

OUR SERIAL

LIKE A DISTANT HILL.

Success is like a far-off hill, serenely wreathed in mellow haze; it looms there, dim and distant, still when, after many trying days, with waning hopes and shattered will, we lift our weary heads and gaze.

And like the far-off hill that through the softening haze shows gentle slopes, the clouds of hide it from his view; that in the darkened valley gropes; the road winds much in leading to the height whereon he sets his hopes.

The hill that looms before us, far away across the misty space; shows not a gap nor break to mar the even beauty of its face, but when we reach it many a scar and clef its rough steep interlace.

Success is like the hill we see far off, where mighty rivers spring, and few that reach it wait for free, fair days the future is to bring; it will not come to us, 'tis we that have to do the traveling.

S. E. Kiser, in Chicago Record-Herald.

Scoundrels & Co. By COULSON KERNAHAN Author of "Captain Shannon," "A Book of Strange Sins," "A Dead Man's Diary," etc.

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CHAPTER V.—CONTINUED.

I remember my awakening distinctly. Whether I had been disturbed by a sound or a movement I cannot say, but suddenly the still waters of my slumbers became troubled. It was as if, from a mirror reflecting a calm stretch of sky, a satyr face had leered. I stirred uneasily, and lay for some moments half asleep and half awake, but conscious of impending disaster; and when at last I opened my eyes, it was to find a man's face pressed close to mine. He was bending over me as I lay, and his eyes, as I met them, seemed to fasten on mine and to hold me as a hawk's talons hold the screaming sparrow out of which he means to tear the life.

Out with it, man, unless you want your brains outside your head instead of in it. Who are you?"

"Councillor Number Seven," I protested stoutly, seeing no way out of it but to lie.

"You're not. That game won't do for me. Now do as I bid you or it will be the worse for you. First of all, remove your hat. Now unhook the beard and take it off, too. That's right, keep your hands up still. Now turn your face this way, to the light, and let's have a look at you, but move carefully, for the trigger of this revolver is hung as light as a watch balance. No, I'm hanged if I know you. Come, you are quite a young man, whoever you are, and it's a pity to throw away your life out of sheer obstinacy. I'd rather spare you than shoot you, especially as I want to know who's blown on us. When you are dead meat what good will it do you whether we are nabbed or not? Once more, who are you?"

"Councillor Number Seven," I repeated, doggedly.

"'Twon't do," he said, decisively. "But come, I'll give you a chance. You say you are Councillor Number Seven. What's his real name, then?"

This was a poser which I tried to evade by answering his question with another question:

"Didn't you tell me yourself at the last meeting of the council on board the yacht that the names of the different members were kept secret?"

"So that's how the land lies, is it?" he said, with a whistle. "You were concealed on that yacht, were you? You were a brave man and a bold one, my friend, to have put your head into that den of lions. It seems a pity to spill such brains as yours for nothing. Let me see if I can't find out something about you for myself, since you won't tell me. Put your left hand in the breast-pocket of your coat and take out any papers you have there. But don't forget that the revolver is at your forehead all the time, and at the first sign of disobedience or of anything like hanky-panky—snap goes the trigger, and bang goes your life."

I did as he told me, and took from my pocket the only paper which it contained. It happened to be no other than the very document giving notice

of the place and date of the meeting, to attend which I was then on my way. As the reader knows, I had taken it from the pocket of the dead man whom I was personating, and when I realized what document it was, I knew that the sight of it would bring matters to a crisis.

As yet, however, Number One had not recognized it, for it was folded when I took it from my pocket and held it out to him.

"No, thank you, my friend," he said, with an ugly smile. "It's very kind of you to wish to take me into your confidence in regard to your private papers. You have no doubt overlooked the trifling fact that if I took that paper into my hand to open it, my attention would be withdrawn from your agreeable self. Not that you would take any unfair advantage of my pre-occupation, I am sure. But somehow this little bit of cold steel with which I am cooling your heated brow seems to have so beneficial influence upon you—seems so to stimulate your faculties and to render you so willing and obliging—that I should be sorry to deprive you of its influence. Perhaps you will favor me by opening that paper and holding it out before you, so that I can read it without having to remove this little plaything from your forehead. No, wait a moment. I think we'll have a bigger target this time. If your head were by any chance to jerk aside while I am engaged, I might miss you when I pull the trigger, and get into trouble with the railway company for damaging the paddings of the carriage. Sit still now, while I shift the popgun."

So saying, he slowly lowered the revolver till it was between my eyes. Then he brought it down the bridge of my nose until it was over my mouth, and I could smell burnt powder, and thence he let it travel down my chin and my neck till it was pressing against my breast-bone.

"Just an inch or two to the left," he said, suiting the action to the word, "and we shall be all right. There! now we're snug and comfortable. If you'll kindly open out that paper and hold it so that I can read it, I'll be obliged to you."

I did as he told me, but with unwilling fingers, for I knew that the sight of it would, as I have already said, bring matters to a crisis.

Nor was I mistaken, for the start which he gave when he set eyes on it was so great that I felt the revolver leap against my chest, and was minded to cry out to him to have a care lest he slipped the trigger.

"My God!" he said, "this is worse than I looked for. Either that man

Number Seven has played us false or else you killed him before you got possession of this."

As he spoke he bent forward slightly to assure himself that the document was not a forgery, and thus gave me what I knew was my only chance. His fine words about wishing to spare my life I took no account of, knowing very well that had he not wished to discover who I was and how I came by the knowledge I possessed, he would have shot me at sight. If by promising me my life he could induce me to tell him whether what I knew was known to others, he would then be aware with whom he had to deal; but if he were in too great a haste to make what he called "dead meat" of me, he would have no other opportunity of obtaining the information he desired.

But that he would spare me one minute longer than suited his purpose I did not for a moment suppose, and I had all along decided that I must wait for my opportunity, and when it came, take it. That opportunity had, I felt, now come, so when he bent forward to look more closely at the document, I let go of the thing and struck with all my strength at the hand that held the revolver hoping to dash the weapon aside. Had things been as he thought they were, that moment would have been my last, for he had, no doubt, expected some such onslaught, and had made of his arm a very bar of iron, so that my blow scarce budged the revolver an inch.

At the same moment he pulled the trigger, and, knowing what was coming, I shut my eyes and waited to feel my life rush out of the hole made by the bullet.

But, to his and my astonishment, the revolver gave tongue to no more deadly sound than a click, and, looking down, I saw, to my amazement and joy, that it was my own unloaded revolver he was holding.

I had, no doubt, surprised him by awakening while he was bending over me, and, catching sight of my revolver in my pocket, and having no weapon of his own, he had in all probability snatched at it, and had presented it at my forehead, with what result the reader knows.

Again he pulled the trigger, and yet again. Each time the weapon derided him with a harmless click, as if it were, so to speak, putting its tongue in its cheek.

With an oath he flung it from him, and at that moment the engine of the train whistled for the stoppage at Benfleet.

"That settles the matter," said Number One, standing up to stretch himself and then sliding his hands into his trouser pockets negligently. "I'm beaten, and I'm ready to take my defeat like a gentleman and surrender quietly. Do you intend to hand me over to the authorities here or at Southend?"

"I didn't say I was going to hand you over to the authorities," I answered. "I'm not a detective. But the authorities at this hole of a place and at this time of the night consist in all probability of a boy who takes the tickets. I don't think we'll trouble him."

"As you like," he said, indifferently, sitting down with outstretched legs and looking at his boots critically. "As you like, my friend. It's all the same to me."

I made no answer, but when the train was moving again after leaving Benfleet station he walked to the window near which I was sitting and leant out, as he said, to get a breath of air.

As he leant, resting on his arms, he kept up a constant chatter of conversation, turning his head every now and then to look at me.

I pretended to be indifferent to what he was saying and to his movements, but I promise you that I kept a keen eye upon him all the same. And as the event proved, I had reason to suspect him, for when he turned round to look back at me with some banter by which he hoped to distract my attention, he slyly slipped out a fist and turned the door-handle. This done he withdrew his head and walked to the other end of the carriage.

"I'll wish you good-night, my friend," he said. "I'm going to open this door and hang on to the footboard till the train is slowing off outside Leigh, and then I shall drop off and slip away."

I very naturally sprang to my feet to prevent him, when having got me, as had, no doubt, been his plan, between himself and the unfastened door, he suddenly leapt upon me, to push me against it, and so out upon the line. But I was not the fool for which he took me, for, divining his purpose, I dropped suddenly down, so that missing me he fell heavily against the door, and the handle being turned, pitched out head foremost upon the line.

Very quickly I shut the door again, and when we got to Leigh I took his bag from the rack and giving up my ticket passed out. The village was now almost in darkness, so, turning in the direction where he had come, I skirted the line till I came to a gate, which I climbed and walked back between the rails till I came to the body.

Number One was lying on his back with his brains dashed out.

"I've been instrumental in sending two of these seven ruffians to their account," I said. "Now I'll pay a visit to the rinky wagon, according to instructions, and interview the other five."

CHAPTER VI. I ATTEND THE COUNCIL OF SCOUNDRELS.

"Who's there?" said a voice from within, in response to the stealthy summons which I rapped upon the door of the gipsy wagon where the council was assembled.

"Number Seven," I made answer, in accordance with instructions.

I heard a bolt slip in its socket, but the door was opened so cautiously that there was scarcely space for me to squeeze in. Nor should I have been

sorry to have squeezed out again the next instant, for, though the light was of the dimmest, the air was too sooty and greasy with the stench of burning coals that it stuck in my throat like a mouthful of oily soup, and I felt my stomach twisting in protest under my belt.

The next instant the light, which apparently had been turned down at my summons, was turned up again. I cannot say that the interior of the wagon was much pleasanter to the sense of sight than to the sense of smell, for the smoky lamplight so jaundiced the faces of the six of us, that we resembled nothing so much as a batch of sea-sick passengers who look askance at each other, wondering who will be the first to give the signal to succumb.

"We are waiting for our chief, Councillor Number One," said the man who had opened the door. "Did you pass any one like him on the road, Councillor Number Seven? He would, of course, be wearing his councillor's disguise, but whether he had his bag with him, as usual, I can't say."

I did not consider it advisable to inform this honored colleague of mine that the bag to which he alluded was tucked away in a hayrick, where I had bestowed it only a few minutes before, and that the owner of the article was lying on the railway line with his brains on the wrong side of his head, so I contented myself by replying that I had seen no one after I had left Leigh.

The man at the door inclined his head gravely in acknowledgment, but said no further word, and for some quarter of an hour we stood there without speaking. Except for our breathing and the ticking of our watches, there was a silence which every moment became more oppressive and more aggressive. To my overwrought nerves it seemed singing with disaster. It was like a brooding presence, ominous of evil, and soon—what with the fetid air and the heat of the place—I began to feel light-headed, and could have sworn that this same silence had slowly begun to gyrate around me, like a gigantic wheel that increased in momentum with every revolution. Nor was I the only one of the company with "nerves," for when a sleepy but would-be-sober beetle, gravely wheeling homeward from some seductive beetle-haunt, blundered against a window pane—as a drunkard, who, vowing that he can walk straight, reels against a tavern door—the whole six of us jumped like startled cats at the sound of his horny tap.

[To Be Continued.]

TOM REED'S DOG STORY.

Statesmen Used to Tell of What Happened to Animal Which Attacked a Kansas Cyclone.

Congressman Vandiver's refusal to run for governor of Missouri against Mr. Folk, because he does not want to "run against a cyclone," says the Kansas City Star, serves to recall the late Thomas B. Reed's story of the Kansas dog that did tackle a cyclone. "You see," Speaker Reed used to say, "a family from the east moved into Kansas, and they didn't know much about cyclones. They had a dog, a fresh, innocent pup, bred in the efinite and windless east. One day a cyclone came along. The folks scooted for the cyclone cellar, but the dog, being an eastern product, didn't understand. He hailed the advent of the cyclone with joyous barks and started off to tackle it. The result was that when the cyclone did business with that dog, which charged down upon it with open jaws, the dog was blown plumb inside out. It was a Dickens of a predicament for the dog. After the cyclone passed along and the old folks came out of the cellar, they found the dog there, picturesque, but of no further value as a dog. The farmer surveyed the dog ruefully. He was a good dog and he hated to lose him. Then the foolishness of the dog struck him, and he said wrathfully: 'There, drat ye; that's what comes of keepin' your mouth open in the face of a storm.'"

The Bishop's Conjecture.

The bishop of London whose work in the East End extended over many years, recently said that spice rather than sugar characterizes the speech of the children of the slums, while the reverse is true of the West End little ones. To make his point the bishop told this story.

"Some years ago," said he, "I preached one Sunday in a West End church. In the course of the sermon a small girl, who had her own ideas of entertainment, began to talk aloud. "'O mummy,' she said, 'I'm awful tired. Can't the bishop go back to Heaven now?'"

"That was not all sugar, to be sure," the bishop continued. "It may have been a left-handed compliment. But no child in the East End ever thought I had come from Heaven."

Then, after a pause, the bishop added, reflectively:

"They knew me too well, perhaps." —Youth's Companion.

Some Small Realms.

In four hours and 40 minutes, says a Berlin geographer, a person can walk across the territories of seven German states. Start at Steinback, in Bavaria, he explains, and go next to Lichtenanne, in Saxe-Meiningen. This journey will occupy half an hour, and in another hour and a half you will arrive at Rauschengesse, which is in the principality of Reuss. After walking for another 40 minutes you will reach Gleima, in the duchy of Rudolstadt, and half an hour later you will find yourself in territory belonging to the younger branch of the Ruess house. Leaving that point you will next arrive at Dronnitz on Prussian territory, and if you continue to walk for another half hour you will find yourself in the duchy of Altenburg.—Detroit Free Press.

ON THE "DUDE" TRAIN.

Johnny Drummer, Who is Side-Tracked to Let the Limited Go By, expresses his sentiments regarding that Superb Train.

"It has been my dream of joy supreme To ride in plush and velvet spender Parlor car for a swell tailender Platform fenced with a swell brass fender On the Regular Limited Train

Electric bell right under your nose Porter to come and brush your clothes Grub in the diner the best that grows A downy bunk for a night's repose On the Regular Limited Train

Chorus  
Biff! Bang! a mile a minute  
No other method of travel is in it  
I want to go ripping, skipping and zipping  
Away on the Limited Train.

These lines are not original with me. They are taken from a tuneless little ditty sung in George Ade's comedy "Peggy Paris." The jingle danced through my brain the other day as we lay on the siding at Prairie Junction, or some such place, to let the Santa Fe's west bound California Limited go by. It was a gorgeous train of palace cars, and behind the plate glass observation windows beauty and fashion and youth and old age were jolling among the luxuriant cushions, some visiting, some reading, some pleasantly dozing, some making wreaths of cigar smoke, some gazing dreamily through the windows at the passing cities, and fields, and forests and rivers.

I stood on the rear platform of the last car of our train and watched the California Limited as she faded away toward the golden west. And I thought of the difference between travel now and travel in the days of old, when it took the gold-seeker half a long, weary year, filled with all kinds of hardships, to travel the distance that is now covered in three days. I thought of the slowly moving wagons, the dust, the stones, the jolting, the thirst, the hunger, the loneliness, the ankle-like crossing of plains, the laborious climbing of mountains, the weary dragging weeks, the never ending trail.

In these palaces that had just glided by were people going to the same place to spend the winter months where the climate is perpetual summer. And they were not to endure a single hardship on the journey. When night came they were to lie in beds whose soft embrace makes sleep a luxury—and in the day time the velvet cushions of their seats were to be made deeper still by pillows—and they were to spend a delightful part of their time in the gilded and glittering dining car, where every dainty that ever tickled the palate is enticingly served—in short, they were to have on the trip all the comforts of home—and of the best kind of home.

I stood there and watched them pass out of sight while my soul was consumed with envy. But I derived some consolation out of reflecting that sometime I, too, would see California, and I promised myself that if I ever did go there it would be over the Santa Fe. —"JOHNNY DRUMMER."

"Has the doctor given up all hope?" "Oh, no; he thinks the estate will settle the bill if his patient dies."—Cincinnati Times-Star.

Piso's Cure for Consumption is an infallible medicine for coughs and colds.—N. W. Samuel, Ocean Grove, N. J., Feb. 17, 1900.

Confidence is the secret of strength.—Monod.

Stops the Cough. Laxative Bromo Quinine Tablets. Price 25 cents

A woman's train of thought is often on her dress.—Everybody's Magazine.

Talent is sometimes taken for genius, especially by the man who has it.—Puck.

The hope of this world is in the hard things we have to do.—Chicago Tribune.

Character may be sold, but it cannot be bought.—Chicago Tribune.

Luxury is good for the good and bad for the bad.—Chicago Journal.

Some people fear to try lest they should succeed.—Chicago Tribune.

Who makes quick use of the moment, is a genius of prudence.—Lavater.

Good humor is one of the best articles of dress one can wear in society.—Thackeray.

They stood by the old well together. "How shall we drink?" he said, "here is no bucket here." She lowered her eyes, when she raised them again they were full of water.—Pinceton Tiger.

Mrs. Nuritch—"I think I'll take this bracelet. Are you sure it's made of refined gold?" Jeweler—"Oh, yes, Mrs. Nuritch—because I do detest anything that isn't refined."—Philadelphia Ledger.

He was interviewing the miserly rich man on how to succeed. "My motto has always been," replied the man of money, offering his visitor a stogie and lighting a good cigar himself. "Never Despair." "I thought," replied the interviewer, "that it was 'Never Give Up'—but it amounts to the same thing, after all."—Cincinnati Times-Star.

"Learn Him with a Club."

The Geary (Okla.) Journal publishes the following: "One of our school teachers received the following note from the mother of one of her pupils recently: 'Dear Miss, You write me about whipping Sammy. I hereby give you permission to beat him up any time it is necessary to learn his lessons. He is just like his father—you have to learn him with a club. Pound knowledge into him. I want him to get it, and don't pay no attention to what his father says. I'll handle him.'"

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