches over the wooded mountains, and when winter comes they have only to go a few miles in order to reach the grassy plains where there is plenty of pasture. They keep fat at all seasons.

One naturally asks, "Where did the wild horses come from?" The answer is that many of them doubtless represented the progeny of animals more or less strayed out of domestication. But apparently most of them trace their ancestry in a feral state much further back; possibly, indeed, for centuries. Their forbears were originally domesticated; but nobody knows how long ago. Not only are they extremely wild, but they are very cunning, and, it is said, can see a man twenty miles away.

It was stated that they are absolutely worthless. Perhaps this might be qualified by saying their hides are worth from one dollar and a half to two and a half apiece. In San Francisco there is a market for their skins, which converted into leather, serve a variety of purposes.

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"Hands down!" the gambler gays,
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