A Secret OF THE HEART

By HOWARD FIELDING.

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PART I.

As I entered the Ann Street Bank building some one touched me on the arm; and I turned to face George Stalbridge. I knew it was Stalbridge before I saw him, before I heard his voice. The creature had an atmosphere such as is said to surround an evil spirit. If it had been consistent with my creed, I should have crossed myself when I perceived him.

My hatred of him had always been quite undisguised. I shook off his hand roughly and would have walked away, but he detained me. There was a snaky fascination about the man which had long been included in my mental catalogue of his offenses.

"You walk very fast," he said. "I have had hard work to overtake you."

"Let me know you're behind me next time," said I, "if you're interested in my pedestrainism. Now, don't detain me. I am going upstairs to see Mr. Davis, and I have no time to waste upon his evil genius."

"Why do you speak so to me?" he asked, not at all in anger. "Come, let's have it out today. What have you against me?"

"Do you want me to go over all that again?" I demanded. "Well, so be it. There is a new count in the indictment today, and I have a curiosity to hear how you will answer it."

We still stood in the main hall of the great building. It was 11 o'clock in the forenoon, a busy hour there, and scores of persons were passing in and out.

"No," said he, reading my thought; "it won't do to talk here. Let us go somewhere else."

He put his hand upon my arm again, in a most friendly fashion, and led me toward the street.

It is positively painful to entertain for any human being the feeling which I had for him. The eye of a stranger lit upon us walking thus together, and I cowed as one detected in a shameful action. It was not for his reputation, because that was good, as reputations go in New York. He was called a first-rate business man, and truly, for he succeeded, and that is the recognized test.

In the old days it was his personal appearance that set me against him. He was tall, thin and high shouldered, having the look of one who had drawn himself up to the uttermost that he may pounce down the harder upon something lying before him. His face was bony, and the upper part was a skin over a skull. He had a most distressing habit of lifting his matted and seemingly abundant hair with his hand in such a way as to show that the top of his head was really quite bald. The long hair rooted at the back merely lay upon it in a mass.

On the occasion in question there was something to be gained by talking with this man, and so I stifled my disgust of him. He had been for many years the close business associate of my uncle, Mr. William Davis, upon whom it had been my intention to call when I visited the bank building.

"My uncle has read the papers this morning, I suppose," said I.

Stalbridge brought his jaws together with a snap, and grinned like a skull.

"They are rather hard upon us," he said. "It is, perhaps, unfortunate that the negotiations between the Union Surface lines and the Twenty-seventh Street company have been divulged. The public never understands such things."

"The public understands them perfectly," I replied, angrily. "The public knows that the Union has got its grip upon the smaller company and has squeezed it to death; that every man who has put a dollar into the Twenty-seventh street road will lose it—has lost it, in fact—and that the whole

"WHAT'S THE MATTER?" I DEMANDED, SHARPLY.

transaction is a mass of political bribery, commercial dishonesty and evasion of law. I am not yet sure that the law has been successfully evaded; but whether it has or not, I certainly believe that if my uncle does not shake you off within a year, he will overstep the mark and disgrace the family name. Stalbridge, you reptile, what is the secret of your influence over him?"

"I have no influence," he replied. "I am only his employe. You know very well that I am really no more than a confidential clerk."

"I know the contrary," said I. "Can you deny that this whole surface road conspiracy was devised and executed by yourself?"

"Some matters of detail were, indeed, left to me," he began; but I interrupted him, angrily:

"The truth is not in you!" I cried. "I know very well what your part in this has been. It is the last of fifty such schemes, every one of which—"

"Made your uncle richer," he said, breaking in upon me. "He is now many times a millionaire."

"I'm not so sure of that," I returned. "It would interest me a great deal to know how much of those dishonest gains stands in his name and how much in yours. I mistake you most seriously if you have not taken the lion's share."

"He has been generous with me," said Stalbridge; "but I am not rich—yet."

"There has been one conspicuous instance in this city," said I, "in which a rascal like yourself, who started with nothing but a rich man's favor, in twenty years absorbed almost all his patron's vast fortune. If my uncle lives five years longer you will have him at your mercy, and his wealth will lie in the hollow of your hand."

"Let us hope that he will live much longer than that," rejoined Stalbridge, with unwonted feeling. "It would be idle to deny that I hope to profit by his continued favor."

I laughed bitterly. The fact was that this man was fastened upon my uncle like a leech, and was bleeding him royally.

"You expect to be made president of the Union lines now, I suppose," said I, with a sneer.

"I had thought," he replied, "that Mr. Davis would give that office to his future son-in-law, Mr. Walter Norman."

As he spoke he started slightly, as one who suddenly notes some trivial coincidence. He almost stopped. I wheeled about to face him, and observed that his eyes were raised so that he looked over my head. There was nothing particularly interesting in that direction. The elevated railroad structure crossed Vesey street at that point, and an uptown train was rattling along. But Stalbridge was not the sort of man to stare at so commonplace a spectacle.

"What's the matter?" I demanded, sharply.

"Nothing of consequence," he replied. "I happened to remember something. Let me see; what were we speaking of?"

"Of Walter Norman, whom you have just ruined by this deal," I said." That is the most mysterious part of it. I cannot understand how you persuaded my uncle to do this thing when Norman, as the principal stockholder in the Twenty-seventh street company, was sure to be terribly involved. Of one think I am certain; Norman had no suspicion of the way things stood, as between the two companies. He relied entirely upon his relations with my uncle's family to save him."

"Miss Davis' fortune will be ample to requite him for any loss he may suffer," said Stalbridge. "Her father will, of course, deal liberally with her when she marries. And besides, as I have already said, I think it is his intention to fix Norman all right when the consolidated stock is issued. I repeat that I expect to see him president of the Union."

"That is an absurd falsehood," I retorted. "You are trying to drive him to desperation that you may break off the match. If it were conceivable that she would accept you, I should believe that you had designs upon my cousin's hand."

"She is a charming woman," said Stalbridge, calmly.

I was anxious to break off the conversation. My object in talking with Stalbridge had already been attained. I had wished to learn what was going to happen to Norman in this bad business of the absorption of his enterprise by that which my uncle nominally, but Stalbridge actually guided. I knew Stalbridge's methods so well that I was able to judge of the truth or falsity of what he had said about my uncle's intentions toward Norman. I

HE KNEW ME—I COULD READ IT IN HIS EYES.

perceived that he had come as near the truth as he ever did; that my uncle was going to make reparation to Norman unless Stalbridge succeeded in preventing him from doing so. That the rascal for once distrusted his power over my uncle and feared that Norman's interests would be guarded, I could read in his eyes. It was, then, time for me to go upon the mission that had brought me down town; which was to see my uncle and plead Norman's cause.

As a matter of fact, I knew that that cause needed all my effort. My uncle's consent to the marriage was a thing not to be depended upon. I had been surprised when it had been dragged out of him; and I had looked for him to change his mind at any moment.

I turned about abruptly, and began to walk back toward the Ann street bank building. Stalbridge kept by my side. I could not shake him off. We entered the building together, by the side door, which is very little used, as there is no elevator in that hall.

My uncle's room was on the third floor at the rear. The Union lines had gorgeous offices at the front; my uncle's room was hidden away. There was no name on the door. Nobody else but Stalbridge had a desk there, even the harmless, necessary typewriter, being banished.

Stalbridge knocked. That was his invariable custom, and it gave me a bad impression of the room, as a place where secret meetings were held—meetings of two where neither dared permit a witness to be present.

There was no answer to Stalbridge's knock.

"Mr. Davis must have gone out," he said. "Will you wait for him?"

He drew out his key and tried to put it into the lock, but it met an obstacle.

"There's a key on the inside," he whispered. "He must be there, after all."

At that moment I heard something fall with a faint ring on the carpet within, and following that sound there came a low, sobbing cry, and then a crash.

Stalbridge, who, because of his strange stature, was bending over the lock, suddenly straightened up, and turned almost around. He leaned against the door. I had never seen a live man's face look as his looked then. The hound was thoroughly frightened.

I seized the key out of his hand; unlocked the door, and flung it open. As I did so, a door upon the other side of the room closed with a snap. This I perceived mechanically, for my gaze was riveted upon my uncle.

He was on his knees beside his desk, his face turned toward me. One hand clutched the desk for support; the other was pressed upon his breast.

He knew me—I could read it in his eyes. He tried to speak, but only gasped; and then fell forward on his face.

Death proclaimed himself in that heavy fall. Even the manner of it was evident, at least to my eye, which is not wholly untrained.

I knew that my uncle had died of a wound from a sharp-pointed weapon. Instantly I knelt by his side and turned him upon his back. The rush of blood was dreadful. It came straight from the heart.

All the world could not help him. My thought flashed to the murderer, and I remembered the closing of that door on the instant of our entrance. I sprang toward it; beat it down, and rushed into the little room beyond.

It was entirely empty. There was no other door but that by which I had entered. I ran to an open window, and looked down a sheer wall to a paved court.

Mystified I turned back to the large room where Stalbridge stood staring down upon the corpse of his benefactor.

To be continued.

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NEEDS OF LITTLE WALES

A Change in the Life of the Principality Greatly Needed.

PYOF. RHYS SOUNDS AN ALARM

Bravery in Coal Mines to be Awarded for Heroism is Recommended by Historian Charles Wilkins, of Merthyr.

Principal John Rhys, the master of Jesus College, Oxford, England, delivered recently the inaugural address to the members of the newly-founded Welsh society at Middlesborough, England, taking as his subject the various phases of Celtic nationality. Dealing with the modern aspects of the question, he said that under proper leadership a people endowed with the elasticity of the Celts could achieve almost anything. Within his own memory much had been accomplished already. Since, some quarter of a century ago, he had the honor of addressing a great Eisteddfod in Liverpool, a great change for the better had taken place in Welsh national feeling and temperature. In those days it was very common to hear in a certain class of Welshmen's public speeches a bitter complaint as to the sacrifice it meant for a man to own himself a Cymro. Owing everything to himself to the accident of his being a Welshman, he confessed he did not understand the complaint; still, he had little doubt as to the genuineness. Since, however, it was now seldom heard, he inferred that the grievance in the main had disappeared, and that Englishmen now treated Welshmen more completely on terms of equality more than ever before. That was partly due, perhaps, to the Welsh people having assumed a bolder and more outspoken attitude, and partly, no doubt, to the progress made in education in Wales. Among the surest signs of improvement in the tone of Welsh nationality was the fact that the old Welsh families now took a pride in being Welsh. That was not always so, and their influence had, in consequence, much enfeebled. Education was a field in which the Welsh had been much engaged of late years. At the time to which he had alluded there were only two colleges of academic standing in Wales and one of them was only just being established. Now they had doubled the number of colleges and more than quadrupled the number of men and women receivig education in them. They had established and were still establishing intermediate schools from which much was expected. Lately they had been enabled to try that experiment of a university for Wales, and they hoped that this also might prove a great success. They must all have noticed that parliament has been of late years much more considerate of the claims of Wales than it used to be, and that without regard to party or politics. As one of the results of the educational movements in Wales some of them who were interested in the older universities hoped that the youth of Wales would be so stimulated by the blessings of a liberal education at home that a growing number would eventually repair to Oxford or Cambridge to profit by the culture of those ancient seats of learning and to compete for the positions to which they were the keys. In this connection he should like to see a more enterprising spirit possessing young Welshmen. He should like to see them competing more numerously for the good things of the civil service and pushing their way to all departments of activity, whether within the limits of the United Kingdom, in the colonies, wherever, in fact, the great Anglo-Celtic empire extends its influence, and he sincerely hoped that the Welshmen who succeeded in making their fortunes would not forget Wales, but would remember it in their pocket.

WHAT WALES WANTS.

But somebody asked, "What does Wales still want?" Want! It wanted a great many things. He was told the other day to be less indefinite; to be more concrete. Well, he would be as concrete as they liked. First of all, there was the railway system of Wales. But he had used the wrong word, for there was no system, and that was one of their complaints. They wanted to see the means of communication between North and South Wales improved, and they wanted also a system of light railways. Then they wanted a national museum, with all the means of education which that implied; and a proper building would soon be needed, doubtless, as a habitation for the new university. But the latter was a mere trifle compared with the want of decent public buildings and improved architecture all over Wales. One of the most open-minded of the Welsh members, addressing the Welsh undergraduates at Oxford, called their attention to the fine architecture around them, and urged them to take note of it, and to exert their influence in the future in the villages of Wales. He hoped that the member would return to the subject and give greater publicity to his views in the deplorable state of the principality as contemplated from the architect's point of view. Nature had done her best in the romantic scenery with which Wales was favored. The jerry-builder had done his worst, and the capitalist had ranged himself on the side of the demon of hideosity. "Ah," said somebody, "You should be careful how you speak of the capitalist, for he is like the wind that bloweth where it listeth." He was disposed, however, to think that the capitalist was only too glad to blow wherever his blast was likely to pay. Some of the first ironmasters who settled in Glamorgan came, he believed, from the weald of Kent and Sussex, where iron was known even to Julius Caesar, and where the working of it only ceased in the present century. Why should an ironmaster from Kent come to Glamorgan? Simply because in Glamorgan he could get fuel cheap and make ample profits. He rejoiced that he should have come, but there was no concealing the fact that he moved to better himself. In fact, capitalist was just as much the subject of economic laws as anyone else. His complaint was that, while a struggling land owner had brought it home to him every day that property had its obligations as well as its rights, the capitalists sometimes practically escaped the analogous obligations in his case.

DUTY NEGLECTED.

Consider the colossal fortunes which had been made, for instance, at Merthyr and Dowlais, and then reflect what those who had made these fortunes had done, or rather, not done for the district. He did not know what might have been done recently, but what he saw there some years ago was miles of street—if one could call them streets—consisting of workmen's dwellings of a uniform dinginess, which was simply appalling. But they must not underate the skill of some of the builders. He heard a mass of evidence given to Lord Balfour of Burleigh's commission as to the art with which one class of homes had been laid out, viz.: Certain beer-houses, which had been so cunningly planned as to baffle all effective control on the part of the police. In that respect the place was unrivalled, but that only applied to public-houses, and when they asked about the public buildings he really did not know what to reply, for he did not recollect seeing any buildings of any pretensions. It was certainly not very potent to a stranger what the capitalist had done for the place or for the moral elevation of the people, beyond inducing a teeming population to crowd these, and he came away profoundly impressed with the notion that he had beheld the ugliest spot in the British Isles. What they wanted to do was, not only to teach the capitalists in Wales the lesson of his obligations to the district, where his profits were made, but to see wholesome ideas of architecture put into a tanglible form all over the Principality, and to have something done to cover with decency the abomination and desolation which the combined energy of capitalist and jerry-builder had so widely produced. This opened up a large vista of reform of a costly nature, and here was the opportunity for the generous and wealthy who wished to prove themselves at the same time true and disinterested patriots. Wales, half a century ago, could have been described as struggling Wales, and he had ample opportunities in his childhood of making himself intimately acquainted with of agricultural depression, things had so improved since then that one now began to look forward to a more attractive aspect of his native land. It was his fervent wish that successful Welshmen in all parts of the world would join in an effort to transform struggling Wales into beautiful Wales—beautiful for the future, not on account of her beautiful natural features, but also by reason of the smudges of man's creation having been successfully removed by the hand of industry, guided by sound culture and modern art.

WELSH NOTES.

The dean of St. Asaph is appointed to preach next Tuesday (St. Patrick's Day) at the Chapel Royal, St. James.

The three things hateful to the ex-president of the Welsh Congregational union, says the Goleaud, are prelate, priest, and prince.

Among the religious bodies of Wales there are two who are not satisfied with the authorized version of the Welsh Bible—the Roman Catholics and the Baptists. The former have their Douay Version, and the latter have made no less than two attempts to translate the New Testament into Welsh. The first was made by the late John Williams, of Newtown, and the second by Dr. Edwards, of Cardiff.

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If you cannot see your favorite candidate for the Presidency on Hughes & Glennon's Bock Beer card, drink a couple glasses of the beer. It will make you open your eyes and see double.

Hurrah for Hughes & Glennon!
Hurrah for their splendid bock!
It will set your face a-grinning.
It is made from pure deep rock.

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