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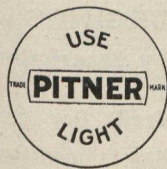
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PROF. KEON, 136 O'Connor Street
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In answering advertisements mention Canadian Courier

The Expiation of Hilary

(Continued from page 15)

of the labouring type, though here and there a better dressed customer could be seen. Hilary approached the counter between two lots of gossiping drinkers and leaned over towards the barmaid, a faded brunette with the hard eyes of a woman who has been seeing the worse side of life all her days. “Captain Jack here?” he asked in a confidential whisper.

“He ain’t; haven’t seen him to-day,” was the reply.

“I must see him to-night, it’s important.”

“Well, he may be in later, it’s early yet,” and she glanced at the clock, which pointed to half-past ten.

“But where is he lodging at present?”

The woman said nothing, surveying him with an unfriendly look.

“He and I have got a little job on,” continued Hilary. “He’ll be mad if he misses me. I’ve important information for him.”

“You ain’t one of his lot.”

“You don’t know everything. Come, give us the tip,” and he showed her half a sovereign.

“If you won’t say I told you.”

Hilary swore solemnly, and the coin changed hands.

“He’s got a room in Martin’s Buildings under the name of ‘Spender’; all his pals know that.”

“I’m a very new pal,” explained Hilary.

Outside he found a small boy who, bribed with a sixpence, led him to the principal entrance of a huge residential block of cheap flats close by, which were Martin’s Buildings.

“D’you know a chap named Spender who lives here?” asked Hilary, “a big, dark man, rather a toff?”

“Yer means Captain Jack?” said the boy, a wizened ragamuffin, who might be any age between ten and fifteen.

Hilary gave him the sixpence. “Find out if he’s in,” he commanded, “quietly, mind, and you’ll have another.”

The boy dived into the rabbit warren and shortly returned. Captain Jack was not in his room, and had not been seen that evening.

Hilary thought furiously. He was on the track, it was hereabouts that Captain Jack was to be found, but where was the man? Was he hiding in a different part of London? It might be so, in which case he had no hope of running him to earth.

“Youngster,” he said to the boy, “it’ll be half a crown in your pocket if you’ll find me Captain Jack within the next hour.”

“I’m on, guv’nor,” was the joyous response, “but,” the boy added, his face falling, “e mayn’t come any’where ’ere to-night. ’E’s got a swell address in the West End, ’e don’t live ’ere reg’lar.”

It was with little real hope in his heart that Hilary returned to the Swan’s Head and ordered whiskey and soda. He could do nothing except pray Captain Jack would turn up in this haunt of his. The crowd was thicker round the counter, and a smell of stale beer and bad tobacco pervaded the atmosphere. He sat apart, and, wrapped in his gloomy thoughts, hardly noticed the flight of time. He was aroused from his abstraction by a tug at his coat sleeve. “Guv’nor,” whispered a familiar voice in accents of triumph, “I’ll trouble yer fer that ‘alf-crown.”

“Where is he?” asked Hilary, hardly believing the news true.

“At the King William, standin’ drinks in the private bar like a bloomin’ lord.”

In a second Hilary was on his feet following his diminutive guide. His

pulse throbbed, the blood sang in his veins, it was with an effort he controlled himself and listened to the boy’s tale of how Captain Jack had driven up to the King William in a cab a few minutes before. He was in the bar parlour at the back of the house, the resort of the landlord and a few intimate friends.

The King William turned out to be a rather more pretentious house than the Swan’s Head; there was an air of flashy gentility about the few men and women who were drinking at the bar. With a confident step the boy led Hilary towards a door facing the entrance, and held out a hand for his reward.

Hilary produced the coin, saying, “Let’s see him first.”

He did not intend immediately to show himself, but the boy jerked the door open forthwith. He had earned his money. Captain Jack stood on the hearthrug, a glass of spirits in his hand, listening to an elderly man who was volubly holding forth on some subject or other; he looked at the door as it opened, and his eyes met Hilary’s. The latter entered. Fate had so far been kind, but he recognized the real difficulty of the quest had now commenced.

It needed but a glance at the room and the company in it to recognize the strength of his adversary’s position: Captain Jack was among friends, a villainous-looking quartette. One was old, it is true, but three were sturdy young ruffians. To accuse the thief would be at the risk of his life; he must temporise.

Captain Jack did not change countenance, and he left Hilary to speak first. The latter, finding looks of sour suspicion levelled at him by everyone, assumed a confidence he was far from feeling. “I hope I don’t intrude, gentlemen,” he began, “but my friend here, the Captain, left me in the lurch earlier this evening.” He turned to the pseudo-detective. “Halves, partner,” he demanded, with a laugh.

“I don’t know you,” replied Captain Jack, favouring Hilary with a his glass.

“He’s been telling you, hasn’t he, that he pulled off a good thing to-day?” queried Hilary, addressing the rest; and, though no one answered him, he guessed instinctively by their manner that he was on the right tack. “He has, it’s so good he daren’t go into details, but I was his partner, and I want my share.”

“Then you’ll have to want it,” the captain was goaded into retorting.

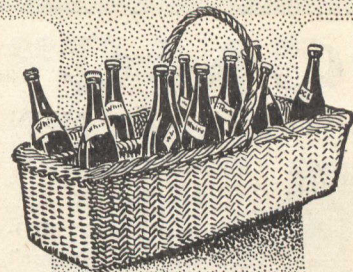
“Will you fight me for it?” challenged Hilary.

The prospect of a fight placated the company. They now surveyed Hilary with distinct friendliness. Some random oaths were uttered, and someone shouted for more drink, but Captain Jack quelled the noise with a wave of his hand.

“Mr. Parker,” he said seriously, “be advised and go quietly, or it’ll be the worse for you.”

Without hesitation Hilary picked up an empty glass off the table and flung it at him. His aim was true; it struck the Captain on the mouth, cutting his lips and sending him reeling back, while the blood spouted from his face.

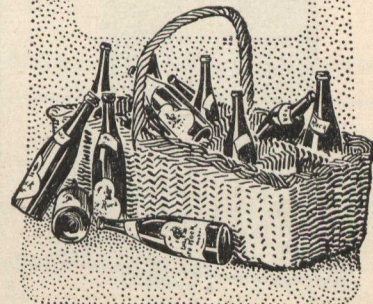
Instantly there was an uproar. Everyone was on his feet, and the air was full of clamour, when suddenly the lights went out, and the room was plunged in darkness. Hilary made for the door, and straightway collided with another man. They crashed to the floor together, Hilary by accident on top. A fierce oath from the man beneath



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night’s feast.”

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