

THE VISION OF CEPHORE BEDORE

By CHARLES C. JENKINS

THE idea flitted into Cephore Bedore's wicked old head as he lay blinking from under the coverlet at the squares of yellow the late afternoon sun cast through the window upon the bed-room carpet. Being only an idea—and a wild one at that—it might have flitted out again had Cephore been of the common type and given to letting difficulties divert him from his desires. But the old habitant had faced and overcome many seeming impossibilities in his day and he was not to be balked.

The more old Cephore turned the Idea over for mental inspection the better he liked it. His bony and knotted right hand felt shakily under his pillow till the fingers came in contact with a small, chilly object. He chuckled to himself, then laughed aloud.

Boisterous merriment caused him to twist indistinctly and his acute rheumatics stabbed him with the stab of white-hot iron in a knee-joint and at a shoulder-blade, which made him groan almost as loudly as he had cackled previously.

Now ideas are not born of barren minds. Incident or spoken word must first sow the suggestion from which they sprout to bring forth grain or tares, as the case may be. Bedore's fertile brain was in a most receptive mood when Patrick Flannagan called, having nothing more acceptable to occupy it just then than the bitter prospect of spending the balance of his days in bed between spasms of twitchings and dull, grinding aches.

Flannagan had not called on Bedore personally. He knew better. But the invalid had caught snatches of the conversation the big Irish neighbour held with his wife in the front room just beyond the partly opened door. Silent rage, which at first held sway at his impotency to order Flannagan from his roof or beat him therefrom with a poker if need be, gave way to craftier reflection. Hence the Idea and the disastrous guffaw.

When the visitor had departed, Cephore called to his wife. He addressed her in Pain Court French:

"Marie, that pig of a Flannagan was here just now?"

"He was," the madame answered, patiently. "He called to ask for your health."

"My health!" sneered the caustic old man. "Much better to say he wished to know how soon Cephore would die, and to know if when Cephore died you would sell to him Cephore's share in the Gay Paree."

"He did mention the boat," admitted Madame Bedore, "but it was to know if we would do anything to get you to sell to him, now that you cannot use it any more."

"**T**HE Irish pig!" exploded Cephore, at the risk of again disturbing his slumbering rheumatics. "But he shall not have the Gay Paree if Cephore die or Cephore live, you hear! It will be my last wish and you must obey."

"Also," he inquired more quietly, "there was some mention of that scamp of a son of his who would marry our Josephine?"

"Yes, Monsieur Flannagan did say something about Tom telling him he'd like to burn the old boat for all the trouble it has caused between us. But he laughed when he said it, Cephore."

"You hear! You hear!" cried the outraged invalid. "He said he would burn the Gay Paree. The rascal, the scamp, the villain! Marie, you call Josephine to me!"

Madame Bedore departed to return almost immediately with a lithe, dark-eyed girl of somewhere about nineteen summers, who carried herself with that grace which goes with city convent education. Obviously, she dreaded the coming interview.

"Josephine," Cephore addressed her,

"have you been keeping company with that young scamp of a Flannagan lately?"

"I have met him at parties sometimes and at the Mass he has been when I have been," she answered, candidly.

"You must have nothing to do with him," commanded her father.

"I have heard you say so before, father."

"I forbid you to marry him," continued the ruthless old man.

"If you marry him when I am gone, I will leave you nothing but my curse, you hear! I have so said in my will."

"Oh, father, how can you speak so!" reproved the girl. "The Padre would be angry if he heard you."

"That is because the Padre does not know it all," snapped Cephore. "Young Flannagan is a pig like his drunken father."

"He has always been a gentleman to me," argued the daughter, with some spirit, "and he does not drink."

"He is a pig," persisted her father. "Furthermore, he is a criminal and a villain, for did he not say he would burn the Gay Paree for spite?"

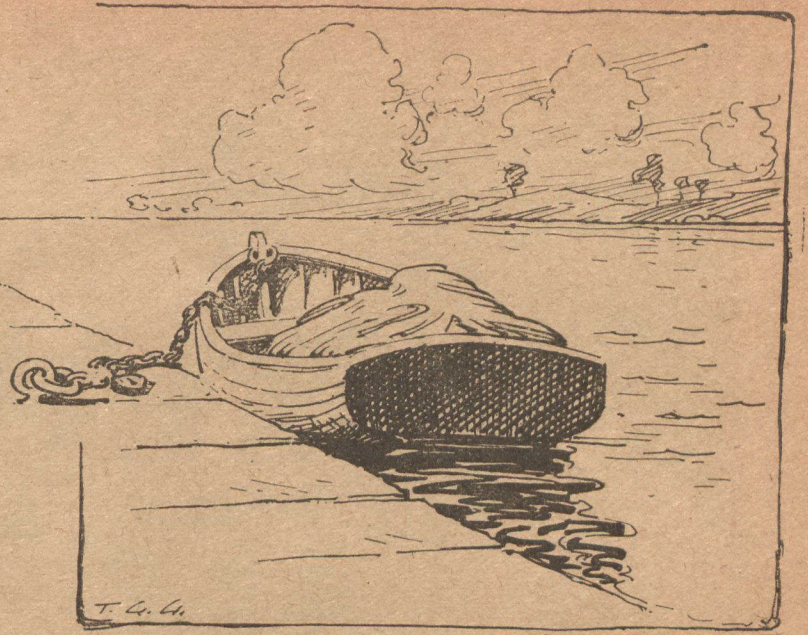
"I do not believe it," stoutly protested Josephine.

"Ask your mother," sneered Cephore, and as Josephine turned she read a mute affirmation in her mother's face.

"Go!" triumphantly cried the old man. "It is enough you should know what a dark rascal he is, and that your father forbids you to meet him. He will burn the Gay Paree if the chance comes to him, you hear!"

The girl was on the verge of tears, and it was with an effort she hid from her stern parent her distress. Without a word she followed her mother from the room. A smile of satisfaction at the successful progress of his plans momentarily rippled over old Cephore's face as he fondled the metallic object beneath his pillow.

It was an odd feud that set up the barrier between



Illustrated by T. G. Greene

the Bedores and the Flannagans. It had wholly to do with the big fish yawl, Gay Paree, in the first place.

The Flannagans lived across the river. The elder Flannagan was Flannagan in penchant as well as name. The only thing he liked better than a joke was a scrap. Patrick Flannagan also was partial to Scotch whiskey, but despite periodical sprees, he had prospered and reared and educated a family of five daughters and a son, of whom Tom Flannagan was the oldest.

THERE were but three of the Bedores, Cephore, his wife, and their daughter, Josephine. Cephore had made his start in life as a riverman and invested his savings in land. He became by dint of circumstances a well-to-do farmer, but at heart was still a freshwater rover, and, so soon as he could afford it, he went back to his first love, the river. For some years now he had leased his farm, retaining only the house and the garden adjoining, giving over all his time to his nets in Lake St. Clair and his carp ponds at Mitchell's Bay.

In the old days, Pat Flannagan and Cephore Bedore were neighbourly and, in fact, partners. It was not that they had anything particular in common in the way of cardinal virtues, but they happened to be of mutual use to one another at a stage of development when neighbourly co-operation was a prime necessity.

The two farmers had gone into the investment in the fish yawl, Gay Paree, on shares, as they did at first on their fishing enterprises down on the lake. Bedore built the shell himself, while Flannagan paid for the engine. Though now rather an old craft as powerboats go, she was still the staunchest and speediest yawl on the river, clinker built, with keel, stem and samson-post from a white oak monarch Cephore had picked and felled himself.

To Flannagan, the Gay Paree was merely a good investment for getting out to the nets in a hurry and hauling the catch to Tilbury or Chatham. To Bedore, she was everything in life worth prizing. She was his one hobby and his joy forever. Seated by her droning engine while she swished over the water like a skimming bird with a white purl of foam at her bow meant Cephore's happiest moments. No one else might regulate her carburetor, none other dare guide her wheel.

Meanwhile, across the river, Old Romance had been weaving a golden web. Tom Flannagan cast sheep's eyes at Josephine Bedore. They were merry blue eyes and Josephine liked them. Tom inherited all the purposefulness of his sire with considerable more reasonableness of disposition thrown in. Josephine inherited beauties of mind and feature that were not her father's. Old Cephore at heart was very proud of the girl, but took care never to tell her so.



The cold grey dawn of the morning after.