

The IMPOSSIBLE BOY by NINA WILCOX PUTNAM ILLUSTRATIONS BY C.D. RHODES

SYNOPSIS.

Pedro and the dancing bear, Mr. Jones, prevent a tramp from stealing a young lady's purse. Pedro's ambition to become a painter spurs him to quit Old Nita and the strolling bear dancers. Pedro, Old Nita and the bear trainers start for New York. Miss Iris Vanderpool quarrels with her artist lover, Sam Hill, and they part. She discovers in her father's desk a portrait, which she recognizes as that of Pedro, who reacted her from the purse snatcher. Hill meets Pedro and Mr. Jones in Washington square. Hill discovers a talent in Pedro's drawings and in a mad desire to lose a miserly, miserly, miserly studio and all in it to Pedro in exchange for Mr. Jones. Pedro occupies Hill's studio and calls on Leigh, the sculptor, with a letter from Iris Vanderpool. Sam Hill, in the alley bumps into two men, one of whom is Reginald Vanderpool, Iris's father, in disguise. Vanderpool's companion goes into the basement of Hill's studio and talks with Ricardo, or Rowe, the basement tenant, of a conspiracy against a foreign government. Vanderpool, over whom Rowe has a secret hold, is implicated. Senora Dausa and her child, supposedly dead in an earthquake, are revealed to be alive. Senora Dausa is driven by Ricardo to a resort where the conspirators meet her and profess loyalty. Sam Hill sees Rowe unexpectedly attacked by Old Nita, and rescues her. Pedro takes luncheon with Iris Vanderpool, who endures his help. Iris goes for Pedro. Pedro sees Rowe with Vanderpool and peeping through Rowe's basement window is astonished at sight of a woman whose face, features for features, is like his own. Hill hears from the bear dancers that Pedro is a Venezuelan. Hill and Mr. Jones wander about, and stumble upon Rowe, loading a steamer with contraband of war. Hill is seized as a spy. Vanderpool, asphalt king, appears as "Senor Chief."

CHAPTER XII.

A Compromise.

The day on which Iris came to Pedro's studio for her second pose was not that which had been appointed, but one nearly a week later. During the intervening period the young painter had remained locked in the studio as long as daylight lasted, emerging only at night, in company with Leigh.

Pedro had given her no explanation for putting her off, simply sending word that he could not have her at present, but would get some work done on the background of the portrait.

Iris had telephoned several futile invitations, and at last, catching Pedro on the wire, had arranged for a sitting. At the hour appointed, she mounted the stairs slowly, with fast-beating heart, starting and trembling at every sound within the ancient building.

She reached the door unchallenged, and rapped upon it.

"Lady! Most gracious Madonna!" he cried in greeting. "See, here is the blue robe—quick, quick! I am all impatient to begin. Do you know the good tidings? Of the ridiculously audacious thing I am going to do? Exhibit my pictures! Yes, me, Pedro! Ha! ha! I am not unknown, it seems! Read the newspapers. I am Pedro, the great Spanish artist! I do not know how to paint, but it matters not; they will say 'an impressionist—Matisse outside!' Ah! ha! your portrait will be the chief gem of the display. In two weeks comes the exhibition, so I must finish it soon, soon!"

"It will be a lovely exhibition!" said he, "there will be Leigh's stuff—beautiful marbles, rich in form, and with such textures and high lights. You know! And the virginal white bas-reliefs—the joyous one of the ladies dancing. And around the walls, between these things will hang many gorgeous paintings by that great Spanish painter—myself."

Iris could not but laugh with him. "And of all these fine pictures," he continued, "the most lovely will be a Madonna with hair that is red-gold, like joy!"

Then there was silence and he worked fiercely, cruelly, for, as usual, he forgot the rests, and it grew late before either spoke.

At last, exhausted by the long pose, by his indifference, by her own emotions, she could bear it no longer, but holding out her arms toward him, she swayed slightly, and said his name in a broken voice.

"Pedro!"

came-like beauty, he thought for the hundredth time that Hill had chosen well. Small wonder that the latter had been driven to despair by her! And she—did she still care for the absent painter? She seldom spoke of him, and that argued well for Hill's cause. And what had parted these two? Some silly, silly quarrel, he again assured himself. How well matched they were, how admirably suited to each other! But how about the girl's attitude toward himself? A subtle smile crept to the corners of his mouth at the thought, and he hastily took his eyes from her face, looking intently at the glowing cigarette between his fingers instead.

"What is the matter?" she asked. "A second ago you were merry. Now you look quiet, wise—dangerous? How you change!"

"Dangerous! Far from it!" he exclaimed, pushing back his chair, "that is, unless you call overwhelming curiosity dangerous. Personally I think it less dangerous than a lack of curiosity; to the individual, at least."

"And what makes you curious?" she asked.

Then Pedro, who did not know how to lead gently up to any subject, plunged in.

"Were you engaged to Hill?" he asked abruptly.

Without answering, she arose and walked away to the window, where she stood for several moments before replying, her back turned.

"Yes," she said at last.

"And do you still care for him?"

To her own intense surprise she found that she could not reply at once.

"I beg your pardon, Madonna," said Pedro softly.

"Oh, you don't understand!" she cried wildly, throwing out her hands. "I don't care, I hate—oh! why did you ask me?"

"I think I do understand," he said very distinctly, looking straight at her. A wave of crimson flooded her cheeks. What did he mean? Unable to face him longer, she buried her face in her hands. He came toward her and stood where he could have touched her.

"Sam Hill is a great soul," said he softly. "He is generous and good. He is talented, he is . . ."

"He is nothing to me!" she gasped, looking up.

"He is my friend," finished Pedro firmly.

She flung her arms wide, and turned to him with an appealing gesture, her face revealing an emotion she made no attempt to conceal, nor he to ignore.

"Pedro!" she began passionately, "you will think me mad for saying it, but ah! I cannot help it—you make me! Pedro, I love . . ."

There was a crash as his liquor glass fell to the floor.

"Hush!" said he.

"What is it?" she asked, for the moment startled into normality.

"Nothing!" said he, "only you are not to finish your sentence. Never mind the glass, it was done intentionally. Let us talk of other things."

"But, Pedro," she said hysterically, "I cannot! I am possessed! How can you be so cruel?"

"Please, please!" he begged her. "Madonna, I am abject; I am in torture! Have pity!"

"It is akin to pity," she replied.

Pedro walked to the hearth and stooped to mend the fire. Then he straightened up and spoke.

"Impossible!" he said quietly. "Utterly impossible!"

And she, watching him intently, knew he had believed her, although he presented this denial. She felt, too, that her cause was nearly hopeless.

"You do not care, then," she said in a low voice.

"Madonna Lady," he said sadly, "I care for you a great deal, but not as Hill does; not as a man should, to be your lover. You charm me beyond words; you are lovely as a dream, and if I could love any woman, it would be you—but you are not for me."

"Why not?" she asked sharply, between her tortured breaths.

"The reason is beyond my power to alter," said Pedro.

"Then," said she, "I suppose I had better go. Shall you wish to finish the picture?"

"Iris!" he cried in a suddenly changed tone, "come here, listen! Of course I want to finish the picture; it is going to be good! And what is more, if you will be so gracious, with your permission we will finish it, and renew our friendship at the same time."

"Friendship!" said she, with a mirthless little laugh.

"Come!" he cried, with an attempt at putting the incident behind them, "I must talk to you about something very important. You asked me to help you find out who was troubling your father."

"Yes," she assented, without much interest, however.

"Well," he said slowly, "I am most distressingly placed, Madonna. I am almost certain that he is being either blackmailed or misled in some manner, and yet my hands are absolutely tied. I can do nothing."

"How very queer!" he commented, when she had finished. "How unlike Nita! And Hill? What has he done?"

"He has not come home!"

"But there is nothing strange in that!" objected Pedro. "Does he not often stay away all night, eh?"

"But the bear came home!" wailed Guneviere.

"Mr. Jones! Alone! Impossible!"

"A policeman-of-the-law brought him," explained Guneviere, "saying that he found the bear near the river. The name was on the collar, and the number, too, was!"

"Saint Joseph! but that does look serious!" Pedro exclaimed. "Quick! Is there nothing more?"

"Only that the policeman-of-the-law made much noise when he found that four bears dwelt within the tenement. He says we must move out. Four bears are not permitted. One bear—perhaps, if much money be paid. But four! No, that is not allowed!"

"And what have you done?"

"We have arranged to go into the back tenement," said Guneviere, the evidently convinced that the change would solve the difficulty.

"But, Hill! Something must have happened to him? And the bear left him?" said Pedro, walking up and down excitedly. "He may have been hurt! Near the river, eh? Good heavens! I scarcely dare guess what has occurred!"

"The hospital!" suggested Guneviere with some faint return of her usual practicality.

"Ah! yes," he exclaimed, "I shall telephone them at once, and then I shall go to Jones street with you. As for Nita, we shall have to find her without help; she has made me swear never to invoke public aid in her behalf, you know."

"Yes, yes!" said Guneviere, "you will come, then?"

"Directly!" he cried. "No time must be lost."

But as it proved, time mattered little, for the hospitals told nothing, and neither did that grim lost and found office, the morgue. For two whole days Pedro alternated between his studio and the rear tenement on Jones street, his mind in an agony of uncertainty. He could not work for nervousness, and the combined suspense and inaction played havoc with his spirit. Leigh had been called out of town to see his mother, who was ill, and there was no one else to whom Pedro dared go for advice and help.

Hill himself had forbidden that his affairs be made known to anyone but the sculptor, or Pedro might have asked Milligan's assistance. As it was, he could not fume impatiently, and eat his heart out with worry. At last, no longer able to endure doing nothing, he called a council of war in the tenement kitchen. To the assembled bear-dancers, with exception only of the still mysteriously absent Nita, he arose and spoke.

"I am going to find Sam Hill, if he is on the face of the earth!" he announced. "I am convinced that some misfortune has befallen him. In half an hour I am going to take Mr. Jones with me, and I am not coming back till we have succeeded in discovering the whereabouts of my friend."

"Splendid!" said Pedro, and thrusting the folded paper into his breast pocket, seized her hand and kissed it with the grace of a courtier.

Iris blushed, watching him with tender eyes. Then she submitted to being led downstairs and shut into her

cell you where until I return. Then we shall attend to your little matter, and I shall see why and how my mother comes in such company. My mother!" he turned away and sighed.

"I had forgotten how I loved her!" he said as though to himself. Then he picked up the pole and chain, and signaled to Beau-Jean that he was ready. Nita arose to her feet.

"Where is my daughter?" she screamed. "Where is Ricardo?"

"At the other end of the city," said Pedro. "Come quickly, Beau-Jean."

And with that they were off, leaving Nita screaming imprecations at them from the stair-head, in the most healthy manner. As they reached the street Beau-Jean asked:

"What is all this murder business of which Nita talks? Couldn't we manage to avenge her, when we have found Samhill?"

"Perhaps," said Pedro soberly, "for this man, Ricardo Valdez, is a very wicked man. He used to live near . . ."

"Where is Ricardo and Thy Mother?"

my home. Nita was my nurse, once, and her daughter was my foster-sister. When she was only fifteen Ricardo stole her away. Then he deserted her, and when she came back to us she killed herself and her baby. Ever since Nita has been looking for him, to avenge her child. But she is so old now, that I think we had best not let her do it. I am sure she would really prefer dying with us, to dying in jail!"

"I agree," said Beau-Jean. "And now which way shall we turn?" said Pedro.

"As the bear came from the river, let us to the river go," suggested Beau-Jean.

"A good notion," said Pedro, "and as likely to prove fruitful as any."

"More likely up-town than down from here," said Beau-Jean, and again Pedro assented.

And so, in accordance with the plan, if plan it could be properly called, they made their way westward, straight toward the docks, and, once reaching them, began a pilgrimage up-town.

Mr. Jones now began acting in a most peculiar manner. Something on the sidewalk had attracted his attention, and nothing could divert him until he had made a thorough inspection. To Beau-Jean and to Pedro there appeared to be nothing on the pavement but a good deal of dirt and refuse; but one particular spot seemed to have fascinated Mr. Jones, and there was nothing for it but to stand waiting while he noosed about.

"Shall I chasten him?" asked Beau-Jean, who was accustomed to using this method with Koko.

"No, certainly not," said Pedro, "I believe he's been here before. Perhaps he recognizes something. Let us watch!"

Pedro's surmise was an eminently correct one, for Mr. Jones had recognized—honey! Very shortly he raised his head, found the scent, and came upon a second spot of interest. How delightful!—this was the neighborhood in which he had found that nice hive where there were no bees to sting, and where the honey was so plentiful! He really had not taken half of it last time! And here were his own footsteps, his sticky, honey-made footprints, which would help him to find the treasure again. Thus it happened that in time they reached the doorway of the little dairy, which Mr. Jones recognized with a joyful

shriek of surprise—"well, I never! How is the other fellow? Ain't he got the bear with him then?"

"No, I've got him!" said Pedro dryly.

"Get out of this, youse!" shouted the milk vender. "Don't you dast ter come in, any of youse! I ain't-a-goin' ter sell yer nothin'. Get off, you smashin', murderin' bunch of dagoes! I'll set the cop on yer if yer don't skidoo!"

"Why?" asked Pedro, wildly excited. "But why won't you sell to us?"

"Go on now! none o' yer back talk!" growled the man. "I sold to one dago feller with a bear last week, an' the brute eat up all me comb-honey! So get out, quit talkin'!"

"A man with a bear?" cried Pedro, scarcely able to believe his ears. "I'll bet it's the one I want to find. That bear he had belongs to me."

"Well, what do I care for that?" said the milk vender sourly. "Get out, or will I call the cop?"

"Which way did he go?" persisted Pedro—"same way as we came?"

A malicious smile came upon the weakened features of the dairyman. Here was a chance to mislead and annoy a bear-dancer, and to do so was a wondrous source of satisfaction.

"He went this way, had luck to him!" he lied, pointing east, "if yer catch up with him, I hope the bear eats both of yer!"

When they had been walking for about half an hour Pedro laid his hand upon the arm of his companion.

"Look, Beau-Jean!" said he. "Look, there, in the window of the little shop of women's finery! See the girl with the red-gold hair? I am painting a picture of the Holy Mother, and the hair is of just such a color!"

"Indeed!" said Beau-Jean soberly. "It is a terrible color. Do you think that the Holy Mother will be pleased?"

"I had not thought of that!" replied Pedro. Then he added suddenly—"Oh! see, the shop-lady knows Mr. Jones!"

It was true. The red-haired girl had given very animated signs of recognizing the bear, and lifted her gaze to the persons in whose company he appeared, with a smile on her lips, which swiftly gave way to a look of disappointment as she met their eyes.

"Wait!" said Pedro, halting before the door, "that lady has seen this bear before, or I am much mistaken! And what is more, she expected to see some one she knew, when she looked at us! Come in, I want to buy some thread."

Whereupon he opened the door, and, with the bear, entered the crowded little shop, leaving Beau-Jean gasping on the pavement.

Behind the counter stood the smiling Lola La Farge, alias Lizzy Hinkle.

"What can I do for you?" she asked, laying aside the bit of knitting upon which she had been engaged.

"Thread, please!" said Pedro, flashing his smile at her.

"What color?" she inquired, admiring his eyes and teeth.

"Er—ah—green, please!" said Pedro, because her eyes were rather of that color, and consequently it came first to mind: "Green, and a needle, please."

ROCK ISLAND UNDER FIRE

Railroad Faces Receivers Proceedings.

LOSS OF MILLIONS ALLEGED

Commerce Commission Hears Of In Bonds and Stocks—Director May Be Sued if Receiver Is Appointed.

New York.—The State Supreme Court issued an order directing Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad Company to show cause why receiver should not be appointed take charge of properties not pledged and to institute action to cover from the railroads' directors amount of damages alleged to be caused the railroad and its creditors.

Should such receiver be appointed under the order prayed for in the which was brought by Home Brand, the receiver would not be empowered to sue directors, but would be specifically instructed by the court to do so. The receiver, in addition would be directed to search out and hold any other assets of the railroad company than those pledged to Central Trust Company as trustee, also he would be directed to apply to the Federal District Court for permission to intervene in foreclosure proceedings recently instituted by the Central Trust Company.

No amount of damages is named. Mr. Brand's petition as the amount which the receiver would be directed to sue.

The complaint sets forth that it accepted a few shares of the \$145,000 authorized capital stock of the defendant company was transferred to New Jersey company, which gave defendant company \$50,000,000 of stock. The bulk of this, it is alleged, was paid over to the Illinois Company as the balance of the purchase price of stock purchased by it by the defendant.

The directors named are charged with diverting the earnings of the Illinois company to the payment of dividends upon these shares of stock, benefits of the dividends being received by themselves and others shareholders of the New Jersey company and as directors of the defendant company. As a result of such diversion, the plaintiff says, the defendant company could not meet the annual interest payment of \$1,475,000 its bonds which fell due last May.

West Virginia Mother Arrested on Point Pleasant.

Point Pleasant, W. Va.—Clara with setting fire to her own home an effort to burn her 10-day-old baby. Mrs. Mary Lanier, of Appleton, near here, was arrested. It is Mrs. Lanier and her husband had a child and that she tried to murder baby "for spite." The fire started in the room where the baby lay in a cradle. Men at work on the house found the cradle in flames, but saved the child.

FOOTBALL KICK IS FATAL

Fordham Boy Dies in Jersey City From Accident in Game.

New York.—Inquiries received by football game last Monday caused death of Charles C. Hays, 18 years of age. Hays was right tackle on the Fordham Prep football team and received a kick in the stomach during a game played at International League Park, Jersey City, against St. Peter's College. Drs. Duffy, Hawkins and Moran operated on the injured boy at Francis' Hospital, in Jersey City, but were unable to save him.

FREE GIFT TRANSIT.

I. C. C. Says Hauling Presents Optional With Railroads.

Washington, D. C.—Christmas gifts to war orphans in Europe can be carried free of charge by the railroads from the interior to Brooklyn, N. Y. for shipment abroad, the Interstate Commerce Commission ruled. The commission stated that the use of railroads for charitable purposes is optional with the railroads.

TURKEY TO DEMOLISH

Rome Dispatch Says Kaiser Is Told Lack of Money.

Rome.—The Turkish Government has notified the German Emperor its intention to demolish its army's account of lack of money, says a dispatch to the Tribune, from its correspondent at Constantinople.

ANTI-TRUST BILL SIGNED

President Takes Last Step in Administration's Big Business Program.



"Where is Ricardo and Thy Mother?"



"There," She Said, "Will That Do?"



SYSTEM SAVES WOMAN'S TIME

Many Farm Wives Lose by Not Mapping Their Work Out in Methodical Manner.

A program is a great labor saver, we are told, but some women use a program as a rosin disc a pole—something to fly from. They never know what is to be done next, says a writer in Country Gentleman. A regular order, wherein the work is dovetailed, makes for real efficiency. While the woman who does her work hit or miss is in the throes of indecision as to what shall be done next, the really methodical woman has her work all mapped out a week ahead. She moves swiftly and surely from one task to the next with no lost time. The amount of work she turns off is a marvel to the other woman.

A good homemaker plans her work and works her plan. She is envied by less executive women, but she must pay the price in careful thought and in an inflexible will that holds her to the prescribed procedure. A weaker woman makes a good plan, but circumstances are forever altering it. She never drives her work, but her work drives her continually. It worries her; it becomes a nightmare. Because

she is always putting things off she is always behind time, and therefore what she does do is done under pressure and in a hurried way that is always wasteful.

Take Rest in Time.

Rest is mental. When the mind wears the body relaxes. Drudgery is mental monotony. The climate of the mind loses its distinct seasons when drudgery steals away vivacity and variety. Idleness is not rest, but rust. A change of air refreshes the whole man. What most people need for a vacation is a new duty, not a new climate. If you would rid yourself of an old trouble and escape from a galling condition, take up a new task. Inaction leads to atrophy. Rust does as much harm as friction. There is no reward for the idler whether he be rich or poor. The lazy man is seldom an optimist.

To Raise Mint.

To those who are fond of mint, this may be a helpful suggestion. Place good sized sprays of mint in a jar of water and you will find that you have a fine mint bed. If the jar is kept well filled with water the mint will grow as well as though planted in a window box.