The Puppet Crown

By HAROLD MACGRATH.

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CHAPTER I.

The king sat in his private garden in the shade of a potted orange tree, the leaves of which were splashed with brilliant yellow. It was high noon of one of those last warm sighs of passing summer which now and then lovingly steal in between the chill breaths of September. The velvet hush of the mid-day hour had fallen.

There was an endless horizon of turquoise blue, a zenith pellucid as glass. The trees stood motionless; not a shadow stirred, save that which was cast by the tremulous wings of a black and purple butterfly, which, near to his majesty, fell, rose and sank again. From a drove of wild bees, swimming hither and thither in quest of the final sweets of the year, came a low murmurous hum, such as a man sometimes fancies he hears while standing alone in the vast auditorium of a cathedral.

The king, from where he sat, could see the ivy-clad towers of the archbishop's palace, where, in and about the narrow windows, gray and white doves fluttered and plumed themselves. The garden sloped gently downward till it merged into a beautiful lake called the Werter See, which, stretching out several miles to the west, in the heart of the thick-wooded hills, trembled like a thin sheet of silver.

Toward the south, far away, lay the dim, uneven blue line of the Thalian Alps, which separated the kingdom that was from the duchy that is, and the duke from his desires. More than once the king leveled his gaze in that direction, as if to fathom what lay behind those lordly rugged hills.

There was in the air the delicate odor of the deciduous leaves which, every little while, the king inhaled, his eyes half-closed and his nostrils distended. Save for these brief moments, however, there rested on his countenance an expression of disenchantment which came of the knowledge of a part ill-played, an expression which described a consciousness of his unfitness and inutility, of lethargy and weariness and distaste.

To be weary is the lot of kings, it is a part of their royal prerogative; but it is only a great king who can be weary gracefully. And Leopold was not a great king; indeed, he was many inches short of the ideal; but he was philosophical, and by the process of reason he escaped the pitfalls which lurk in the path of peevishness.

To know the smallness of the human atom, the limit of desire, the existence of other lives as precious as their own, is not the philosophy which makes great kings. Philosophy engenders pity; and one who possesses that cannot ride roughshod over men, and that is the business of kings.

As for Leopold, he would rather have wandered the byways of Kant than studied royal etiquette. A crown had been thrust on his head and a scepter into his hand, and, willy-nilly, he must wear the one and wield the other. The confederation had determined the matter shortly before the Franco-Prussian war.

The kingdom that was, an admixture of old France and newer Austria, was a gateway which opened the road to the Orient, and a gateman must be placed there who would be obedient to the will of the great travelers, were they minded to pass that way. That is to say, the confederation wanted a puppet, and in Leopold they found a dreamer, which served as well. That glittering bait, a crown, had lured him from his peaceful Osian hills and valleys, and now he found that his crown was of straw and his scepter a stick.

He longed to turn back, for his heart lay in a tomb close to his castle keep, but the way back was closed. He had sold his birthright. So he permitted his ministers to rule his kingdom how they would, and gave himself up to dreams. He had been but a cousin of the late king, whereas the duke of the duchy that is had been a brother. But cousin Josef was possessed of red hair and a temper which was redder still, and, moreover, a superlative will, bending to none, and laughing at those who tried to bend him.

He would have been a king to the tip of his fiery hair, and it was for this very reason that his subsequent appeals for justice and his rights fell on unheeding ears. The confederation feared Josef; therefore they dispossessed him. Thus Leopold sat on the throne, while his highness bit his nails and swore impotent to all appearances.

Leopold leaned forward from his seat. In his hand he held a riding stick with which he drew shapeless pictures in the yellow gravel of the path. His brows were drawn over contemplative eyes, and the hint of a sour smile lifted the corners of his lips. Presently the brows relaxed, and his gaze traveled to the opposite side of the path, where the British minister sat in the full glare of the sun.

In the middle of the path, as rigid as a block of white marble, reposed a young bull-dog, his moist black nose quivering under the repeated attacks of a persistent insect. It occurred to the king that there was a resemblance between the dog and his master, the Englishman. The same heavy jaws were there, the same fearless eyes, the same indomitable courage for the prosecution of a purpose.

A momentary regret passed through him that he had not been turned from a like mold. Next his gaze shifted to the end of the path, where a young lieutenant stood idly kicking pebbles, his cuirass flaming in the dazzling sunshine. Soon the drawing in the gravel was resumed.

The British minister made little of the three-score years which were closing in on him, after the manner of an army besieging a citadel. He was full of animal exuberance, and his eyes, a trifle faded, it must be admitted, were still keenly alive and observant. He was big of bone, florid of skin, and his hair—what remained of it—was wiry and bleached. His clothes, possibly cut from an old measure, hung loosly about the girth—a sign that time had taken its tithe. For 35 years he had served his country by cunning speeches and bursts of fine oratory; he had wandered over the globe, lulling suspicions here and arousing them there, a prince of the art of diplomacy.

He had not been sent here to watch this kingdom. He was touching a deeper undercurrent, which began at St. Petersburg and moved toward Central Asia, Turkey and India, sullenly and irresistibly. And now his task was done, and another was to take his place, to be a puppet among puppets. He feared no man save his valet, who knew his one weakness—the love of a son on whom he had shut his door, which pride forbade him to open. This son had chosen the army, when a fine diplomatic career had been planned—a small thing, but it sufficed. Even now a word from an humbled pride would have reunited father and son, but both refused to speak this word.

The diplomat in turn watched the king as he engaged in the aimless drawing. His meditation grew retrospective, and his thoughts ran back to the days when he first befriended this lonely prince, who had come to England to learn the language and manners of the chill islanders. He had been handsome enough in those days, this Leopold of Osia, gay and eager, possessing an indefinable charm which endeared him to women and made him respected of men. To have known him then, the wildest stretch of fancy would never have placed him on this puppet throne, surrounded by enemies, menaced by his adopted people, rudderless and ignorant of statecraft.

"Fate is the cup," the diplomat mused, and the human life the ball, and it's toss, toss, toss, till the ball slips and falls into eternity." Aloud he said, "Your majesty seems to be well occupied."

"Yes," replied the king, smiling. "I am making crowns and scratching them out again—usurping the gentle pastime of their most Christian majesties, the confederation. A pretty bauble is a crown, indeed—at a distance. It is a fine thing to wear one—in a dream. But to possess one in the real, and to wear it day by day with the eternal fear of laying it down and forgetting where you put it, or that others plot to steal it, or that you wear it dishonestly—Well, well, there are worse things than a beggar's crust."

"No one is honest in this world, save the brute," said the diplomat, touching the dog with his foot. "Honesty is instinctive with him, for he knows no written laws. The gold we use is stamped with dishonesty, notwithstanding the beautiful mottoes; and so long as we barter and sell for it, just so long we remain dishonest. Yes, you wear your crown dishonestly but lawfully, which is a nice distinction. But is any crown worn honestly? If it is not bought with gold, it is bought with lies and blood. Sire, your great fault, if I may speak, is that you haven't continued to be dishonest. You should have filled your private coffers, but you have not done so, which is a strange precedent to establish. You should have increased taxation, but you have diminished it; you should have forced your enemy's hand four years ago, when you ascended the throne, but you did not; and now, for all you know, his hand may be too strong. Poor, dishonest king! When you accepted this throne, which belongs to another, you fell as far as possible from moral ethics. And now you would be honest and be called dull, and dream, while your ministers profit and smile behind your back. I beg your majesty's pardon, but you have always requested that I should speak plainly."

The king laughed; he enjoyed this frank friend. There was an essence of truth and sincerity in all he said that encouraged confidence.

"Indeed, I shall be sorry to have you go tomorrow," he said, "for I believe if you stayed here long enough you would truly make a king of me. Be frank, my friend, be always frank; for it is only on the base of frankness that true friendship can rear itself."

"You are only 48," said the Englishman; "you are young."

"Ah, my friend," replied the king with a tinge of sadness, it is not the years that age us; it is how we live them. In the last four years I have lived ten. Today I feel so very old! I am weary or being a king. I am weary of being weary, and for such there is no remedy. Truly I was not cut from the pattern of kings; no, no. I am handier with a book than with a scepter; I'd liever be a man than a puppet, and a puppet I am—a figurehead on the prow of the ship, but I do not guide it. Who cares for me save the archbishop, who yet dreams of making a king of me. And these are not my people who surround me; when I die, small care. I shall have left in the passing scarce a finger mark in the dust of time."

"Ah, Sire, if only you would be cold, unfriendly, avaricious. Be stone and rule with a rod of iron. Make the people fear you, since they refuse to love you; be stone."

"You can mold lead, but you can not sculpture it; and I am lead."

"Yes; not only the metal, but the verb intransitive. Ah, could the fires of ambition light your soul!"

"My soul is a blackened grate of burnt-out fires, of which only a coal remains."

And the king turned in his seat and looked across the crisp green lawns to the beds of flowers, where, followed by a maid at a respectful distance, a slim young girl in white was cutting the hardy geraniums, dahlias and seed poppies.

"God knows what her legacy will be!"

"It is for you to make it, sire."

Both men continued to remark the girl. At length she came toward them, her arms laden with flowers. She was at the age of 10, with a beautiful, serious face, which some might have called prophetic. Her hair was dark, shining like coal and purple, and gossamer in its fineness; her skin had the blue-whiteness of milk; while from under long black lashes two luminous brown eyes looked thoughtfully at the world. She smiled at the king, who eyed her fondly, and gave her unengaged hand to the Englishman, who kissed it.

"And how is your royal highness this fine day?" he asked, patting the hand before letting it go.

"Will you have a dahlia, Monsieur?" With a grave air she selected a flower and slipped it through his buttonhole.

"Does your highness know the language of the flowers?" the Englishman asked.

"Dahlias signify dignity and elegance; you are dignified, Monsieur, and dignity is elegance."

"Well!" cried the Englishman, smiling with pleasure; "that is turned as adroitly as a woman of 30."

"And am I not to have one?" asked the king his eyes full of paternal love and pride.

"They are for your majesty's table," she answered.

"Your majesty!" cried the king in mimic despair. "Was ever a father treated thus? Your majesty! Do you not know, my dear, that to me 'father' is the grandest title in the world?"

Suddenly she crossed over the kissed the king on the cheek, and he held her to him for a moment.

The bulldog had risen, and was wagging his tail the best he knew how. If there was any young woman who could claim his unreserved admiration, it was the Princess Alexia. She never talked nonsense to him in their rambles together, but treated him as he should be treated, as an animal of enlightenment.

"And here is Bull," said the princess, tickling the dog's nose with a scarlet geranium.

"Your highness thinks a deal of Bull?" said the dog's master.

"Yes, monsieur, he doesn't bark, and he seems to understand all I say to him."

The dog looked up at his master as if to say: "There now, what do you think of that?"

"Tomorrow I am going away," said the diplomat, "and as I cannot very well take Bull with me, I give him to you."

The girl's eyes sparkled. "Thank you, Monsieur, shall I take him now?"

"No, but when I leave your father. You see, he was sent to me by my son who is in India. I wish to keep him near me as long as possible. My son, your highness, was a bad fellow. He ran away and joined the army against my wishes, and somehow we have never got together again. Still, I've a sneaking regard for him, and I believe he hasn't lost all his filial devotion. Bull is, in a way, a connecting link."

The king turned again to the gravel pictures. These Englishmen were beyond him in the matter of analysis. Her royal highness smiled vaguely, and wondered what this son was like. Once more she smiled, then moved away toward the palace. The dog, seeing that she did not beckon, lay down again. An interval of silence followed her departure. The thought of the Englishman had traveled to India, the thought of the king to Osia, where the girl's mother slept. The former was first to rouse.

"Well, sire, let us come to the business at hand, the subject of my last informal audience. It is true, then, that the consols for the loan of five millions of crowns are issued today, or have been, since the morning is passed?"

"Yes, it is true. I am well pleased. Jacobi and Brother have agreed to place them at face value. I intend to lay out a park for the public at the foot of the lake. That will demolish two millions and a half. The remainder is to be used in city improvements and the reconstruction of the apartments in the palace, which are too small. If only you knew what a pleasure this affords me! I wish to make my good city of Bleiberg a thing of beauty—parks, fountains, broad and well-paved streets."

"The Diet was unanimous in regard to this loan?"

"In fact they suggested it, and I was much in favor."

"You have many friends there, then?"

"Friends?" The king's face grew puzzled, and its animation faded away. "None that I know. This is positively the first time we ever agreed about anything."

"And did not that strike you as rather singular?"

"Why, no."

"Of course, the people are enthusiastic, considering the old rate of taxation will be renewed?" The diplomat reached over and pulled the dog's ears.

"So far as I can see," answered the king, who could make nothing of this interrogatory.

"Which, if your majesty will pardon me, is not very far beyond your books."

"I have ministers."

"Who can see farther than your majesty has any idea."

"Come, come, my friend," cried the king good-naturedly; "but a moment gone you were chiding me because I did nothing. I may not fill my coffers as you suggested, but I shall please my eye, which is something. Come; you have something to tell me."

"Will your majesty listen?"

"I promise."

"And to hear?"

"I promise not only to listen, but to hear," laughing; "not only to hear, but to think. Is that sufficient?"

"For three years," began the Englishman, "I have been England's representative here. As a representative I could not meddle with your affairs, though it was possible to observe them. Today I am an unfettered agent of self, and with your permission I shall talk to you as I have never talked before and never shall again."

The diplomat rose from his seat and walked up and down the path, his hands clasped behind his back, his chin in his collar. The bulldog yawned, stretched himself, and followed his master, soberly and thoughtfully. After a while the Englishman returned to his chair and sat down. The dog gravely imitated him. He understood, perhaps better than the king, his master's mood. This pacing backward and forward was always the forerunner of something of great importance.

During the past year he had been the repository of many a secret. Well, he knew how to keep one. Did not he carry a secret which his master would have given much to know? Some one in far away India, after putting him into the ship steward's care, had whispered: "You tell the governor that I think just as much of him as ever." He had made a desperate effort to tell it the moment he was liberated from the box, but he had not yet mastered that particular language which characterized his master's race.

"To begin with," said the diplomat, "what would your majesty say if I should ask permission to purchase the entire loan?"

CHAPTER II.

The king, who had been leaning forward, fell back heavily in his seat, his eyes full wide and his mouth agape. Then, to express his utter bewilderment, he raised his hands above his head and limply dropped them.

"Five millions of crowns?" he gasped.

"Yes; what would your majesty say to such a proposition?" complacently.

"I should say," answered the king, with a nervous laugh, "that my friend had lost his senses, completely and totally."

"The fact is," the Englishman declared, "they were never keener nor more lucid than at this present moment."

"But five millions!"

"Five millions; a bagatelle," smiling.

"Certainly you cannot be serious, and if you were, it is out of the question. Death of my life! The kingdom would be at my ears. The people would shout that I was selling out to the English, that I was putting them into the mill to grind for English sacks."

"Your majesty will recollect that the measure authorizing this loan was rather a peculiar one. Five millions were to be borrowed indiscriminately, of any man or body of men willing to advance the money on the securities offered. First come, first served, was not written, but it was implied. It was this which roused my curiosity, or cupidity, if you will."

"I cannot recollect that the bill was as you say," said the king, frowning.

"I believe you. When the bill came to you, you were not expected to recollect anything but the royal signature. Have you read half of what you have signed and made law? No. I am serious. What is it to you or to the people, who secures this public mortgage, so long as the money is forthcoming? I desire to purchase at face value the 20 certificates."

"As a representative of England?"

The diplomat smiled. The king's political ignorance was well known. "As a representative of England, Sire, I could not purchase the stubs from which these certificates are cut. And then, as I remarked, I am an unfettered agent of self. The interest at 2 per cent will be a fine income on a lump of stagnant money. Even in my own country, where millionaires are so numerous as to termed common, I am considered a rich man. My personal property, aside from my estates, is five times the amount of the loan. A mere bagatelle, if I may use that pleasantry."

"Impossible, impossible!" cried the king, starting to his feet, while a line of worry ran across his forehead. He strode about impatiently slapping his boots with the riding stick. "It is impossible."

"Why do you say impossible, Sire?"

"I cannot permit you to put in jeopardy a quarter of a million pounds," forgetting for the moment that he was powerless.

"Aha!" the diplomat cried briskly. "There is, then, beneath your weariness and philosophy, a fear?"

"A fear?" With an effort the king smoothed the line from his forehead. "Why should there be fear?"

"Why indeed, when our cousin Josef——" He stopped and looked toward the mountains.

"Well?" abruptly.

"I was thinking what a fine coup de maitre it would be for his highness to gather in all these pretty slips of parchment given under the hand of Leopold."

"Small matter if he should. I should pay him." The king sat down. "And it is news to me that Josef can get together five millions."

"He has friends, rich and powerful friends."

"No matter, I should pay him."

"Are you quite sure?"

"What do you mean?"

"The face of the world changes in the course of ten years. Will there be five millions in your treasury ten years hence?"

"The wealth of my kingdom is not to be questioned," proudly, "nor its resources."

"But in ten years, with the ministers you have?" The Englishman shrugged doubtfully. "Why have you not formed a new cabinet of young men? Why have you retained those of your predecessor, who are your natural enemies? You have tried and failed."

The expression of weariness returned to the king's face. He knew that all this was but a preamble to something of deeper significance. He anticipated what was forming in the other's mind, but he wished to avoid a verbal declaration. Oh, he knew that there was a net of intrigue enmeshing him, but it was so very fine that he could not pick up the smallest thread whereby to unravel it. Down in his soul he felt the shame of the knowledge that he dared not. A dreamer, rushing toward the precipice, would rather fall dreaming than waken and struggle futilely.

"My friend," he said, finally sighing, "proceed. I am all attention."

"I never doubted your majesty's perspicacity. You do not know, but you suspect, what I am about to disclose to you. My hope is that, when I am done, your majesty will throw Kant and the rest of your philosophers out of the window. The people are sullen at the mention of your name, while they cheer another. There is an astonishing looseness about your revenues. The reds and the socialists plot for revolution and a republic, which is a thin disguise for a certain restoration. Your cousin the duke visits you publicly twice each year. He has been in the city a week at a time incognito, yet your minister of police seems to know nothing." The speaker ceased, and fondled the dahlia in his button-hole.

The king, noting the action, construed it as the subtle old diplomat intended he should. "Yes, yes! I am a king only for her sake. Go on. Tell me all."

"The archbishop and the chancellor are the only friends you possess. The marshal from personal considerations merely, remains neutral. Your army, excepting the cuirassiers, are traitors to your house. The wisest thing you have done was to surround yourself with this mercenary body, whom you call the royal cuirassiers, only, instead of 300, you should have 2,000. Self-interest will make them true to you. You might find some means to pay them, for they would be a good buffer between you and your enemies. The president of the Diet and the members are passing bills which will eventually undermine you. How long it will take I cannot say. But this last folly, the loan, which you could have got on without, caps the climax. The duke was in the city last week unknown to you. Your minister of finance is his intimate. This loan was a connivance of them all. Why ten years, when it could easily be liquidated in five? I shall tell you. The duke expects to force you into bankruptcy within that time, and when the creditor demands and you cannot pay, you will be driven from here in disgrace.

"And where will you go? Certainly not to Osia, since you traded it for this throne. It was understood, when you assumed the reign, that the finances of the kingdom would remain unimpeachable. Bankrupt, the confederation will be forced to disavow you. They will be compelled to restore the throne to your enemy, who, believe me, is most anxious to become your creditor.

"This is an independent state—conditionally. The confederation have formed themselves into a protectorate. Why? I can only guess. One or more of them covet these beautiful lands. What are ten years to Josef, when a crown is the goal? Your revenues are slowly to decline, there will be internal troubles to eat up what money you have in the treasury. Oh, it is a plot so fine, so swiftly conceived, so cunningly devised that I would I were 20 years younger, to fight it with you! But I am old. My days for acting are past. I can only advise. He was sure of his quarry, this Josef, whose hair is of many colors. Had you applied to the money syndicates of Europe, the banks of England, France, Germany, or Austria, your true sponsor, the result would always be the same: your ruin. Covertly I warned you not to sign; you laughed and signed. A trap was there, your own hand opened it. How they must have laughed at you! If you attempt to repudiate your signature the Diet has power to overrule you.

"Truly, the shade of Macchiavelli masks in the garb of your cousin. I admire the man's genius. This is his throne by right of inheritance. I do not blame him. Only, I wish to save you. If you were alone, why, I do not say that I should trouble myself, for you yourself would not be troubled. But I have grown to love that child of yours. It is all for her. Do you now understand why I make the request? It appears Quixotic? Not at all. Put my money in jeopardy? Not while the kingdom exists. If you cannot pay back, your kingdom will. Perhaps you ask what is the difference, whether I or the duke becomes your creditor? This: in ten years I shall be happy to renew the loan. In ten years, if I am gone, there will be my son. You wonder why I do this. I repeat it is for your daughter. And perhaps," with a dry smile, "it is because I have no love for Josef."

"I will defeat him!" cried the king, a fire at last shining in his eyes.

"You will not."

"I will appeal to the confederation and inform them of the plot."

"The resource of a child! They would laugh at you for your pains. For they are too proud of their prowess in statecraft to tolerate a suspicion that your cousin is a cleverer man than all of them put together. There remains only one thing for you to do."

"And what is that?" wearily.

"Accept my friendship at its true value."

The king made no reply. He set his elbows on the arms of the rustic seat, interlaced his fingers and rested his chin on them, while his booted legs slid out before him. His mediation lengthened into several minutes. The dplomat evinced no sign of impatience.

"Come with me," said the king, rising quickly. "I will no longer dream. I will act. Come."

The diplomat nodded approvingly; and together they marched toward the palace. The bulldog trotted on behind, his pink tongue lolling out of his black mouth, a white tusk of two gleaming on each side. The lieutenant of the Cuirassiers saluted as they passed him, and, when they had gone some distance, swung in behind. He observed with some concern that his majesty was much agitated.

The business of the kingdom, save that performed in the Diet, was accomplished in the east wing of the palace; the king's apartments, aside from the state rooms, occupied the west wing. It was to the business section that the king conducted the diplomat. In the chamber of finance its minister was found busy at his desk. He glanced up casually, but gave an ejaculation of surprise when he perceived who his visitors were.

"O, your majesty!" he cried, bobbing up and running out his chair. "Good afternoon, your excellency," to the Englishman, adjusting his gold-rimmed glasses, through which his eyes shone pale and cold.

The diplomat bowed. The little man reminded him of M. Thiers, that effervescence of soda tinctured with the bitterness of iron. He understood the distrust which Count von Wallenstein entertained for him, but he was not distrustful of the count. Distrust implies uncertainty, and the Englishman was not the least uncertain as to his conception of this gentleman of finance.

There were few men whom the count could not interpret; one stood before him. He could not comprehend why England had sent so astute a diplomat and politician to a third-rate kingdom. Of that which we cannot understand we are suspicious, and the guilty are distrustful. Neither the Minister of Police nor his subordinates could fathom the purpose of this calm, dignified old man with the difficult English name.

"Count," began the king, pleasantly, "his excellency here has made a peculiar request."

"And what might that be, Sire?"

"He offers to purchase the entire number of certificates issued today for our loan."

"Five millions of crowns?" The minister's astonishment was so genuine that in jerking back his head his glasses slipped from his nose and dangled on the string.

The Englishman bowed again, the wrinkle of a smile on his face.

"I would not believe him serious at first, count," said the king, laughing easily, "but he assured me that he is. What can be done about it?"

"Oh, your majesty," cried the minister, excitedly, "It would not be politic. And then the measure——"

"Is it possible that I have misconstrued its import?" said the diplomat with a fine air of surprise.

"You are familiar—" began the count, hesitatingly.

"Perfectly; that is, I believe so."

"But England——"

"Has nothing whatever to do with the matter. Something greater, which goes by the name of self-interest."

"Ah," said the count, his wrinkles relaxing; "then it is on your own responsibility?"

"Precisely."

"But five millions of crowns — two hundred and fifty thousand pounds!" The Minister could not compose himself. "This is a vast sum of money. We expected not an individual, but a syndicate, to accept our securities, to become debtors to the various banks on the continent. But a personal affair! Five millions of crowns! The possibilities of your wealth overwhelm me."

The Englishman smiled. "I dare say I have more than my share of this world's goods. I can give you a check for the amount on the Bank of England."

"Your majesty's lamented predecessor——"

[To be Continued.]

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Understand first that we have two entirely separate nerve systems. When we walk, or talk, or act, we call into play a certain set of nerves—nerves which obey our mental commands. That is why the arm can be raised, or the mouth opened, or the eye shut, at the slightest desire. That is why your fingers can delicately pick up a pin one moment, and hold a heavy hammer the next.

But these are not the nerves we are to consider here.

It is the inside nerves that manage and govern and actuate the heart and the stomach, the kidneys and the liver and all of the vital functions. You cannot control these nerves. By no supreme effort of mind can you make your heart stop or start—nor can you even make it vary by a single beat a minute. And so with the stomach and the liver and the kidneys and the bowels—they are automatic—they do their work at a certain set speed whether you are awake or asleep—whether you want them to or not.

It is on these inside nerves that life and health depends. So long as these nerves perform there proper duties we are well and strong. When they fail, we know it by the inevitable symptoms—stomach, heart, liver, kidney troubles.

Thus, we find that most forms of illness are, after all, only symptoms of the REAL trouble — INSIDE nerve trouble.

For instance, indigestion, sour stomach, heartburn, dyspepsia and all stomach troubles—diabetes, Bright's disease and other kidney disorders—heart troubles, liver troubles, bowel troubles, nervousness, fretfulness, sleeplessness, irritability—all of these ailments are due to this single cause. Painful, disagreeable and dangerous, though they be, they are not separate diseases—and they are not to be treated as such. They are merely OUTWARD signs of INWARD trouble.

There are different centers and branches of this INSIDE nerve system (frequently called the Sympathetic Nervous System). But each branch is so closely connected with the others that breakdown ANYWHERE usually means breakdown EVERYWHERE.

This explains why stomach trouble develops into heart trouble—why indigestion brings on nervousness—why diseases become complicated. It explains, too, why ordinary medical treatments are wrong—why medicine so frequently fails.

For, despite the discoveries of science, the common remedies of the day are designed to treat the organ, not the nerve—the SYMPTOM instead of the cause.

Don't you, though you may not know medicine at all, see that this is wrong? That it is mere patchwork? That while the suffering organ is enjoying its temporary relief, the nerve that is really sick may be getting worse and worse? Does this not explain to you why relapse so frequently follows a supposed cure? Does this not account for the uncertainties of medicine?

More than thirty years ago this thought came to me:

"If life and health depend upon perfect heart action, upon proper stomach digestion, upon correct kidney filtering, why does not life itself depend upon these life governing power nerves—these inside nerves.

I realized, too, that all ailments which result from one cause may, of course, be cured by one remedy. I resolved not to doctor the organs, but to treat the one nerve system which operates them all.

For those who treat only the symptoms need a different remedy for each. Such treatments are only palliative; the results do not last. A cure can never come in disease of the stomach, heart, liver or kidneys, until the inside nerve power is restored. When that is done, Nature removes the symptoms. There is no need of doctoring them.

My remedy—now known by druggists everywhere, as Dr. Shoop's Restorative—is the result of a quarter century of endeavor along this very line. It does not dose the organ or deaden the pain—but it does go at once to the nerve—the inside nerve—the power nerve—and builds it up, and strengthens it and makes it well.

There is no mystery—no miracle. I can explain my treatment to you as easily as I can tell you why cold freezes water and why heat melts ice. Nor do I claim a discovery. For every detail of my treatment is based on truths so fundamental that none can deny them. And every ingredient of my medicine is as old as the hills it grows on. I simply applied the truths and combined the ingredients into a remedy that is practically certain.

In more than a million homes my remedy is now known, and relied upon. Yet you may not have heard of it. So I make this offer to you, a stranger, that every possible excuse for doubt may be removed. Send no money—make no promise—take no risk. Simply write and ask. If you have never tried my remedy, I will send you an order on your druggist for a full dollar bottle—not a sample, but the regular standard bottle he keeps constantly on his shelves. The druggist will require no conditions. He will accept my order as cheerfully as though your dollar lay before him. He will send the bill to me.

Will you accept this opportunity to learn at my expense absolutely, how to be rid forever of all forms of stomach, heart, kidney ailments—to be rid not only of the trouble, but of the very cause which produced it? Write today.

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