



# The DAY of the DUEL

A CANCELLED ACCOUNT.



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It was well toward the end of the second act. The tension of the stage situation having been lightened by a touch of comedy, there was a general relaxation in the close attention of the audience. Fans began to wave and silks to rustle, while here and there a head was turned aside toward this or that part of the house.

Clemence Hoyt leaned back in her chair in the right stage box and whispered to her escort, Benjamin Price. He glanced at her and bent nearer to hear her remark.

"I said that there is a gentleman in the next box who is making himself unbearable."

Price looked around quickly. In the adjoining raised space sat a young man in conventional dress who returned his stare in a manner that he easily interpreted as being highly offensive.

"Do you say that he has been annoying you?" he asked his companion.

"Since he came in he has not ceased to do as he is doing now. He is attracting notice by his behavior. It is most embarrassing."

Price turned about again and frowned angrily at the person thus complained of. The young man did not cease to use his eyes to best advantage. In a sudden gesture, as the act was brought to a close and scattering applause came from the house, Price leaned far over the intervening railing and struck the offending gentleman across the cheek with his open hand.

The object of this attack sat motionless in his chair a moment, his face showing white, save where the blow had left its mark in red. Few persons had witnessed the incident, for in that second the climax had claimed renewed interest. The young man rose slowly and made his way out of the box. A moment later he appeared in the doorway of the one in which Price was seated.

"May I see you a moment, sir?" he said.

Price, in spite of the agitation of Clemence, met him at the threshold and they continued in low tones.

"Sir," said the stranger indignantly, "you have grossly and publicly insulted me. May I know the reason?"

"Certainly, sir," returned Price. "The young lady with whom I am seated complained of your persistence in staring at her. You would not obey my signal to desist and I took the only course open to me."

"I protest," said the other with dignity and warmth, "that I was entirely free from any desire to convey offence. You must be sensible, sir, that your companion is most charming. I am Lieutenant Green, of the British service. I have been in New York but a few days. As a stranger I am, perhaps, too curious, a fact which at times may seem to lead me beyond a reserved attitude when persons or things attract me. I assure you again that my persistence, as you say, was nothing more than an involuntary tribute to the remarkable beauty of the young lady."

It was a singular speech, yet one that reflected credit upon its author, whose youth, direct address and manly bearing removed all traces of weakness from his words. Price recognized a frank and generous personality and accepted the apology in the spirit which dictated it. He extended a hand impulsively.

## Lieutenant's Apology.

"I hope you will forgive me for my hot temper," he said. "Your explanation has been more than satisfactory. I am sincerely sorry that, as a stranger, you should have been subjected to such unpleasantness and doubly sorry that I should have been its agent. I am Benjamin Price, of — Vesey street. If you are prolonging your stay I trust you will honor me with a visit."

Green returned the handclasp in friendly manner and after an exchange of bows the two parted. Clemence, who had followed their movements, asked Price anxiously what had been said. He described the lieutenant's apology and assured her, to her great relief, that the affair had been amicably arranged. The occupant of the neighboring box carefully refrained from glancing in their direction during the rest of the performance.

Two months later Green had joined his regiment in Quebec. He found himself, as a newcomer, slightly out of it among his brother officers and set himself to remove the cause. In this he quickly discovered that one of the young men with whom he was thrown, Captain Wilson, nourished animosity against him. It was an instinctive clash of opposing natures, and though Green did nothing to aggravate the difference he found himself drawn more and more into a position of open antagonism to Wilson. The trouble came to a head one morning at breakfast. A trifling argument had set the two at odds.

"I trust that if occasion requires you will be able to display more spirit than you did recently in New York," was the remark of Wilson that silenced the mess table.

Green, always pacific, made no reply.

"What do you mean, Wilson?" asked one of the others.

"Why, a friend of mine in New York writes me of a most extraordinary incident. Lieutenant Green, as it appears, was attending a public performance at a theatre. He was in a box, prominently placed before all, when a young blood rose and slapped him across the face. It was supposed by those who saw what happened that reparation would be had in some form. On the contrary, as I am informed, there was no further action in the matter."

The officers of the mess, none of whom had been friendly with Green since his arrival, broke into exclamations of indignation.

"Is this true, Green?" asked Craig, the one who had spoken before.

"It is true, in part," returned Green. "But it con-

cerns no one except myself. The gentleman apologized."

"Let me tell you, sir," said Wilson, sharply, "that under the code of honor there is no possible apology for a blow and no possible satisfaction short of a meeting on the field. You seem to be singularly ill informed concerning a matter which a gentleman must feel and know. As to your extraordinary statement that it concerns yourself alone, allow me to point out that you fail to perceive your responsibility to the service and to the regiment. If I must descend to elements, sir, our traditions hold that you have brought contempt upon all who are associated with you by such conduct."

Green's temper was not proof against the domineer-

planation was afforded his second. The lieutenant's word was that a blow had passed and that he was entitled to satisfaction. Before leaving his home early in the morning three days later for the scene of the meeting Price wrote out the circumstances and added an affectionate farewell to the beautiful woman whose marriage to him was set for a time but a matter of hours distant. Then, with his second, he embarked in a small boat upon the Hudson.

The ground chosen was near Hoboken. According to the terms fixed by Price the weapons were duelling pistols, at fifteen paces, each to fire at the word. The young New Yorker arrived to find his challenger already awaiting him, and it was with some curiosity that he regarded the man he had not seen since exchanging apologies with him months before. Green was pale and rather nervous. He conversed in a low voice with his second, Johnson, a retired British officer, apparently giving him final instructions. He avoided Price's glance. Price himself was cool but grave. He did not respond to a light tone of comment assumed by his second in an attempt to relieve the situation.

The distance was paced off carefully and the pistols, brought by Price, were loaded and handed to

the principals. As the two men faced each other Green looked his opponent in the face for the first time. He flushed, but did not flinch. His belief in the rule of conduct so forcibly pointed out to him was complete, and whatever natural feeling of repugnance he might have had in thus reviving a forgiven injury was overcome by the conviction that his move was absolutely necessary to reinstate himself as a gentleman.

The sun was high in the sky when the men took their positions. They were placed so that neither had the advantage as to light. Their weapons were held downward at their sides, not to be raised until the final word.

"Are you ready?" asked Price's second.

They repeated the word simultaneously.

"One, two, three, fire!"

The two arms came up swiftly to a level and the pistols spoke as one. Without a word or gesture Price fell forward on his knees and then sideways to the ground. The bullet had passed through his heart. Green was untouched. The British officer rowed directly down the river into the bay, where he caught a vessel bound for Plymouth. The seconds fled in the remaining boat. Price's body was not discovered until late in the afternoon. On a paper pinned to his breast was the legend:—

"This is Benjamin Price, of No. — Vesey st., New York. Take care of him."

Three years had passed. Clemence Hoyt had not married. After the death of her intended husband almost on their wedding day she had passed a year in retirement, from which she emerged thin and pale, but insatiably eager for company, gayety and a life crowded with color, light and movement. She was extremely striking in her beauty, which had gained in fire and interest. She became the leader of a dashing set and was always to be found where the rout was most brilliant. Her friends marvelled, but those who knew her best could look at times beneath the careless, flighty manner she affected and could find there a need for distraction that was almost desperate in its intensity. Some thought her shallow, but there were a few who could understand the depth of her feeling.

During the winter several visitors from overseas were introduced into the circle where Clemence moved. One of these was Captain Tobias Wilson, lately stationed at Quebec. His dashing ways and handsome appearance won him popularity and he was in demand for the social affairs of the season. Thrown much with Clemence, his admiration for the girl soon became pronounced. Nor did she repulse his advances. It began to be rumored that an engagement was to be expected, though in truth the affair had not progressed to that point. Captain Wilson never heard the name of Benjamin Price, since it was tacitly omitted by those who knew the story.

Clemence was one of a group one evening when the gallant captain, recounting adventures in the Canadas, mentioned the name of Lieutenant Green in a merely incidental and rather slighting connection. She made no comment at the time, but later, when they were alone in a corner of the drawing room, she checked a softer strain of conversation with which he ventured to address her by recalling Green.

"There was a Lieutenant Green here in New York not long ago," she said, as if trying to recollect.

"Ah, you heard of him then," returned the Captain.

"The cub turned out fairly well; he's in India now, I believe. I suppose you remember the duel in which he figured."

She nodded, with compressed lips.

"Now here's an odd thing about that duel," he went on, seeing an opportunity to bring himself forward in a dominant and essentially masculine rôle.

"Green was the victor, you know, when he came to

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ing tone.

"I accept no dictation in my personal affairs," he returned, hotly. "I must insist upon being allowed to arrange my private relations as I see fit."

Craig intervened.

"Kindly refrain from raising your voice, sir," he said. "You will not be permitted to quarrel with Captain Wilson, even should you be so disposed."

"Quarrel with me," sneered Wilson. "He has not the right. I tell you gentlemen, Lieutenant Green has put a reproach upon all of us and I cannot bring myself to have further dealings with one who has so unfortunately conducted himself. I think you will bear me out that until he removes the stain under which he rests he is not entitled to the consideration due a fellow officer of untainted honor."

The universal support which Wilson's words received showed Green how isolated was his position. He cast forward into what his life would be with these men under the system of ostracism they had prepared for him and he could not bring himself to face it. He would be little better than a pariah, despised, avoided, continually reminded of his cowardice.

"I hope there is no one here who thinks so ill of me that he will believe I avoided an encounter through fear of it," he said. "If the incident ended at the theatre it was because I believed myself the first, if unwitting, offender. Since I seem to have committed a breach of the code I stand willing to do anything you may suggest to prove that the fact was through ignorance of its demands."

"The only way to establish it is to return and fight the man who struck you," said Wilson, and he was borne out by the others.

"Then if that is the way that is what I shall do," said Green. "I plead but one thing. I am no shot and I must have time to bring my pistol practice up to a favorable standard."

"That is entirely reasonable," said Craig. And there the arrangement rested.

During the next three weeks Green practised with duelling arms for five hours each day. While he had had no previous experience with shooting, he applied himself so assiduously to this employment that by the time he could obtain passage on a vessel bound for New York he was able to hit a silver dollar at ten paces, nine shots out of ten.

Benjamin Price had nearly forgotten the affair with the British officer in the old Park Theatre. His engagement to Clemence Hoyt had been announced and the wedding was but a week distant. It was a rude shock that came to him through the medium of a letter the day after Green landed in New York for the second time.

"Sir—You will recall that on a recent occasion you went so far as to offer me personal violence. There is no need to inform you that but one honorable method of making amends is open to you. Mr. Johnson, a friend of mine, will call upon any one you may designate to act for you. Your obedient servant,

"TERHUNE GREEN,

"Lieutenant, R. M., —th Regt."

Price was astounded. He could scarcely believe that the communication actually came from Green or that it was not some prank of an acquaintance. Running back over the incident he remembered that it had been satisfactorily adjusted and that there had been no suggestion of remaining ill will. However, mysterious as it was, the note called for response and he asked a friend to investigate it and act for him if it was really what it purported to be. The friend returned with the information that the writer of the note was indeed Green, that he was irreconcilable and that Price must fight or be branded a poltroon.

Sadly Adjusted Himself.

The young man adjusted himself sadly to the stern demand that had come so like an ominous flash of lightning. He had no thought to evade it. Such a proceeding would have been repugnant alike to his own convictions and the feeling of the persons with whom he was associated. The grim wantonness of fate that had dug up this dead quarrel and thrust it so inopportunely upon him found him without anger but ready for the issue. One thing he carefully guarded against was that any word of the impending duel should reach the ears of Clemence Hoyt. Her he desired to protect as long as it lay in his power. Should the outcome be unfortunate for himself he knew that he could not keep from her the knowledge that she herself had been the indirect cause of the combat.

As to the reason for the strange reawakening of Green's tenderness as to his honor, when in the spur and heat of the affront he had freely forgiven the blow, the problem was too much for him. No one

planation was afforded his second. The lieutenant's word was that a blow had passed and that he was entitled to satisfaction. Before leaving his home early in the morning three days later for the scene of the meeting Price wrote out the circumstances and added an affectionate farewell to the beautiful woman whose marriage to him was set for a time but a matter of hours distant. Then, with his second, he embarked in a small boat upon the Hudson.

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Quebec. Actually, he had suffered mortal insult at the hands of this man Price and had not taken it up. It came to our ears and we, that is I, insisted that he return and wipe out his disgrace. Gad, the fellow had to do it, and he did."

She looked at him with wide eyes.

"I—I don't think I understand," she said faintly.

"Why, you know, Green could never have held up his head again if he had let that pass—a slur upon the whole service. He'd actually shaken hands and apologized, after Price struck him. Quite impossible. As it was, I couldn't induce him to take it up again until I showed him he'd be barred by every one if he didn't."

"Then you made him come back and fight?"

"I may say it was I. A friend of mine here. Johnson, saw the affair. It was in a theatre, I think. He wrote me about it and I put it squarely to Green. I never liked the man and I had practically to force him to do his duty. Why?"

But she was gone. With a little choking cry she had risen quickly and swept out into the hall. He did not see her again until she was stepping into her waiting carriage.

It was late in the evening when she was driven up to the Price house. A wondering servant admitted her.

"Is Mr. Stephen Price at home?"

"Yes, madam, but he is ill."

"I must see him."

The servant took her name and returned to usher her to an inner room. On the bed, propped up on pillows, was Stephen Price, brother of Benjamin, and at one time lessee of the Drury Lane Theatre, London. He greeted her kindly, but with a face drawn and lined with pain.

"Stephen," she began immediately, with flaming eyes and voice that trembled, "the man who murdered your brother is in town."

With a spasmodic effort he thrust himself to a sitting posture.

"Green?" he cried.

"No, but the man who sent Green back to retract his apology, the fiend who drove him to it. He is here. I have been talking with him. And he is boasting of it, Stephen."

"Where is he staying?" asked Price, with lowered brows.

"At the Washington Hotel."

She repeated the conversation she had had with Wilson and the way in which he was connected with the death of Benjamin Price. When she left him they had come to an understanding.

A Strange Figure.

It was a strange figure that stumped into the Washington Hotel next morning, a middle aged man, with stooped shoulders and feet swathed in flannel, covered by a pair of enormous moccasins. Hobbled along by the aid of a cane, he demanded to be taken to Captain Wilson's room and followed a servant up stairs with difficulty. On receiving response to his knock he flung open the door. Wilson was standing near the threshold, a handsome and well-groomed figure.

"Are you Captain Wilson?" asked Price, abruptly.

"That is my name, sir."

"Then, sir, my name is Stephen Price, the brother of Benjamin. You see, sir, I can scarcely put one foot before the other. I am afflicted with the gout. My object in coming here is to insult you. Shall I have to knock you down or will you consider that I have said enough?"

"Sir," said the Captain, with a smile, "I shall consider what you have said quite sufficient and shall act accordingly. You shall hear from me."

Price left on his painful way home without waste of words. Clemence Hoyt met him in her carriage outside the hotel.

It was on just such a morning as had witnessed the death of Benjamin Price that his elder brother, a sombre, pain-racked cripple, took boat at the Battery, accompanied by his second, bearing the same set of duelling pistols that had been used in the previous combat. The second laid the course for Bedloe's Island, and when they landed they found the opposing party in possession. Johnson, the grim old retired officer, was again the second for the challenger. Wilson was brisk and confident and looked upon his adversary with a pitying expression as the latter moved slowly to his position, supported on the arm of his second.

Stephen had named ten feet as the distance. Once placed he balanced himself on his bandages and flung off his coat. With his long gray hair blown in awkward strands, his tense, hollowed face, scowling brows and his clumsy feet, he presented a spectacle at once ludicrous and terrifying. His eye held the steady glow of deadly resolve, and even Wilson as he faced his enemy with a smile, trim, active, alert, felt the chill of that concentrated and invincible hatred.

Price moved his weapon about with suppleness, practised wrist a moment and then fixed his gaze unwinkingly upon the Captain.

"Are you ready, gentlemen?"

"Ready," said Stephen.

"Ready" came from Wilson.

"One, two, three, fire!"

The sharp explosion of Wilson's weapon rang close upon the word, but Price did not waver. As the cloud of smoke broke he sighted through it and pulled the trigger. Wilson staggered, raised both hands to his head and fell forward. When the seconds reached him he was dead, with a bullet through his brain. While they were still bending over him Price drew a large handkerchief from his pocket, and, with the smoking pistol still in his hand, waved it toward the Manhattan shore. In the bright sunlight flooding across the water a figure in white stood near the verge. The brass of a telescope flashed sharply as the figure lowered it.

