

## A Prince of Sinners

By E. Phillips Oppenheim

Author of "The Traitors," "The Survivor," "A Millionaire of Yesterday," Etc.

### CHAPTER VI.

#### The Man Who Went to Hell

The Hon. Sydney Chester Molyneux stood with his cue in one hand, and an open telegram in the other, in the billiard-room at Eaton. He was visibly annoyed.

"Beastly hard luck," he declared. "Parliament is a shocking grind any way. It isn't that one ever does anything, you know, but one wastes such a lot of time when one might have been doing something worth while."

"Do repeat that, Sydney," Lady Caroom begged, laying down her novel for a moment. "It really sounds as though it ought to mean something."

"I couldn't," he admitted. "I wish to cultivate a reputation for originality, and my first object is to forget everything I have said directly I have said it, in case I should repeat myself."

"A short memory," Arranmore remarked, "is a politician's most valuable possession, isn't it?"

"No memory at all is better," Molyneux answered.

"And your telegram?" Lady Caroom asked.

"Is from my indefatigable uncle," Molyneux groaned. "He insists upon it that I interest myself in the election here, which means that I must go in tomorrow and call upon Rochester."

"The younger girl looked up from her chair, and laughed softly.

"You will have to speak for him," she said. "How interesting! We will all come in and hear you."

Molyneux missed an easy cannon, and laid down his cue with an aggravated air.

"It is all very well for you," he remarked dismally, "but it is a horrible grind for me. I have just succeeded in forgetting all that we did last session, and our programme for next. Now I've got to wade through it all. I wonder why on earth Providence selected for me an uncle who thinks it worth while to be a Cabinet Minister."

Sybil Caroom shrugged her shoulders.

"I wonder why on earth," she remarked, "any constituency thinks it worth while to be represented by such a politician as you. How did you get in, Sydney?"

"Don't know," he answered. "I was on the right side, and I talked the usual sort."

"For myself," she said, "I like a politician who is in earnest. They are more amusing, and more impressive in every way. Who was the young man you spoke to in that little place, where we had tea?" she asked her host.

"His name is Kingston Brooks," Arranmore answered. "He is the agent for Henslow, the Radical candidate."

"Well, I liked him," she said. "If I had a vote I would let him convert me to Radicalism. I am sure that he could do it."

"He shall try—if you like," Arranmore remarked. "I am going to ask him to shoot one day."

"I am delighted to hear it," the girl answered. "I think he would be a wholesome change. You are all too flippant here."

The door opened. Mr. Hennibul, K.C., inserted his head and shoulders.

"I have been to look at Arranmore's golf-links," he remarked. "They are quite decent. Will some one come and play a round?"

"I will come," Sybil declared, putting down her book.

"And I," Molyneux joined in. "Hennibul can play our best ball."

Lady Caroom and her host were left alone. He came over to her side.

"What can I do to entertain your ladyship?" he asked, lightly. "Will you play billiards, walk or drive? There is an hour before lunch which must be charmed away."

"I am not energetic," she declared. "I ought to walk for the sake of my figure. I'm getting shockingly stout. Marie made me promise to walk a mile today. But I'm feeling deliciously lazy."

"Embonpoint is the fashion," he remarked, "and you are inches short of even that yet. Come and sit in the study while I write some letters."

She held out her hands.

"Pull me up, then! I am much too comfortable to move unaided."

She sprang to her feet. Lightly enough, and for a moment he kept her hands, which rested willingly enough in his. They looked at one another in silence. Then she laughed.

"My dear Arranmore," she protested. "I am not made up half carefully enough to stand such a critical survey by daylight. Your north windows are too terrible."

"Not to you, dear lady," he answered, smiling. "I was wondering whether it was possible that you could be forty-one."

"You brute," she exclaimed, with uplifted eyebrows. "How dare you? Forty if you like—for as long as you like. Forty is the fashionable age, but one year over that is fatal. Don't you know that now-a-days a woman goes straight from forty to sixty?"

It is such a delicious long rest. And besides, it gives a woman an object in life, which she has probably been groping about for all her days. One is never bored after forty."

"And the object?"

"To keep young, of course. There's

scope for any amount of ingenuity. Since that dear man in Paris has hit upon the real secret of enamelling, we are thinking of extending the limit to sixty-five. Lily Costigan is seventy-one, you know, and she told me only last week that Mat Harlowe—you know Harlowe, he's rather a nice boy in the Guards—had asked her to run away with him. She's known him three months, and he's seen her at least three times by daylight. She's delighted about it."

"And is she going?" Arranmore asked.

"Well, I'm not sure that she'd care to risk that," Lady Caroom answered, thoughtfully. "She told him she'd think about it, and, meanwhile, he's just as devoted as ever."

They crossed the great stone hall together—the hall which, with its wonderful pillars and carved dome,

marked the show-house of the county. Arranmore's study was a small octagonal room leading out from the library. A fire of cedar logs was burning in an open grate, and he wheeled up an easy-chair for her close to his writing table.

"I wonder," she remarked, thoughtfully, "what you think of Syd Molyneux?"

"Is there anything to be thought about him?" he answered, lighting a cigarette.

"He's rather that way, isn't he?" she assented. "I mean for Sybil, you know."

"I should let Sybil decide," he answered.

"She probably will," Lady Caroom said. "Still, she's horribly bored at having to be dragged about to places, you know, and that sort of thing just because she isn't married, and she likes Syd all right. He's no fool!"

"I suppose not," Arranmore answered. "He's of a type, you know, which has sprung up during my absence from civilization. You want to get used to it to appreciate it properly. I don't think he's good enough for Sybil."

Lady Caroom sighed.

"Sybil's a dear girl," she said, "although she's a terrible nuisance to me. I shouldn't be at all surprised either if she developed views. I wish you were a marrying man, Arranmore. I used to think of you myself once, but you would be too good for me now. You are exactly the right age for Sybil."

Arranmore smiled. He had quite forgotten his letters. Lady Caroom always amused him so well.

"She is very like what you were at her age," he remarked. "What a pity it was that I was such a poverty-stricken beggar in those days. I am sure that I should have married you."

"Now I am beginning to like you," she declared, settling down more comfortably in her chair. "If you can keep up like that we shall be getting positively sentimental presently, and if there's anything I adore in this world—especially before luncheon—it is sentiment. Do you remember we used to wait together, Arranmore?"

"You gave me a glove one night," he said. "I have it still."

"And you pressed my hand—and it was in the Setons' conservatory—how bold you were."

"And the next day," he declared, in aggrieved tone, "I heard that you were engaged to Caroom. You treated me shamefully."

"These reminiscences," she declared, "are really sweet, but you are most ungrateful. I was really almost too kind to you. They were all fearfully anxious to get me married, because Dumesnil always used to say that my complexion would give out in a year or two, and I wasted no end of time upon you, who were perfectly hopeless as a husband. After all, though, I believe I paid. It used to annoy Caroom so much, and I believe, he proposed to me to get rid of you."

"I am not energetic," she declared. "I ought to walk for the sake of my figure. I'm getting shockingly stout. Marie made me promise to walk a mile today. But I'm feeling deliciously lazy."

"Upon my word," she declared, "I have an idea. It is the most charming and flattering thing, and it never occurred to me before. After all, it was not eccentricity which caused you to throw up your work at the Bar—and disappear. It was your hopeless devotion to me. Don't disappoint me now by denying it. Please don't!"

"And has it taken you all these years to find it out?"

"I was shockingly obtuse," she murmured. "The thing came to me just now as a revelation. Poor, dear man, how you must have suffered. This puts us on a different footing altogether, doesn't it?"

"Altogether," he admitted.

"And," she continued, eyeing him now with a sudden nervousness, "emboldens me to ask you a question which I have been dying to ask you for the last few years. I wonder whether you will answer it."

"I wonder!" he repeated.

A change in him, too, was noticeable. That wonderful impassivity of feature which never even in his lighter moments passed altogether away, seemed to deepen every line in his hard, clear-cut face. His mouth was close drawn, his eyes were suddenly colder and expressionless. There was about him at such times as these an

almost repellent hardness. His emotions, and the man himself, seemed frozen. Lady Caroom had seen him look like it once before, and she shuddered. Nevertheless, she persevered.

"For nearly twenty years," she said, "you disappeared. You were reported at different times to be in every quarter of the earth, from Zambesi to Pekin. But no one knew, and of course, in a season or two you were forgotten. I always wondered, I am wondering now, where were you? What did you do with yourself?"

"I went down into Hell," he answered. "Can't you see the marks of it in my face? For many years I lived in Hell—for many years."

"You puzzle me," she said, in a low tone. "You had no taste for dissipation. You look as though life had scorched you up at some time or other. But how? Where? You were found in Canada, I know, when your brother died. But you had only been there for a few years. Before then?"

"Ay! Before then?"

There was a short silence. Then Arranmore, who had been gazing steadily into the fire, looked up. She fancied that his eyes were softer.

"Dear friend," he said, "of those days I have nothing to tell—even you. But there are more awful things even than moral degeneration. You do me justice when you impute that I never ate from the trough. But what I did, and where I lived, I do not think that I shall ever willingly tell anyone."

A piece of burning wood fell upon the hearthstone. He stooped, and picked it up, placed it carefully in its place, and bustled himself for a moment or two with the little brass poker. Then he straightened himself.

"Catherine," he said, "I think if I were you that I would not marry Sybil to Molyneux. It struck me today that his eyeglass-chain was of last year's pattern, and I am not sure that he is sound on the subject of collars. You know how important these things are to a young man who has to make his own way in the world. Perhaps I am not sure, but I think it is very likely I might be able to find a husband for her."

"You dear man," Lady Caroom murmured. "I should rely upon your taste and judgment so thoroughly."

There was a discreet knock at the door. A servant entered with a card. Arranmore took it up, and retained it in his fingers.

"Tell Mr. Brooks," he said, "that I will be with him in a moment. If he has ridden over, ask him to take some refreshment."

"You have a visitor," Lady Caroom said, rising. "If you will excuse me I will go and lie down until luncheon time, and let my maid-tutor me up. These sentimental conversations are so harrowing. I feel a perfect wreck."

She slipped from the room, graceful, brisk and charming, the most wonderful woman in England, as the Society papers were never tired of calling her. Arranmore glanced once more at the card between his fingers.

"Mr. Kingston Brooks."

He stood for a few seconds, motionless. Then he rang the bell.

"Show Mr. Brooks in here," he directed.

### CHAPTER VII.

#### A Thousand Pounds

Brooks had ridden a bicycle from Medchester, and his trousers and boots were splashed with mud. His presence at Eaton was due to an impulse, the inspiration of which he had already begun seriously to doubt. Arranmore's kindly reception of him was more than ordinarily welcome.

"I am very glad to see you, Mr. Brooks," he said, holding out his hand. "How comes it that you are able to take even so short a holiday as this? I pictured you surrounded by canvases and bill-posters and journalists, all clamoring for your ear."

Brooks laughed, completely at his ease now, thanks to the unspoken cordiality of the other man. He took the easy-chair which the servant had noiselessly wheeled up to him.

"I am afraid that you exaggerate my importance, Lord Arranmore," he said. "I was very busy early this morning, and shall be again after four. But I am allowed a little respite now and then."

"You spend it very sensibly out of doors," Arranmore remarked. "How did you get here?"

"I cycled," Brooks answered. "It was very pleasant, but muddy."

"What will you have?" Lord Arranmore asked. "Some wine and biscuits, or something of that sort?"

His hand was upon the bell, but Brooks stopped him.

"Nothing at all, thank you, just now."

"Luncheon will be served in half an hour," the Marquis said. "You will prefer to wait until then?"

"I am much obliged to you," Brooks answered, "but I must be getting back to Medchester as soon as possible. Besides," he added, with a smile, "I am afraid when I have spoken of the object of my visit you may feel inclined to kick me out."

"I hope not," Arranmore replied, lightly. "It was hoping that your visit had no object at all, and that you had been good enough just to look me up."

"I should not have intruded without a purpose," Brooks said, quietly. "But you will be almost justified in treating my visit as an impertinence when I have disclosed my errand. Lord Arranmore, I am the secretary for the fund which is being raised in Medchester for the relief of the Unemployed."

Arranmore nodded.

"Oh, yes," he said. "I had a visit a few days ago from a worthy Medchester gentleman connected with it."

"It is concerning that visit, Lord Arranmore, that I have come to see you," Brooks continued, quietly. "I on-

ly heard of it yesterday afternoon, but this morning it seems to me that every one whom I have met has alluded to it."

The Marquis was lounging against the breakfast table. There was a certain cordiality of his manner had vanished.

"Well?"

"Lord Arranmore, I wondered whether it was not possible that some mistake had been made," Brooks said. "I wondered whether Mr. Wensome had altogether understood you properly."

"I did my best to be explicit," the Marquis murmured.

"Or whether you had misunderstood him," Brooks continued, doggedly. "This fund has become absolutely necessary unless we wish to see the people starve in the streets. There are between six and seven thousand operatives and artisans in Medchester to-day who are without work through no fault of their own. It is our duty as citizens to do our best for them. Nearly every one in Medchester has contributed according to their means. You are a large property-owner in the town. Cannot you consider this appeal as an unenforced rate? It comes to that in the long run."

The Marquis shrugged his shoulders. "I think," he said, "that in the subject of charity Englishmen generally wholly misapprehend the situation. You say that between six and seven thousand men are out of work in Medchester. Very well, I affirm that there must be a cause for that. If you are a philanthropist it is your duty to at once investigate the economic and political reasons for such a state of things, and alter them. By going about and collecting money from people who commit what is little short of a crime in you must know the demoralizing effect of charity. No man who has ever received a dole is ever again an independent person. Besides, that you are diverting the public mind from the real point of issue, which is not that so many thousands of people are hungry, but that a flaw exists in the administration of the laws of the country so grave that a certain number of thousands of people who have a God-given right to productive labour, haven't got it. Do you follow me?"

"Perfectly," Brooks answered. "You did not talk like this to Mr. Wensome."

"I admit it. He was an ignorant man in whom I felt no interest whatever, and I did not take the trouble. Besides, I will frankly admit that I am in no sense of the word a sentimentalist. The distresses of other people do not interest me particularly. I have been poor myself, and I never asked for, nor was offered, any sort of help. Consequently I feel very little responsibility concerning these unfortunate people, whose cause you have espoused."

"May I revert to your first argument?" Brooks said. "If you saw a man drowning then, instead of trying to save him you would subscribe towards a fund to teach people to swim?"

"That is ingenious," Lord Arranmore replied, smiling grimly. "but it doesn't interest me. If I saw a man drowning I shouldn't think of interfering unless the loss of that man brought inconvenience or loss to myself. If it did I should endeavor to save him—no unless. As for the fund you speak of, I should not think of subscribing to it. It would not interest me to know that other people were provided with a safe refuge against drowning. I should probably spend the money in perfecting myself in the art of swimming. Don't you see that no man who has ever received help from another is exactly in the same position again? As an individual he is a weaker creature. That is where I disagree with nearly every existing form of charity. They are wrong in principle. They are a debauchment."

"Your views," Lord Arranmore said, "are excellent for a model world. For practical purposes I think a little pedantic. You are quite right in your idea that charity is a great danger. I can assure you that we are trying to realize that in Medchester. We ask for money, and we dispense it unwillingly, but as a necessary evil. And we are trying to earnestly see where our social system is at fault, and to readjust it. But meanwhile, men and women and children are starving. We must help them."

"That is where you are wholly wrong, and where you retard all progress," Arranmore remarked. "Can't you see that you are continually plunging under dangerous leaks with putty instead of lead? You muffle the cry which but for you must ring through the land, and make itself heard to every one. Let the people starve who are without means. Legislation would be a waste of time. It is the star itself fast enough to individuals in any way. Charity to individuals is the crime of the multitude. You create the criminal classes with your charities; you blindfold statesmen and mislead political economists. I tell you that the more you give away the more distress you create."

Brooks rose from his seat.

"Charity is older than nations or history," Lord Arranmore said. "I am foolish enough to think that the world is a better place for it. Your teaching is very excellent, but life has not yet become an exact science. The weaknesses of men and women have to be considered. You have probably never seen a starving person."

Lord Arranmore laughed, and Brooks looked across the room at him in amazement. The Marquis was always pale, but his pallor just then was as unnatural as the laugh itself.

"My dear young man," he said, "I could show you what I have seen your hair would turn grey, and your wits go wandering. Do you think that

I know nothing of life save its crust? I tell you that I have been down in the depths, awe, single-handed, there in the devil's own cauldron, where creatures in the shape of men and women, the very sight of whom would turn you sick with horror, creep like spawn through life, brainless and soulless, foul things who would murder one another for the sake of a crust—or—Bah! What horrible memories!"

He broke off abruptly. When he spoke again his tone was as usual.

"Come," he said, "I must let you have this journey for nothing. After all, the only luxury in having principles is in the departing from them. I will give you a cheque, Mr. Brooks, only I beg you to think over what I have said. Abandon this dolling principle as soon as it is possible. Give your serious attention to the social questions and imperfect laws which are at the back of all this distress."

Brooks felt as though he had been awakened from a nightmare. He never forgot that single moment of revelation on the part of the man who sat now smiling and debonaire before his writing-table.

"You are very kind indeed, Lord Arranmore," he said. "I can assure you that the money will be most carefully used, and amongst my party, at any rate, we do really appreciate the necessity for going to the root of the matter."

Arranmore's pen went scratching across the paper. He tore out a cheque and placing it in an envelope, handed it to Brooks.

"I noticed," he remarked, thoughtfully, "that a good many people coming out of the factories hissed my carriage in Medchester last time I was there. I hope they will not consider my cheque as a sign of weakness. But after all," he added, with a smile, "what does it matter? Let us go in to luncheon, Brooks."

Brooks glanced down at his mud-spattered clothes and boots.

"I must really ask you to excuse me," he began, but Arranmore only rang the bell.

"My valet will smarten you up," he said. "Here, Fritz, take Mr. Brooks into my room and look after him, will you? I shall be in the hall when you come down."

As he passed from the dressing room a few moments later, Brooks paused for a moment to look up at the wonderful ceiling above the hall. Below, Lord Arranmore was idly knocking about the billiard balls, and all around him was the murmur of pleasant conversation. Brooks drew the envelope from his pocket and glanced at the cheque. He gave a little gasp of astonishment. It was for a thousand pounds.

(To be Continued.)

### BURIED ALIVE.

Doctor's Accounts of Recent Cases—Reform of Burial Laws Urged.

Presiding at the annual meeting in London of the Society for the Prevention of Premature Burial, Dr. J. Stenson-Hooker said that there was a constantly increasing list of dangers from premature burial, to say nothing of the actual cases of premature burial. The number of cases brought to the secretary was getting appalling.

A few months ago he was called in to see a little child of between one and two years of age who had collapsed into what the parents believed to be a dead trance. If those parents had been of the uneducated type immediately there really might have been serious danger of that child being buried alive.

Dr. Walter R. Hadwin, of Gloucester, said septics had sought to lessen the seriousness of premature burial by urging that the organs within a closed coffin would soon be exhausted and that a person could not live more than three or four minutes. But that depended upon several circumstances. Mr. Bernard, a Paris surgeon, testified, said Dr. Hadwin, that in the parish of Riol he himself saw a monk of the Order of St. Francis (a subject of catalepsy) who had been buried for three or four days taken from his grave breathing and alive with his arms lacerated near the armpits and bound him. An account of this was drawn up by public authority. It would appear to be quite possible for a person to live for forty to sixty minutes in a closed coffin, and what a century of time would be compressed into that brief period.

Dr. Brindley Jones mentioned a case at Harmondsey in which a man who had been found hanging had been certified as dead by two medical men. He was the third medical man called in and after trying artificial respiration for an hour the man began to breathe. The man was removed to Guy's hospital, where he completely recovered.

A resolution was unanimously carried, calling upon the government special to reform the burial laws.

CONFESSES TO MURDER.

Edmonton Negro Tells of Killing the Husband of White Paramour.

Edmonton, April 14.—James Chapman, a negro, who has been living on Namoy avenue with a white woman, who is not his wife, has confessed to the R.N.W.M.P. of the murder of the woman's husband, Lawrence Matthews, in Stillwater, Okla., on December 5, 1908. Both are now under arrest. Chapman was induced to make the confession by jealousy of another man who was a frequent visitor to the house. Chapman states Mrs. Matthews strangled her husband to death while he slept, a previous effort to poison him with strychnine having failed. An Oklahoma sheriff is now en route to this city.

Minard's Liniment Relieves Neuralgia.

GAMBLING CLUBS.

In America such a thing as a proprietary club owned and managed by one man is almost unknown. In London it is the usual thing, and almost all the medium sized clubs which are devoted to some special purpose, such as card playing, are proprietary.

In the old days this was a money making enterprise, and some immense fortunes were piled up by the proprietors of London card clubs. But now whenever a club shows signs of unusual prosperity the members get together and insist on forming some sort of governing body which shall have power to pass upon the proposals for membership. They also see to it that the proprietor spends proper proportion of his profits on the comfort of the members instead of putting everything in his pocket.

The fashions in the card clubs occasionally change with the years, and with the games that are the rage. A century ago it was against the rules in many of the best clubs to play cards before dinner, whereas nowadays the principal play is between the hours of 4 and 7. The income of the proprietor today is from the annual subscriptions and from the fixed fees for card money. In the old days the largest source of revenue was from the counters picked up from the floor after the game was over.

George Raggatt, the owner of White's, one of the most famous gambling clubs in the world, situated on St. James' street, made it his rule to attend to his guests in person whenever exceptionally high play was in progress, knowing that he would be well repaid for his time. Upon one occasion, after picking up counters to the value of nearly \$1,000 from the floor, he received a gift of almost as much from Harvey Connely, who had been playing from Monday evening until 11 o'clock on Wednesday morning. Sir John Malcolm, Tippoo Smith and Ward, the member of parliament for London, being the other players at the table.

Some of the proprietary clubs adopted curious rules to attract and keep their customers. One of the chief difficulties then, as now, was to insure a game from any one that might happen to drop in at odd times. One of these nicknamed the Nervy Ending Club, had a bylaw that no player should quit a table until a fresh arrival was ready to take his place.

One very popular feature was to provide light silken curtains which could be drawn between the faces of the players so to conceal from an adversary any ungarded expression of disappointment or of triumph upon picking up a hand or following the course of play.

It was at this club that Fox lost a large sum of money to Lord Barrymore, who took advantage of the concealment of his own face to study the reflection of Fox's cards in the large polished steel buttons which he wore upon his coat.

At the corner of Bolton street and Piccadilly was Walter's club, which Byron records was a "superb club" in 1815. Beau Brummel played here regularly for ten or twelve years, but he eventually fell into disrepute through the want of proper supervision of the admissions to membership.

Swinburne says in his "Courts of Europe" that it was in this club that a player upon seeing the witty Lord Alvanley enter the room and, dreading his satirical tongue, laid down his cards and pulled out a pair of pistols, which he laid on a table beside him. The only comment of Alvanley was: "I hope you don't expect your adversary to follow suit."

Every visitor to London who has passed down Piccadilly has probably remarked the imposing home of the Devonshire club at the southwest corner of St. James' street. Within the building the highest gambling in the world has probably taken place, the sums won and lost at Monte Carlo being nothing to those that changed hands here. The entrance was originally from the Piccadilly side, and many changes have been made in the interior arrangements, but some of the gilt chairs that were used by the high rollers of seventy years ago are still preserved in the clubrooms.

The proprietor of this club was originally a small dalmatian named William Crookford, who had a shop near Temple Bar. His first venture in club proprietorship was to take Walter