

THE ANTS : One of the Series of Evening Public Ledger Original Short Stories on Married Life by the Best American Fiction Writers

By James Hopper

PETER left the studio, where he had been painting steadily for hours, and stepped out into the garden. It was full moon; he blinked under the high sun and stretched, still a little dazed from his long plunge in toil; he inhaled full the perfume of roses.



James Hopper started his literary career in a San Francisco newspaper. In 1914 he went to France as a war correspondent. In 1916 he returned to this country, and went to the Mexican border with the American army. When he saw the World War he again went to France, still as a correspondent, but he joined in the fighting, going over the top with the Twenty-eighth Infantry at Cantigny. He says that this is his main war feat, but that in college he played football.

ment was a double one. Hundreds of thousands of the small carapaced creatures were marching from the hole to the hedge; but as many were marching from the hedge to the hole; they threaded their way in and out of each other's course, the two movements interpenetrating each other. And bringing his long nose still lower, Peter saw that all this had a character of panic and dismay; that, had this multitude not been denied voice, a great confused clamor would be rising from it to his high-perched ear.

He saw her as she had been years ago. She was slender, fragrant and soft. Her frock was cut low at the neck; the beginning of her virgin breasts swelled deliciously there. And her eyes, turned up to him, were a little wet, as Venus is at dawn



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But a broom, a big, capable garden broom now planted itself down at his side; and without looking at more than the broom, which he could see out of the corner of his eye, he knew that his wife was standing by.

and there, a lone squirting small spot indented into the ground; and on the surface of the water in the excavation, a film made of dust, dead and mangled ants, and eggs.

PETER turned on his heel and walked away. He walked out of the garden and up the path which led to the village. In the village was a place where one could drink; the plan at the back of his head was simple enough.

THE glade was very quiet in the sun, and insects hummed. Thoughts also would have cringed at the colonel's upraised finger.

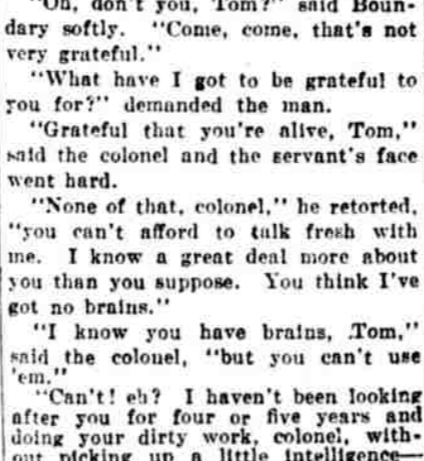


He was gaining courage at the very mildness of the man of whom he once stood in terror.

A reservoir deep within him began to surge. It was a reservoir which had been filling there in the dark, drop by drop, for years.

He had seen something so clearly; he had felt it so poignantly—the minute cosmic tragedy of these ants. Had she seen nothing at all? These ants. He felt nothing.

He put his hand in the inside of his coat, as though searching for a pocket watch, and so quick was he that the man, leaning over the table, did not see the weapon that killed him.



OSCAR CANARY'S REVENGE: Once upon a time, dear children, there was a mouse named Mrs. Christopher Mouse, who lived with her husband, Christopher, in a hole under the stage of Orchestra Hall.

He should remember that always. Of course, he should always remember it.

PETER lay down by his wife, and found her hot lips, and awakened her; she clutched at him convulsively.

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He put his hand in the inside of his coat, as though searching for a pocket watch, and so quick was he that the man, leaning over the table, did not see the weapon that killed him.

But if not true—what then? A strange new kind of discomfort took possession of him; his mind, as if frightened, shied to one side, tried to bolt.

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He had cultivated it, enriched it. He had colored it, chiseled it, cherished it. Like a diamond cutter absorbed, without cease he had ground it to new iridescences.

PETER did not go up to the village. When he rose after a while, it was toward home he made his way, at first on hesitant feet which little by little quickened their gait as a foolish fear pricked him.

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"I accept. I am getting old. One does, Peter. I am willing to old."

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wet ground across the part of the feet which showed between the flaccid slippers and the soiled gown. They pressed the earth, these feet, firmly; set down well apart in a solid wide base; they pressed it familiarly. They might—had he seen that—he sunk, in their flaccid slippers, into soft manure, unshrinkingly.

JACK O' JUDGMENT : By Edgar Wallace

WHO'S WHO IN THE STORY: COLONEL DAN BOUNDARY. Int. courtesan, but, at present, clear leader of a gang of crooks, has become a woman of respect in a matter of days.

WHAT was Snow Gregory's real name? If he could find that, he had Jack O' Judgment.

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