

"Grip's" Popular Series of Pirated Romances.

A VERY STRANGE STORY.

BY JOHN (HULWER) SMITH.

THE YOUNG AND THE BEAUTIFUL ever since the days of primeval innocence blend into a graceful Ideal. Not alone on the burning sands of Egypt, beneath the shadow of the dumb eternal Sphinx, not alone in the caves of the mystic Rosicrucians, not in the study of the Alchemist, but also in the throbbing streets of the modern Babylon, is the mysterious to be discovered.

In one of the fashionable streets in the neighbourhood of Belgravia, the Countess of Plumbeury gave a fashionable *re-union*. In addition to Peers of the realm, Bishops, Judges of the bench, and men of literature, whose names are famous where language is spoken, the Lion of the season, Walter Spoilgrave, was expected.

I was seated in an alcove with Mrs. Captown Ruthven, discussing the Pacific Scandal, when I suddenly felt a strange presence, and looking up saw Walter Spoilgrave before me. The bloom of health was on his rounded cheeks, and the laughter of infancy broke from his dimpling lips; but his eyes were old, as though Sphinx-like, they had gazed unblinkingly through thousands of years, at strange mysterious rites. We were introduced, and after a casual exchange of remarks on the Weather, he glided away. Presently I heard the Countess saying, "We have heard of your musical abilities, will you favour us?"

"Certainly," he replied, and with rare grace, he unfolded a Jew's harp from a piece of brown paper. "This air," he said, "is the famous Tarantula, those who hear must dance."

He commenced; silvery tinkling notes, then louder, crepitating, clanging, and at last a thunderous volume of sound. During this wonderful performance the ladies gracefully kept time, tapping tunefully with their slippered feet, the men drumming with their fat fingers. Then the time changed into a marvellous rhythm. Miss Barbara Chillybe, the ancient spinster, seized a Bishop round his portly waist and spun in the Giddy Waltz, the rest followed, all were in motion. The wig fell from one, the false teeth clattered from the mouth of another, a many folded pannier lay upon the floor, beside dainty slippers—all was confusion. The Graceful and the Beautiful were swallowed up in reticulated Motion!

In the midst of the confusion, young Spoilgrave stopped his music, re-folded his melodious Jew's harp in the brown paper, bowed to the confused company, and seizing my hand passed out.

"Volition is Motion," he whispered. "I will to be in my apartments, and we are there." It was strange. The room was like a second-hand store in Wardour Street. Ancient armour hung upon the walls, swords of Damask, Canoe couches of the same, curious Louis le Grand furniture, Venetian glass and belts, with zodiac signs from the far east, above all, the mystic pentacle and the Abracadabra of a remote age.

As I looked at him he seemed to be growing visibly older. He appeared to be turning bad, and a greenish light like the emanations from putrescent fish, played upon his face. He rose and went to a cupboard and took out a small phial. It too was green, and labelled Absinthic. "Drink!" he said, and against my own will, compelled by a stronger will than my own, I drank the fiery draught. "For my part," he said, "I prefer drinking thus." As he spoke he rose in the air, floated recumbent, touched the ceiling with his feet, and hanging head downwards, drank out of the phial with a strange gurgling sound. "I am young again," he said returning to my side.

"Yet you look old."

"Bah!" he remarked, and his wicked eyes twinkled. "What is Youth; what is Age? The Will is eternal. I defy Time. I have seen the Pyramids when they were young. The statute of Mamon has murmured music to me in the dim Long Ago. I change my name; but I live on. Now a Satrap in the Court of Sardinia-palus, later a Rosicrucian, afterwards an Alchemist. I stormed the Bastille—bah, what signifies it? To Will is to Live. But we have business."

With phosphorous he drew the circle and the pentacle. We stood inside, seven lamps burned incense, and the air grew dark. A form grew out of the darkness, balls of fire danced in the air. I grew dizzy and fell.

How long I lay I have no means of telling; but motion at last came to my limbs, and I kicked out like a sturdy swimmer at sea. A voice hissed in my ears—"Keep your feet to yourself you drunken brute!" A sounding blow rang on my ear. I awoke. It was my dear wife. The Ideal blended with the Real. The blow from my Julia's hand was a palpable Fact!

Croaks from Grip's Basket.

GLAD to hear it. The musical young lady who tossed about her head before pitching her voice in the right key is expected to recover.

QUERY.—When is a horse not a horse? When it is turned to grass.

Why were the majority of the voters for the Water Works' Commissioner not like the god of marriage. Because they were not Hime-men.

SEASONABLE NOTE.—The United States' Minister to Spain is a good man to keep cool, seeing he is always an I. Sickie.

Is the new political platform of the Monarchists in France likely to prove untenable because the leader is a CHAMBERD (sham board)?

FALSE.—There is no truth whatever in the report that Mr. EDWARD BLAKE is practising the sword dance and Highland fling in order to regain his popularity with the Scotch portion of the Reform party.

TIPS TO OUR BETTERS.

We don't approve of betting, but it is one of the inevitable evils, and we must content ourselves with doing a little towards its mitigation, seeing that it cannot be eradicated. *Appropos* of the forthcoming meeting of the House of Commons, we are pained to observe many rushing into the broad road of this ruinous habit, in some cases recklessly staking large amounts on the wrong side of questions that are no questions at all. This course will result only in chagrin to all such. Now if any of our friends insist on "putting up," by all means let them risk their money or silk hats, as the case may be, on a *sure thing*, as this will rob the practice of some of its more repulsive features, as well as obviate much after pain.

We can recommend the following propositions as comparatively safe on the part of the affirmative:

(1). Hon. Mr. MACKENZIE will, directly or indirectly, privately or publicly, make some reference to the Pacific Scandal on the 23rd of October inst.

(2). *The Globe* will, on the 22nd instant, say something touching the duty of the hour.

(3). Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD will refrain from repeating his statement about his hands.

(4). Hon. Mr. BLAKE will (if he speaks at any length), make allusion to "statutes in such cases made and provided"—(though probably not in a set phrase).

(5). Mr. JAMES BEATY, M.P., will maintain a dignified and contemptuous silence during the debate.

(6). Hon. Mr. HUNTINGTON will be in his place in Parliament if nothing prevents.

(7). If Black Rod interferes there will be cries of "Order!" and "Privilege!"

(8). The Speech from the Throne will *not* be carried by acclamation.

(9). If a test vote is taken, the Party that can count the most noses will be in the majority.

We would particularly advise that *no* wager be offered on the question as to what the Right Hon. the Premier will do. It is absolutely unsafe.

"THE CURSE OF CANADA."

A CORONER'S JURY the other day returned a verdict of "Death from natural causes," in the case of a person whose demise had been occasioned directly by whiskey. This is the first formal recognition of king alcohol by any of the Great Powers.

How to grow corns. Wear boots two sizes too small.

WHAT vegetable is given to strong drink? The Sea Kale (seek ale) of course.

BARNUM now proposes to send the pioneer balloon across the Atlantic. If he can make it convenient to go personally on the trip, there need be no fear of the gas giving out.

Mrs. GRUMPTON says she makes her daughters all lace tightly, because then they will be always staid (stayed). Pardon, Mrs. G., but for the same reason they will always move in a coarse set (corset).