

## Dr. Aram Kalfian

(Continued from page 18.)

varnished terms, I told of the charge brought against his honour, and of the peril which hung over him, the hope died within me, for he listened to my report in absolute silence. After I had finished, he replied quite quietly that my friend's warning came somewhat late, for he had that very day received a visit from two emissaries of the society, who were empowered to demand the return of the trust money placed in his hands, together with a full and complete account of his stewardship.

"I asked him if he was in a position to comply with their requests; he replied shortly, 'No, he was not'; but that he had affected to be; he had bluffed to gain time. He explained to me that half the money placed in his hands was supposed to be kept in reserve, ready in case of emergency for immediate use; whilst the other half was invested in securities which could be easily and quickly realized. He had demanded a couple of days' grace to collect the latter; and promised at the end of that time to place the whole amount in the hands of the emissaries. To me he acknowledged quite frankly that he had diverted a considerable portion of the trust-money to his own ends—always hoping that he would have time to replace it before it was needed; and that it was utterly impossible for him to raise the necessary sum at so short a notice.

"I upbraided him bitterly for having cast such a stain upon our hitherto honoured name; he bent his head meekly under my reproaches, and vowed that if only time were afforded him, the whole amount of his defalcations should be refunded.

"There was but one thing left to be done—to arrange as quickly as possible the details of his flight. When this was accomplished, I left him to make a few last preparations, whilst I, restless with misery, went out into the dark night and roamed wretchedly around—trying to kill the time which must elapse before we took the first steps of our journey. Dazed and bewildered by the overwhelming nature of the misfortune which had befallen me, I moved as if in a dream; and my feet soon carried me, half-unconsciously, where my heart dwelt already. It seemed impossible to me that I could be the same man who only the day before had trod that same ground with every thought and nerve attuned to happiness. The blackness of despair now filled my mind; how, I asked myself, could I ever face my little love again, seeing that, through no fault of mine, I was a man disgraced, and had only a tarnished name to offer her?

"How long I had stood sheltered by the darkness of the trees, gazing up at Enid's window, I don't know, when, to my surprise, as if drawn by the wordless telepathy of thought, her slight figure appeared and stood, framed like a picture by the open casement. Thinking myself well-hidden, I held my breath and gazed like one spell-bound—all my heart in my eyes. Suddenly, leaning forward, she called me by name, and I fled panic-stricken, for what could I say to her? How account for my presence there at such an hour? How hide otherwise than by flight the agony of my mind?

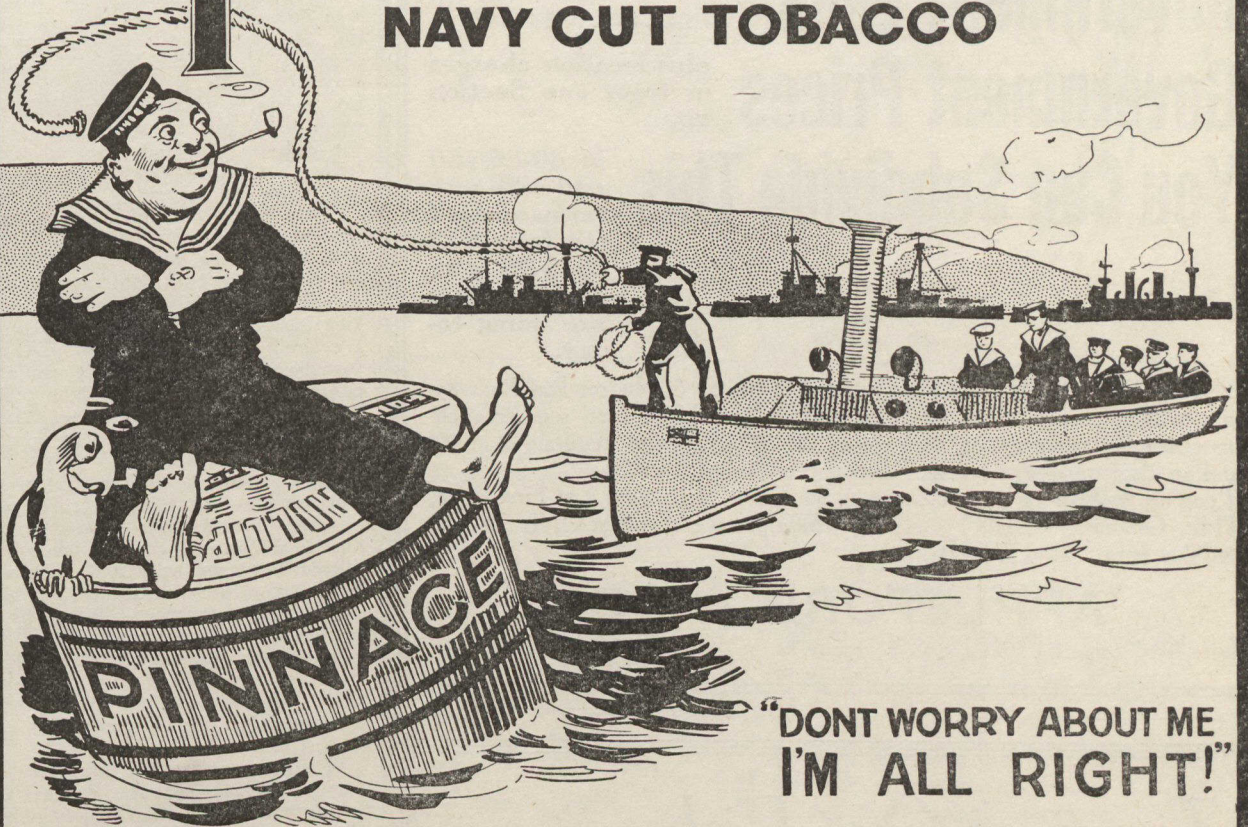
"When I returned to the Hall, after an absence of perhaps a couple of hours, I went straight to my father's room, and found all there in darkness. I spoke, but there was no response; I called his name aloud, a quick fear taking possession of me. As the echo of my own voice died away, silence succeeded, a silence so oppressive, so fraught with terror, that it seemed to weight my limbs like lead.

"Hastily striking a light, I looked round. I saw at first indistinctly the dark outline of a prostrate figure lying between the bed and the table, and thought that my father had forestalled his pursuers—had taken his own life; but, coming closer, I realized with horror that the avenger had been before me, for all that was left of the offender was a headless corpse.

"In the first moments of horror following that awful discovery, a mental and bodily paralysis seemed to overcome me. I stood transfixed—incapable of thought—incapable of action. Even when my

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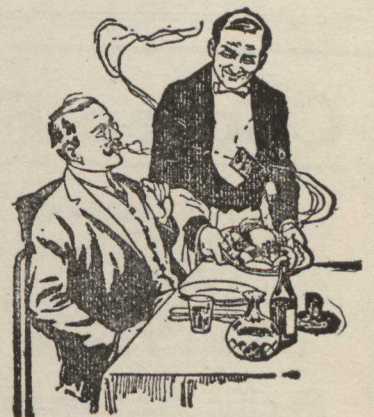
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