

Past One at Rooney's

A Romance of the Under
World of New York

By O. HENRY
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Only on the lower east side of New York do the houses of Capulet and Montague survive. There they do not fight by the book of arithmetic. If you but bite your thumb at an upholder of your opposing house you have work cut out for your steel.

So when Eddie McManus, known to the Capulets as Cork McManus, drifted into Dutch Mike's for a Stein of beer and came upon a bunch of Montagues making merry with the suds he began to observe the strictest parliamentary rules. Courtesy forbade his leaving the saloon with his thirst unsatisfied; caution steered him to a place at the bar where the mirror supplied the cognizance of the enemy's movements that his indifferent gaze seemed to disdain; experience whispered to him that the finger of trouble would be busy among the chattering steins at Dutch Mike's that night. Close by his side drew Brick Cleary, his Mercutio, companion of his perambulations. Thus they stood, four of the Mulberry hill gang and two of the drydock gang.

Overstrained etiquette at last gave way. It is not known who first overstepped the bounds of punctilio, but the consequences were immediate. Buck Malone of the Mulberry hills, with a Dewey-like swiftness, got an eight inch gun swung round from his hurricane deck, but McManus' smile must be the torpedo. He glided in under the guns and slipped a scant three inches of knife blade between the ribs of the Mulberry hill cruiser. Meanwhile Brick Cleary, a devotee to strategy, had skinned across the lunch counter and thrown the switch of the lectrics, leaving the combat to be waged by the light of gunfire alone.

The cop came and found a prostrate, bleeding Montague supported by three distrustful and reticent followers of the house. Faithful to the ethics of the gangs no one knew whence the hurt came.

At midnight McManus strolled round a pile of lumber near an east side dock and lingered in the vicinity of a certain water plug. Brick Cleary drifted casually to the trying place ten minutes later. "He'll maybe not roak," said Brick, "and he won't tell, course. But Dutch Mike did. He told the police he was tired of having his place shot up. It's unhandy just now, because Tim Corrigan's in Europe for a week's end with kings. He'll be back on the Kaiser Williams next Friday. You'll have to duck out of sight till then."

This goes to explain why Cork McManus went into Rooney's one night and there looked upon the bright, ranger face of Romance for the first time in his precarious career.

It was on Thursday evening that Cork's seclusion became intolerable to him. Never a hart panted for water until as he did for the cool touch of a drifting stein. But he must avoid the district where he was known. The cops were looking for him everywhere. At half past 12 McManus stood in a dark cross-town street, looking up at a name "Rooney's," picked out by incandescent lights against a signboard over a second story window. He had heard of the place as a tough "hang out"; with its frequenters and its locality he was unfamiliar. Guided by certain unerring indications common to all such resorts, he ascended the stairs and entered the large room over the cafe.

Here were some twenty or thirty tables, at this time about half filled with Rooney's guests.

For one brief moment you must admire Rooney with me as he receives, us, manipulates and chaffs his guests. He is twenty-nine. He has Wellington's nose, Dante's chin, the eyebrows of an Iroquois, the smile of Heyland, Corbett's foot work, and the poise of an eleven-year-old east side Central park queen of the May. He is assisted by a Lieutenant known as Frank, a pudgy, easy chap, swelled, who goes among the tables that dull care does not intrude. McManus sat down at a vacant table, paid for the glass of beer that he ordered, tilted his narrow brimmed hat to the back of his brick dust lid, twined his feet among the rungs of his chair and heaved a sigh of content from the breathing spaces of innermost soul.

girl, alone, entered Rooney's, glancing around with leisurely swiftness and opposite McManus at his table. Her eyes rested upon him for two seconds the look with which woman reconnoiters all men whom she for the first time confronts. In that space of time will decide upon one of two things either to scream for the police or that may marry him later on.

Her brief inspection concluded, the laid on the table a worn red morocco shopping bag, with the inevitable gallant sail of frayed lace hand-chief flying from a corner of it. She had ordered a small beer in the immediate waiter, she took in her bag a box of cigarettes and lit one with slightly exaggerated ease of manner. Then she looked in the eyes of Cork McManus and smiled.

Instantly the doom of each was

With the exchange of the mysterious magnetic current came to each of them the instant desire to lie, pretend, dazzle and deceive, which is the worst thing about the hypocritical disorder known as love.

"Have another beer?" suggested Cork. "No, thanks," said the girl, raising her eyebrows and choosing her conventional words carefully. "I—merely dropped in for—a slight refreshment." The cigarette between her fingers seemed to require explanation. "My aunt is a Russian lady," she concluded, "and we often have a post perennial cigarette after dinner at home."

"Cheese it!" said Cork, whom society airs oppressed. "Your fingers are as yellow as mine."

"Say," said the girl, blazing upon him with low voiced indignation, "what do you think I am? Say, who do you think you are talking to? What?"

She was pretty to look at. Her eyes were big, brown, intrepid and bright. Under her flat sailor hat, plaited jauntily on one side, her crinkly, tawny hair parted and was drawn back, low and massy, in a thick pendant knot behind. The roundness of girlhood still lingered in her chin and neck, but her cheeks and fingers were thinning slightly.

"Beg your pardon," said Cork, looking at her admiringly. "I didn't mean anything. Sure, it's no harm to smoke, Maudy."

"Rooney's," said the girl, softened at once by his amends, "is the only place I know where a lady can smoke. May-



HE SLIPPED A KNIFE BETWEEN THE RIBS OF BUCK MALONE

be it ain't a nice habit, but aunty lets us at home. And my name ain't Maudy, if you please; it's Ruby Delaire."

"That's a swell handle," said Cork approvingly. "Mine's McManus—Cor'er—Eddie McManus."

"Oh, you can't help that," laughed Ruby. "Don't apologize."

Cork looked seriously at the big clock on Rooney's wall. The girl's ubiquitous eyes took in the movement.

"I know it's late," she said, reaching for her bag, "but you know how you want a smoke when you want one. Ain't Rooney's all right? I never saw anything wrong here. This is twice I've been in. I work in bookbindery on Third avenue. A lot of us girls have been working overtime three nights a week. They won't let you smoke there, of course. I just dropped in here on my way home for a puff. Ain't it all right in here? If it ain't, I won't come any more."

"It's a little bit late for you to be out alone anywhere," said Cork. "I'm not wise to this particular joint, but anyhow you don't want to have your picture taken in it for a present to your Sunday school teacher. Have one more beer and then say I take you home."

"But I don't know you," said the girl with fine scrupulousness. "I don't accept the company of gentlemen I ain't acquainted with. My aunt never would allow that."

"Why?" said Cork McManus, pulling his ear. "I'm the latest thing in suitings with side vents and bell skirt when it comes to escortin' a lady. You bet you'll find me all right, Ruby. And I'll give you a tip as to who I am. My governor is one of the hottest cross buns of the Wall street push. Morgan's cab horse casts a shoe every time the old man sticks his head out the window. Me! Well, I'm in trainin' down the street."

"I guess you can walk to the door with me," said the girl hesitatingly, but with a certain pleased flutter. "Still I never heard anything extra good about Wall street brokers. Ain't you got any other recommendations?"

"I think you're the sweetest looker I've had my lamps on in little old New York," said Cork impressively.

"That'll be about enough of that, now. Ain't you the kiddie?" She modified her chiding words by a deep, long, beaming, smile embellished look at her cavalier. "We'll drink our beer before we go, ha?"

One o'clock struck. Downstairs there was a sound of closing and locking doors. Frank pulled down the green shades of the front windows carefully. Rooney went below in the dark hall and stood at the front door, his cigarette cached in the hollow of his hand.

Cork McManus and the bookbindery girl conversed absently, with their elbows on the table.

"Say," said Cork McManus, almost covering the table with his eloquent hands. "was that dead

straight about you workin' in a bookbindery and livin' at home—and just happenin' in here—and—and all that spid you gave me?"

"Sure it was," answered the girl with spirit. "Why, what do you think? Do you suppose I'd lie to you? Go down to the shop and ask 'em. I handed it to you on the level."

"On the dead level?" said Cork. "That's the way I want it, because—" "Because what?"

"I threw up my hands," said Cork. "You've got me goin'. You're the girl I've been lookin' for. Will you keep company with me, Ruby?"

"Would you like me to—Eddie?"

"Surest thing. But I wanted a straight story about—about yourself, you know. When a fellow has a girl—a steady girl—she's got to be all right, you know. She's got to be straight goods."

"You'll find I'll be straight goods, Eddie."

"Of course you will. I believe what you told me. But you can't blame me for wantin' to find out. You don't see many girls smokin' cigarettes in places like Rooney's after midnight that are like you."

The girl flushed a little and lowered her eyes. "I see that now," she said meekly. "I didn't know how bad it looked. But I won't do it any more. And I'll go straight home every night and stay there. And I'll give up cigs if you say so, Eddie—I'll cut 'em out from this minute on."

Cork's air became judicial, proprietary, condescending, yet sympathetic. "A lady can smoke," he decided slowly, "at times and places. Why? Because it's bein' a lady that helps her pull it off."

"Eddie, do you really like me?" The girl searched his hard but frank features eagerly with anxious eyes.

"On the dead level."

"When are you coming to see me—where I live?"

"Thursday, day after tomorrow evening. That suit you?"

"Fine. I'll be ready for you. Come about 7. Walk to the door with me tonight and I'll show you where I live. Don't forget, now."

"On the dead level," said Cork, "you make 'em all look like rag dolls to me. Honest, you do."

Against the front door downstairs reported heavy blows were delivered. The loud crashes resounded in the room above. Only a triphammer or a policeman's foot could have been the author of those sounds. Rooney jumped like a bullfrog to a corner of the room, turned off the electric lights and hurried swiftly below. The room was left entirely dark except for the winking red glow of cigars and cigarettes. Frank, cool, smooth, reassuring, could be seen in the rosy glow of the burning tobacco co going from table to table.

"All keep still," was his caution. "Don't talk or make any noise. Everything will be all right."

Ruby felt across the table until Cork's firm hand closed upon hers. "Are you afraid, Eddie?" she whispered. "Are you afraid you'll get a free ride?"

"Nothin' doin' in the teeth chattering line," said Cork. "I guess Rooney's been slow with his envelope. Don't you worry, girl; I'll look out for you all right."

Yet Mr. McManus' ease was only skin and muscle deep. With the police looking everywhere for Buck Malone's assailant and with Corrigan still on the ocean wave, he felt that to be caught in a police raid would mean an ended career for him. And just when he had met Ruby too! He wished he had remained in the high rear room of the true Capulet reading the pink extras.

Rooney seemed to have opened the front door below and engaged the police in conference in the dark hall. Frank made a wireless news station of himself at the upper door. Suddenly he closed the door, hurried to the extreme rear of the room and lighted a dim gas jet.

"This way, everybody," he called sharply; "in a hurry, but no noise, please."

The guests crowded in confusion to the rear. Rooney's lieutenant swung open a panel in the wall, overlooking the backyard, revealing a ladder already placed for the escape.

"Down and out, everybody," he commanded.

Among the last, Cork and Ruby waited their turn at the open panel. Suddenly she swept him aside and clung to his arm fiercely.

"Before we go out," she whispered in his ear—"before anything happens, tell me again, Eddie, do you—I do you really like me?"

"On the dead level," said Cork, holding her close with one arm, "when it comes to you, I'm all in."

When they turned they found they were lost and in darkness. The last of the fleeing customers had descended. Half way across the yard they bore the ladder, stumbling, giggling, hurrying to place it against an adjoining low building, over the roof of which lay their only route to safety.

"We may as well sit down," said Cork grimly. "Maybe Rooney will stand the cops off, anyhow."

They sat at a table, and their hands came together again.

A number of men then entered the dark room, feeling their way about. One of them, Rooney himself, found the switch and turned on the electric light. The other man was a cop of the old regime—a big cop, a thick cop, a fuming, abrupt cop—not a pretty cop.

He went up to the pair at the table, his cigarette cached in the hollow of his hand.

Cork McManus and the bookbindery girl conversed absently, with their elbows on the table.

"What are you doin' in here?" he asked.

"Dropped in for a smoke," said Cork mildly.

"Had any drinks?"

"Not later than 1 o'clock."

SHERIFF'S SALE OF VALUABLE REAL ESTATE.—By virtue of process issued out of the Court of Common Pleas of Wayne county, and State of Pennsylvania, and to me directed and delivered, I have levied on and will expose to public sale, at the Court House in Honesdale, on

TUESDAY, MAY 7, 1912, 11 A. M.

All the defendant's right, title and interest in the following described property—viz:

All that certain piece or parcel of land and the land covered with water known as the Sand Pond property situated in Cherry Ridge township, Wayne county, Pennsylvania, bounded and described as follows:

Beginning in the middle of the Cherry Ridge and East Sterling turnpike road in the southern line of land of the Pennsylvania Coal Company and being the northeasterly corner of the land hereinabove described, thence along the middle of said road south 45 degrees west 7 perches, thence along the middle of the same south 58 degrees west 28 perches; thence along the line of said company's land south 59 degrees east 17 and 9-10 perches to a heap of stones; thence along line of L. and T. Boncar's land south 40 degrees west 228 perches to a line tree corner; thence north 50 degrees west 44 perches to a stones corner; thence south 40 degrees west 701 feet; thence north 10 degrees 15 minutes east 1400 feet to a corner on Old Loaded Track; thence north one degree forty-five minutes west 565 feet to a corner on southerly side of road and thence by the same north 86 degrees 32 minutes west 441 feet to the place of beginning. Containing 86.67 acres of land or thereabouts.

Beginning in the middle of the Cherry Ridge and East Sterling turnpike road in the southern line of land of the Pennsylvania Coal Company by their deed dated Nov. 22, 1899, and recorded in Wayne County Deed Book No. 87, page 26, etc., granted and conveyed to A. T. Hankins, et al. on March Term, 1912, Judgment, \$200.00, page 458.

Seized and taken in execution as the property of A. T. Hankins at the suit of Harriet S. Sutton, No. 84, March Term, 1912, Judgment, \$200. Attorney, Mumford.

TAKE NOTICE.—All bids and costs must be paid on day of sale or deeds will not be acknowledged.

FRANK C. KIMBLE, Sheriff.

Honesdale, April 16, 1912.

south 84 degrees 52 minutes east 198 feet to an ash; thence south 29 degrees 20 minutes east 310 feet to a hemlock; thence south 44 degrees 39 minutes east 820 feet to a stake and stones corner on road; thence along the road north 50 degrees east 150 feet; thence north 37 degrees 10 minutes west 2154 feet; thence north 40 degrees 45 minutes west 1400 feet; thence north 29 degrees 22 minutes east 701 feet; thence north 10 degrees 15 minutes east 1400 feet to a corner on Old Loaded Track; thence north one degree forty-five minutes west 565 feet to a corner on southerly side of road and thence by the same north 86 degrees 32 minutes west 441 feet to the place of beginning. Containing 86.67 acres of land or thereabouts.

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a post and stone corner on Crater's land; thence along said land north thirty-eight perches to the south side of the Great Bend and Cochecton turnpike road; thence along said road north eighty-five degrees east fifty-eight perches to place of beginning, containing fourteen acres more or less.

Upon said premises is a two-story frame house, frame barn and other improvements, being the same property that Aaron Fowler conveyed to A. T. Hankins by deed dated Feb. 6, 1903, recorded in Deed Book No. 90, page 458.

Seized and taken in execution as the property of A. T. Hankins at the suit of Harriet S. Sutton, No. 84, March Term, 1912, Judgment, \$200. Attorney, Mumford.

TAKE NOTICE.—All bids and costs must be paid on day of sale or deeds