

THE GIFT WIFE...

By RUPERT HUGHES—WNU SERVICE

SYNOPSIS

On board the Nord-Express, with Ostend as his immediate destination Dr. David Jebb is bound for America. With him is five-year-old Cynthia Thatcher, his temporary ward. On the train they meet Big Bill Gaines, former classmate of David's. He tells Gaines of his mission—which is the return of the child to her mother in America. Cynthia's father is dead.

CHAPTER I—Continued

"You're a pretty good little carver, I suppose?"

"I'm great, Billy."

"You ought to know."

"I do. I am. That is, I'm great with extenuating circumstances. I'm a genius, but a damn fool. I have a curse that ruins everything."

"Not cocaine?"

"No. I've somehow escaped drugs."

"Our mutual friend, Barleycorn?"

"Old John Barleycorn."

"I see, it makes your hand steady, eh?"

"No. I never play with the fire, except at regular intervals. Then I commit arson. I'm what is popularly known as a periodical—with a capital P. It's a terrible thing to confess, even to old Goliath Gaines, but it's all in the Catacombs, and I'm not the only person on earth with a flaw in his make-up. Nobody knows how badly assembled human machines are, Billy, except doctors. If it weren't for our Hippocratic ideals, what closet doors we could open in the best simulated families!"

"I've got a skeleton too—some-where, I suppose," said Gaines, "but I can't find it. My skeleton is a tendency to turn into a balloon—more or less dirigible. I've tried everything. I've banded in seven languages. Diet? I haven't eaten a thing for ten years, but I—no, I don't know any sure cure for fat, do you?"

"Nobody does, Billy," said Jebb with the cynical frankness doctors employ to their friends; then with a look at his own lank legs, "I've got the anti-fat serum in my system, I suppose, but I don't know what it is."

Gaines shook his fat head and all his chins in elephantine despair. "Thanks for your little ray of discouragement. Go on with your story. I'll tell you mine later. So you've developed one of those clock-work things, eh? Too bad, old boy. I had a pal who was like you—he's dead now—but he found a cure. Have you tried—"

"Your friend found the one sure cure. Don't start anything beginning 'Have you tried?' I've tried all the Have-you-trieds and then some. I've tested all there are in the books and a thousand of my own invention. I had a landlady who used to buy those 'put-some-in-your-husband's-coffee-and-he-won't-notice-it-till-he's-cured' things. Her coffee was so bad anyway I never noticed it. But no more did she notice any cure. You see, Billy, most of the habit-cures depend on the will eventually; but when the will itself is diseased, what can you do? It's like making rabbit-pie when you can't catch the rabbit. The one important fact is that everybody has his personal devil, and that's mine."

"Otherwise I'm all to the good. I've got two arms, a pair of legs, a couple of eyes, both ears, both lungs, one whole stomach, no floating kidneys, a liver you couldn't derange with an ax, and ability to work forty hours at a stretch, and a gift for operative surgery that is a marvel, if I do say it. But I've got an intermittent thirst that amounts to mania, and it does its little best to nullify all my other gifts. If it weren't for that I'd be famous and rich."

"Don't you call ten thousand real iron dollars rich?"

"Oh, I'm rich enough for the moment. I feel like old King Midas, but the trouble is I've got his long ears, too. When I'm in my—cups, is the polite expression. But it's a case of bathub with me. When I'm that way, I think I'm Mr. Croesus, and I spend what I have as if I owned the Standard Oil and had struck a gusher of gold."

"I don't tittle between speeres. I hate the sniff of liquor in my dry seasons. But when my time rolls round, I've the thirst of a man lost in the Mojave desert. I see mirages, but not of waterfalls, Billy—fire-waterfalls!"

"My life runs on schedule. So many months of humanity, then three weeks of humidity. I'm like the tropics—all rain or all sun. And I can pretty nearly tell you to the hour and the minute, just when my freshest begins. I'm a sort of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hydrophobia. When the rabies bites me, the sight of water makes me froth at the mouth. For two or three weeks I go about like an idiot trying to put out a raging fire by pouring on kerosene."

"Poor old boy," said Gaines, "it must be hell. What do you do? Lock yourself in a room and order drinks through the keyhole?"

"If I only did! If I only did! But I'm no stationary dipsomaniac. I'm the only original Wandering Jew—no connection with a cheap imitator of similar name. I hardly show what I'm carrying—they tell me. I look a bit feverish, and I'm slightly thick of tongue, but I have a subtlety that keeps me from being run over by the cars. My trouble is like certain forms of aphasia with double personality. I lose my sense of orientation, but I am determined to hike. And hike I hike, till I drop or come round sober. Then I'm like the man Bill Nye tells about who was found after the train-wreck, plucking violets in the dell and gently murmuring 'Where am I?'"

Gaines looked at him more in amazement than in sorrow: "You must have had some rare old experiences." Gaines loved to travel.

"No doubt, Billy, no doubt. But I don't know what my experiences are. Once in a while I meet some man who hails me by some strange name and says I borrowed money from him in Pueblo, or lent him money in Skaneateles. I never ask any questions. I take his word for it and say, 'Oh, yes, of course.'"

"I tell you it's an uncanny sort of thing to wake up in a mysterious room in some unheard of place and



He paused to lean on me and beg my pardon profusely.

wonder how under the sun you got there and where under the sun you are."

Gaines was reminded: "I used to walk in my sleep as a boy. Once I found myself in my nightie in the middle of a ballroom floor. I had just meandered there. The floor committee meandered me out in double time. The other night, I got turned round in bed in a hotel in Leipzig, and when I woke up with my head to the footboard I was so bewildered I came near hollering for the night clerk. I thought somebody had put a voodoo on me."

"That's the feeling exactly," said Jebb, "only when I wake up I'm as weak as a sick cat, and my head—oh, my head! And my tongue—oh, oh, my tongue! I haven't the faintest idea of what I have done, or where I have been, or where I am. I reach for my trousers and the pockets are empty—my watch is gone, stolen, given away to a polite street-car conductor or thrown at a cat. Then I have to recuperate, send a telegram, collect, or draw on my bank—that's no fun among strangers—and get home the best way I can."

"I'm a periodical prodigal, Billy; only I have no father to fall on my neck and offer me veal. I sneak back to my own shack and try to regain my disgusted and mystified patients by scattering lies by the bushel."

It was Gaines' amiable nature to try to bring a drop of honey from every gall-bag.

"You must be a great little surgeon, Davey, to keep any practice at all."

"I am, but I had to give up New York and go out West to a smallish city where they have to have me, handicap and all. When I feel the madness coming on, I arrange my affairs, transfer my patients to other hands, say that I've been called East about my property—and then I hit the trail on the long hike. If I weren't one of the cleverest surgeons that ever ligated an artery, I'd be in the poorhouse today. If I weren't cursed with the bitterest blight that ever ruined a soul, I'd be at the top of my profession."

"Poor old Jebb," sighed Gaines, "but don't you care, we've all got our troubles. Now to look at me, you wouldn't think—but that can wait. You were going to tell me what I could do for you."

"Well, now that you know all, I'll tell you the rest. The last time I fell, I woke up in New Orleans. When I got home I found a letter saying that a distant relative had

died leaving me a leasehold in London. That's one of the things that happens in storybooks. But truth sometimes tries to imitate fiction. I vowed I'd jump across the Atlantic, clean up what cash I could, and invest it where I couldn't touch the principal."

"Well, just when I was getting my affairs straightened up so that I could start, a beautiful operation came my way. No money in it, but some reputation and a rare opportunity I couldn't let slide—an exquisite fibroid tumor intricately and vitally involved. The woman, Mrs. Milburn, was a widow, and her only child was a married daughter who had gone to Berlin with her husband, John Thatcher."

"When Mrs. Milburn heard that she must undergo a capital operation, she called her daughter to come and hold her hand while she went under the ether. John Thatcher couldn't afford to come and his wife took the first steamer, leaving her little four-year-old girl with her father. I brought Mrs. Milburn through—and good work, too—there'll be an article about it in the Medical Record. Her daughter, Mrs. Thatcher, cried all over me and said she would pay my bill when her husband made his fortune by a great invention he was working on. We doctors get a lot of that money! But I said, 'Don't let that worry you.' We always say that."

"Just as Mrs. Thatcher was about to sail back to Europe, she got a cablegram saying that her husband had committed suicide—scandalously, with a woman of bad name. The Dutchman who sent it had to pay a mark a word, and he didn't waste any breaking it gently."

"Thatcher left only funds enough to bury him. Strangers took the child in charge. The death and the circumstances and the shock prostrated Mrs. Thatcher completely. She was in no condition to go over and bring back the little girl. The money was a big consideration, too, and I—well, since I was going over anyway, I offered to get the child and bring her back with me—fool that I was."

"Fool nothing," Gaines blurted; "it was mighty white of you, old boy."

Jebb shook his head. "I meant well, but you know where we well-intentioned people lay the asphalt."

"I don't follow you, Davey."

"I hoped you would, Billy. It's so nauseating to explain. But here goes: I was so delayed in starting from America and met so much postponement in settling my affairs in poky old London, and had so many details to close up for poor Thatcher before I left Berlin with the child, that I have exhausted my vacation from Hades."

"You don't mean—"

"That's just exactly what I mean. I've been so busy in new scenes that I lost count of the days. This morning as I boarded the train at Berlin, a drunken man—needless to say, he was an American—lurched into me. He paused to lean on me and beg my pardon profusely. I couldn't dodge his breath. I shook him off, but I had felt that first clutch of the thirst. It comes with a rush, Billy, when it comes. And I might as well fight it as try to wrestle with a London fog. It's got me. And I'm afraid, Billy, horribly afraid. I feel like a man who has sold his soul to the devil when the clock strikes and he smells brimstone. It doesn't matter about my rotten soul or the body it torments. And I have no children—I've never dared to marry and drag any woman along my path. My parents, heaven be praised, died when I was in college. I got my curse by entail from poor old dad. His father acquired it in the grand old days when the high

society was found under the table after dinner.

"I'm alone now. There'd be nobody to mourn for me. But here I am with a poor widow's only child in my care, and I'm racing with fate."

"And there's another thing, Billy. In Berlin I found proofs that this poor Thatcher didn't commit suicide. He tried to save the woman's life—she was drowning; she dragged him to his death—they both died. He didn't even know who she was. Besides, he did leave something for his family. In my handbag, I have his finished drawings for a great invention that looks to me good for a fortune if it can be got to America and patented and placed."

"So you see, Billy, what a load I've got on my chest. The little child, her father's honor, her mother's salvation from poverty—all these, with an ocean and a half a continent between me and safety. It's no question of will-power. I have none. Your offer of a nip-of-you-know, went through me like a knife. If you want to spare me agony don't use even the name of—of any of those things in my hearing. If I get a sniff of liquor—ugh! I'll fight for it. And after the first drop is on my tongue, it's all over but the hike."

Goliath looked at David with eyes of complete compassion. He said:

"Don't you care, Dave. I'll stick to you to the finish. If you should be—er, incapacitated, I'll get the child to her mother, and the documents, too. So just qualify for the Don't Worry Club, and leave the rest to me. And I rather think you'd better hand over those plans. They'd be a little less likely to be lost in any excitement. And all that money of yours, Dave—it doesn't sound exactly Samaritan to say to a man you haven't seen for years, 'Give me your ten thou. and I'll carry it for you,' but if you want to gamble on my honesty I'll play banker for you."

He was about to break down, but he gathered himself together with a brusque effort. He slapped his hand hard on the leather and rose to his feet:

"I'll get those documents for you, Billy, this instant, and I'll hand you my money-belt as soon as I can unbuckle it."

He looked at Gaines' girth, and Gaines looked at his. The same thought struck both of them, and a whiff of laughter shook away the gloom.

"Your money bag will have to be pieced out about a yard to get round my equator," said Gaines. "It will be great sport for me, though. I'll know how it feels to be entirely surrounded by money."

Seeing that Jebb's sour face had softened a trifle—the fat are eminent consolers—Gaines made an effort to keep him diverted, and he began to laugh reminiscently:

"Say, Dave, do you remember, when we were cubs together at Yale, and one evening we were at—"

He was about to say "Moriarity's" but that had liquid connotations. He stopped short and gulped. "No, that wasn't the time." His memory switched to another incident—but that was Heublein's or Traeger's."

It seemed to him, as he tumbled out the pigeonholes of memory in his roll-top forehead, that he could find nothing recorded but carousals. He knew that they had played only a minute part in the total of college life, but because he wanted to avoid them, he found them everywhere.

He tried to think of some athletic excitement, some classroom joke, some incident in the Catacombs, but the memory is not a voluntary muscle.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Spring Is Time to Start Hayfever Treatment

Probably two people in each hundred have hay fever. If you are one of the two bear in mind that the spring of the year is the time to begin medical treatment.

Hay fever is due to inhaling an irritating pollen. The symptoms are sneezing, blocking of the nostrils due to the swollen mucous membrane, watery discharge, itching of the eyes and sometimes the roof of the mouth, slight degree of fever, difficult breathing, depressed spirits and a general feeling that the worst is yet to come. Such symptoms coming year after year can be nothing but hay fever. As evidence against the pollen it is noted that relief is always obtained when the supply of pollen is for any reason diminished. A continued rain often gives relief, a change in wind may do so, and many sufferers insist that running away on the train for a hundred miles or so is a sure cure.

Years ago it was supposed that the irritation came from the hay harvest—thus the name hay fever. Then the relationship to pollen was discovered and because the golden-rod stands out a bright and shining

mark it was promptly made to bear the blame. But investigation shows that the pollen of golden-rod is not abundant and is dislodged with difficulty. Finally the botanical detectives turned to the ragweed, with its insignificant green flowers, and discovered that its pollen is not only wind-borne but is produced in such abundance that a slight blow will discharge it in clouds, and it is so light that the wind will easily carry it a great distance.

Ragweed is responsible for perhaps four cases in every five of the common variety of hay fever that autumn brings. Bear in mind that there is also a very annoying pollen infection that attacks in the spring. Grasses, weeds and certain trees are responsible, and so common are the sources of attack that escape by flight is difficult.

Specialists in treating hay fever are to be found in every large city. Their plan of treatment is to test the sensitiveness of the patient to various pollens, until the right one is discovered, and then give treatment to produce immunity to that particular pollen, a system of vaccination.

"The Name Is Familiar"

BY FELIX B. STREYCKMANS and ELMO SCOTT WATSON

Teddy Bear

THE coy, mild teddy bear, the idol of all small children, was named after the brusque, forceful Theodore Roosevelt, as a result of a bear hunt down in Mississippi during November, 1902.

For 10 days "Teddy" and his companions searched in vain for big game. One morning the cry of "Bear!" was raised and the President hurried out of his tent to discover a small, frightened cub which had been dragged into camp for him to shoot.

"Take him away!" snorted Teddy contemptuously. "If I shot that little fellow I would be ashamed to look into the faces of my children."

When Clifford K. Berryman, a cartoonist for the Washington Post heard about the incident, he drew this cartoon:



Overnight the cartoon became famous and soon the "teddy bear" became the subject of innumerable verses and stories. Then the toy-makers took advantage of its vogue and it became a more popular toy for children than the panda of today.

Lavalliere

THE piece of jewelry known as a lavalliere has been out of style for two centuries—but it carried on the duchess of Lavalliere for whom it was named. She was born in 1644 and died in 1710, noted for being the mistress of Louis XIV and for her affection for pendant jewelry which hung from her throat by a chain.

She was known as Francoise Louise de Labaume Le Blanc, and was born at Tours, France, the daughter of an army officer. She did not become the duchess of Lavalliere until she bore her third child. The first two died, but the third lived and was recognized by Louis as his daughter.

In letters-patent he made the mother a duchess and conferred upon her the estate of Vaujours, which gives you a rough idea of how the French tried to hush those matters up in those days.

The same year, she gave birth to a son, but Louis was interested in someone else then and the duchess finally spent her remaining days in a convent. . . . lucky at that that she had nothing around her throat when she left Louis except pendant jewelry.

Pompadour

EVER since about 1895, Americans have called a straight-back-off-the-forehead hairdress a pompadour. But the word was in use in France since the early part of the Eighteenth century when the Marquise de Pompadour was mistress of Louis XV.

And the French didn't confine the word to describing her hairdress.

Everything that was in vogue during the time Mme. Pompadour was Louis' naughty playmate was named for her. Various items of apparel were included, like the long coats the men wore. Long sticks they carried that looked like Bo Peep's except that they had a silver ball on the top instead of a crook, were called pompadour sticks. A shade of pink was called pompadour pink, too.

Even a fish has been named the pompadour, not because it wears its scales straight back or carries a stick but because it is that same shade of passionate pink that flashed across Louis' court on date nights.

The Marquise de Pompadour's given name—the name she was known by until she made good with the king—was Jean Poisson. Poisson is French for fish, so naming a fish pompadour was merely returning the compliment.

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College Graduate Study

The first president of Johns Hopkins university, Daniel Coit Gilman, is usually regarded as the founder of college graduate work in this country.

Ask Me Another

● A General Quiz

1. Can you give three words, having two pronunciations each, the meanings of which change with the pronunciations?
2. Which are the three fastest animals on foot?
3. What is a martingale—a song-bird, part of a horse's harness, or a flowering shrub?
4. What kinds of twins are there?
5. What are the male and female architectural figures called?
6. What three birds have become extinct in the United States in the last 100 years?
7. How far has an aviator fallen before opening his parachute in a safe descent?

The Answers

1. Record, produce, minute.
2. The cheetah, the gazelle and the race horse are the three fastest animals on foot.
3. Part of a horse's harness.
4. Identical, unlike, and Siamese.
5. Male figures, used as supports in architecture, are called caryatids, female figures are called atlantes.
6. The passenger pigeon became extinct in the 1880s, the Labrador duck in the 1840s, and the great auk in the 1840s.
7. On March 1, 1931, E. S. ("Spud") Manning fell 15,265 feet before opening his parachute in a safe descent.

SPEED'S MY BUSINESS — BUT FOR PLEASURE GIVE ME A SLOW-BURNING CIGARETTE. CAMELS ARE Milder AND COOLER!

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