THE VAGRANT DUKE

By GEORGE GIBBS of "The Splendid Outcast," "The Yellow Dove," "The Secret Witness," Etc.

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THIS BEGINS THE STORY Peter Nicholaevitch. Russian Grand Duke, driven from home by revolution, comes to this country as Peter Nichols, and on the estate of Jonathan K. McGuire takes charge Peter Nichols, and on Jonathan K. McGuire takes charge Jonathan K. McGuire takes charge of men whose duty it is to see that of men whose duty it is to see that of men whose duty it is to see that of men with the dinner given in honor or night. At a dinner given in honor or night. At a dinner given in honor of Peggy McGuire, daughter of Jonathan K., a stranger, who has managed to make his way unsuspected through the guards, holds conversation with Mrs. Bergen, the house-tion with the resistor is and frightens her badly. Peter at first thinks the visitor is the ne'er-do-well father of Beth Cameron, a beautiful girl in the neighborhood, but later dismisses the neighborhood, but later dismisses the thought as he talks to her. They discuss Shad Wells, one of the gurds, in love with Beth.

AND HERE IT CONTINUES

Tirenic impudence the message was crawled in red crayon upon the reverse one of Jonathan McGuire's neat

You know what know what I've got and I know what you've got. Act pronto.
I'll come for my answer at 11 Friday night—at this tree. No tricks. If there's no answer—you know what I'll do.
"Hawk!" muttered Beth, "who on

"Another-" said Peter crypti-

ryou see!" cried Beth triumphant.
It, "I knew it couldn't be Jack Bray!"
"This chap seems to be rather in sernest. doesn't he? Pronto! That means haste."
"But it's only a joke. It must be," ried Beth.
Peter loosened the knife, took the placard down and turned it over, exam-

Peter locsened the knife, took the placard down and turned it over, examining it critically.

"I wender." And then, thoughtfully, "No. I don't believe it is, It's addressed to McGuire. I'm going to take it to him."

"Mike McGuire." corrected Beth.
And then, "But it really does look guere."

queer."
It does." assented Peter: "It appears to me as if this message must have come from the person McGuire saw last night."
Beth looked bewildered.
"But what has Aunt Tillie got to do with—with Hawk? She never knew serveds of that name."

"Probably not. It isn't a real name, of course.

"Then why should it frighten Mr.

"Then why should it frighten Mr.

McGuire?" she asked logically.

Peter shook his head. All the props
had fallen from under his theories.

"Whether it's real to McGuire or

"Whether it's real to Alcoure or not is what I want to know. And I'm going to find out." he finished.
When they reached a path which cut through the trees toward the creek. Beth stopped, and held out her hand. "I'm not goin' up to the house with you and I don't think I'll see Aunt Tillie just now," she said. "Good-by, Mr.—"

"Good by, Mr. Peter."
"Just Peter." he insisted.
"Good by, Mr. Just Peter. Thanks for the playin'. Will you let me come again?" "Yes. And I'm going to get you

"Singin' music?" she gasped.
He nodded. you'll let me know if I can belp—Aunt Tillie or you?"

She bobbed her head and was gone.

Peter stood for a while watching the path down which she had disappeared. wondering at her abrupt departure. which for a moment drove from his mind all thought of McGuire's troubles. It was difficult to associate Beth with the idea of prudery or affectation. Her visit proved that. She had come to the cable because she had wanted to hear him play, because she had wanted to sing for him, because too his promises lad excited her curiosity about him, and aspired a hope of his assistance. But he visit had flattered Peter. He wasn't nured to this sort of frankness.

was perhaps the greatest single gift of tribute and confidence that had ever been paid him—at least by a woman.

A visit of this sort from a person like

Anastasie Galitzin or indeed from a most any woman in the world of forms and precedents in which he had lived would have been equivalent to uncon-The girl had not stopped to question the propriety of her actions. That the cabin was Peter's bedroom, that she

and only seen him twice, that he might not have understood the headlong im-pulse that brought her, had never occurred to Beth. The self-consciouswafted away on the melody of the music he had played, and after that he knew they were to be friends. There seemed to be no doubt in Peter's mind that she could have thought they would be any-thing else.

And Peter was sure that he had hardly been able, even if he had wished,

conceal his warm admiration for her physical beauty. She had been very ear him. All he would have had to do was to reach out and take her.
That he hadn't done so seemed rather curious now. And yet he experienced a sort of mild satisfaction that he had resisted so trying a temptation. If she hadn't been so sure of him dealism? Perhaps. The same sort of idealism that had made Peter believe the nearly street of the nearly street. the people at Zukovo were fine enough to make it worth while risking his life for them—that had made him think that the people of Russia could emerge above Russia herself. He had no illusions as to Zukovo now, but Beth was child—and one is always gentle with

child-and one is always gentle with He puzzled for another moment over ber decision not to be seen coming with him from the cabin. Had this sophis-tication come as an afterthought, born of something that has passed between them? Or was it merely a feminine instinct seeking expression? Peter didn't care who knew or saw, because he really liked.

liked Beth amazingly. She had a sorgeous voice. He would have to develop it. He really would.

All the while Peter was turning over All the while Peter was turning over in his fingers the placard bearing the strange message to "Mike" McGuire from the mysterious "Hawk." He read and reread it, each time finding a new meaning in its wording. Blackmail? Probably. The "pronto" was significant. This message could hardly have come from Beth's "handy-legged busard." He knew little of movie camera men, but imagined them rather given

men, but imagined them rather given to the depiction of villaintes than the accomplishment of them. And a coward who would prey upon an old woman and a child could hardly be of the mettle to attempt such his same as McQuire. and a child could hardly be of the mettle to attempt such big game as McGuire. The mystery deepened. The buzzard was now a hawk. "Hawk." whatever his real name, was the man McGuire had seen last night through the window. Was ho also the man who had frightened dirs. Bergen? And if so, how and where and as known him without Beth's being aware of it? And why should Beth be involved in the danger?

Peter was slowly coming to the belief that there had been two men outside the couse last night. "Hawk" and John lay, And yet it seemed scarcely pos-

stble that the men on guard should not have seen the second man and that both men could have gotten away without leaving a trace. And where was the men could have gotten away without leaving a trace. And where was the man with the black mustache? Was he John Bray? Impossible. It was all very perplexing. But here in his hand he held the tangible evidence of McGuire's fears. 'You know what I've got and I know what you've got.' The sentence seemed to have a cabalistic significance—a pact—a threat which each man held over the other. Perhaps it wasn't money only that 'Hawk' wanted. Whatever it was, he meant to have it, and soon. The answer the man expected was apparently something well understood between himself and McGuire, better understood perhaps since Comeron, a beautiful girl in the Comeron, a beautiful girl in the design of the complete the disk of the complete the day McGuire had seen him in New York and had fled in terror to Sheldon Sr.'s office. And if McGuire didn't send the desired answer to the tree by Friday night, there would be the very devil to puy—if not "Hawk."

Peter was to be the desired answer to the tree by Friday night, there would be the very devil to puy—if not "Hawk."

Peter was to be the hearer of ill tidings, and with them, he knew, all pros-pect of a business discussion would vanf one of Jonathan McGuire's neat for one of one of Jonathan McGuire's neat for one of the fresh for

many fewer days in which to build the fire towers. And these he considered to e a prime necessity to the security of the estate.

He rolled the placard up and went

He rolled the placard up and went toward the house. On the lawn he passed the young people, intent upon their own pursuits. He was glad that yone of them noticed him, and meeting Stryker, who was hovering around the lower hall, he sent his name up to his "I don't think Mr. McGuire expects

you just yet, sir." said the man. "Nevertheless, tell him I must see im," said Peter, "It's important." Though it was nearly 2 o'clock, Me-Guire was not yet dressed and his looks when Peter was admitted to him bespoke a long night of anxiety and vigil. Wearing an incongruous flowered dress-

ing gown tied at the waist with a silken cord, he turned to the visitor. "Well," he said rather pecvishly. "I'm sorry to disturb you, Mr. Meluire, but something has happened that

"What's happened?" the other ma: snapped out, eyeing the roll of card-board in Peter's hand. "What--?" e gasped. Peter smiled and shrugged coolly.

"It may be only a joke, sir—and I hardly know whether I'm even justified in calling it to your attention, but I ound this placard nailed to a tree near the ontch to the cabin. "Placard!" said McGuire, bis sharp

glauce noting the printing of the tres-eass sign. "Of course—that's the usual warning—" "It's the other side." said Peter. "that is unusual." And unrolling it earefully, he laid it flat on the table heade his employer's breakfast tray and then stood back to note the effect of

McGuire stared at the headline, starting violently, and then, as though fascinated, read the scrawl through to the end. Peter could not see his face but the back of his neck, the ragge fringe of moist hair around his bald spot, were eloquent enough. And the hands which held the extraordinary document were far from stendy.

The gay flowers of the dressing gown mocked the pitiable figure it concealed, which seemed suddenly to sag into its chair. Peter waited. For a long while the dressing gown was dumb and then as though its occupant were slowly awakening to the thought that something was required of him it stirred and turned slowly in the chair.

"You-you've read this?" asked Mc Guire weakly.

"Yes, sir. It was there to read. It was merely stuck on a tree with this hasp-knife," and Peter produced the implement and handed it to McGuire. McGuire took the knife—twisting it slowly over in his fingers. "A hasp-knife." he repeated dully.

"I thought it best to bring them to you," said Peter, "especially on ac-"Yes, yes. Of course." He was staring at the red crayon scrawl and

as he said nothing more Peter turned toward the door, where Stryker stood on guard. 'If there's nothing else just now.

"Wait!" uttered the old man, and Peter paused. And then, "Did any one else see this—this paper?"
"Yes—Mrs. Bergen's niece—she saw it first."

"My housekeeper's niece. Any one else?" "I don't know. I hardly think so

It seemed quite freshly written. "Ah-" muttered McGuire. He vas now regarding Peter intently. 'Where—where is the tree on which you found it?"

"A maple-just in the wood-at the foot of the lawn."
"Ah!" He stumbled to the window. the placard still clutched in his hands, and peered at the woods as though seek-ing to pick out the single tree marked for his exacerbation. Then jerked him-self around and faced the bearer of these tidings, glaring at him as though

he were the author of them. - you all!" in a stiffed tone. "I beg pardon," said Peter with sharp politeness.

McGuire glanced at Peter and fe heavily into the nearest armchair. "It can't—be done," he muttered, half to himself, and then another oath. He was showing his early breeding now. "I might 'a' known-," he said aloud, staring at the paper.

"Then it isn't a joke?" asked Peter risking the question.

"Joke!" roared McGuire. And then more quietly, "A joke? I don't want it talked about," he muttered with a senile smile. And then, "You say a woman read it?"

"She must be kept quiet. I can't have all the neighborhood into my affairs."
"I think that can be managed. I'll speak to her. In the meanwhile if there's anything I can do——"

McGuire looked up at Peter and their glances met. McGuire's glance wavered and then came back to Peter's face. What he found there seemed to satisfy him, for he turned to Stryker, who had been listening intently.

"You may go, Stryker," he commanded. "Shut the door, but stay within call."

The valet's face showed surprise and

The valet's face showed surprise and

some disappointment, but he merely bowed his head and obeyed. "I suppose you're—you're curious about this message, Nichols—coming in such a way," said McGuire, after a

pause.

"To tell the truth, I am, sir," replied Peter. "We've done all we could to protect you. This 'Hawk' must be the devil himself."

"He is." repeated McGuire. "Hell's breed. The thing can't go on. I've got to put a stop to it—and to him."

"He speaks of coming again Friday night—"

CONTINUED TOMORROW

By sney Smith THE GUMPS-Another 50 Bucks Gone Hay Wire AND HAS THE FELLOW RUNNING THEY HAVE TO HAVE THE BEST OF EVERYTHING TOL MA (ES NO DIFFERENCE WHAT IT COSTS - YOU FIFTY BUCKS BHE TOUCHED ME THE PRESS DOING OVERTIME - THEY DON'T CARE HOW HARD TIMES ARE FOR YESTERDAY AND HOW SHE BAID SEE A WOMAN WITH ANYTHING BUT SILK IT - BO NONCHALANTLY -STOCKINGS HOW DAYS AND YOU THINK SHE'S ON THE THEY'VE GOT TO HAVE EVERYTHING -WAY TO THE POOR HOUSE - IN OLDEN TIMES THEY USED SHE MUST THINK THAT THE IF YOU SPEAK TO THEM THEY SAY. TO I.NIT THEIR OWN STOCKINGS - MAKE THEM OUT OF MINT HAS A PRESS RUNNING CAN'T HELP MYSELF - EVERYTHING WOLL- IF A WOMAN WORE A PAIR OF WOOLEN STOCKINGS NOW YOU'D HAVE TO HAND HER A COUPLE 18 80 HIGH- I KNOW IT'S HIGH JUST FOR ME -AND THEY BUY EVERYTHING-OF WIRE BRUSHES OR A CURRY COMB TO SCRATCH HERBELF WITH-

By Hayward SOMEBODY'S STENOG-So Far and Yet So Near : Copyright, 1921; by Public Ledger Company WELL IM BOSS HERE NOW! MISS O'FLAGE - DON'T FORGET TO SEND BELIEVE ME IF HE WAS HERE THIS MUST BE. THE THOSE TWENTY FORM LETTERS OUT RUSHIN' ME AND MAKIN' ME MOBODY TO INTERFERE WITH HOTEST DAY SINCE 1492 L TODAY - CALL UP SHOOKS AND CO. -HUSTLE ID DIE! IT'S TOO HOT ME ! IT'S LIKELY TO BE HOTTER GO OVER THE FILES - MAKE TEN CARBONS OR SOMETHING! I'M GLAD TO WORK TODAY ANYHOW! TOMORROW - GUESS ILL GO OF THE SMITH LETTER -IS IT HOT THE BOSS IS AWAY AND BRAINS GET ALL STICKY AND HOME AND REST UP FOR IT! I CAN TAKE IT EASY ! [THERE IN TOWN ? FINE AN' COOL DON'T FLOW US EXECUTIVES GOT TO SMOOTH! HERE! KEEP A CLEAR HEAD!

The Young Lady Across the Way

The young lady across the way says the demand for alligator pears as human food is growing at such a rate that she guesses the alligators will have to cultivate a taste for something else.

Aunt Eppie Hogg, the Fattest Woman in Three Counties By Fontaine Fox WHEN SHE ADDRESSED THE LADIES OF THE GUILD LAST WEEK AUNT EPPIE (WHO DOES NOT SEE VERY MUCH OF WHAT IS DIRECTLY BEFORE HER) TOOK ONE

VERY DISASTROUS STEP FORWARD TO THE FRONT OF THE STAGE.

By DWIG SCHOOL DAYS HEUR DOMMA HOPMA HIV HITCHER PITCHER LEVEL LAYERS -HALM PALM TUSK WHY DONTCHA PUT 'EM IN LIKE MINE-LIKE A KLEEDISCOPE? THIS AINT PURTY -TOO COMMON EM ALA POUSSE CAFE DELA CUM

MOVIE FAN—Looks All Right to Nicodemus



