

comparison man is a poor, india-rubbery article, with almost offensive powers of recuperation. We can invent airships and discover Poles, but in love we have to concede their three-million-years-old supremacy. I conceded it to Miss Gibbs, conceded it handsomely, and warmed by her returning consideration, I bleated a little bleat about my own sad position.

"You see, I've been promising Fred it would all bust up," I said. "As a person who has outlived a whole row of prophets, I felt it was a pretty safe statement. But it has put me in an awful hole; Fred holds me responsible, don't you know; in the interests of peace and quietness I held him back from taking—er—"

"It will never bust in our time," interrupted Miss Gibbs. "At least, not from any fault of the Purple Brother's, if that's what you mean. I've had him under a microscope too long not to know that he's transparently sincere, transparently honest, and so good that it's a perpetual strain to keep up with him."

"I don't see how that squares with his detaining Elinor," I said.

"Oh, he's not detaining Elinor," Miss Gibbs protested. "Everybody is as free as air. You must try and do what you think right, that's all; and he won't even advise you what that is, or puts you off with a parable. He says the curse of all systems has been authority, reducing people to the level of sheep."

"But Elinor is pining away for Fred," I said. "Doesn't he see it, or doesn't he care?"

"To a person on the Purple Brother's plane," returned Miss Gibbs, "such things are about as important as the humming of that fly on the window. No,

the real nigger in the woodpile is Mrs. Wentworth, who's one of those grabby old octopuses that will never let go anything they like. To her the New Religion is simply a sort of bomb-proof, in which she can keep Elinor away from all the Freds and Toms and Willies and Harrys, and have her all to herself."

"Then you don't think anything can be done?"

"Nothing at all."

"And Elinor's bound to stay in the bomb-proof?"

"Has to."

"And Fred's out in the cold forever?"

"As far as Elinor is concerned, yes."

"And my position as the blighter of his life is to be permanent?"

"I guess so."

"And the Purple Brother's there for keeps?"

"Indeed, he is."

"Would you mind if I utter a loud yell of despair?"

"No, go ahead!"

I rang the bell instead. They are poisonous things, those baldheads, but what else had I to turn to? When all the world is dark and drear one might be excused, even by a temperance reformer, for ordering two frappe. As I sipped mine I reflected that crude people like Fred McCall are often better inspired in an emergency than those of the highest culture. He had been for attacking the problem with tar and feathers, and the summary use of a rail. Woe's me that I had dissuaded him. The whole disaster was my fault; I had wrecked two young lives; I was a shadow across that cold hearth on De La Guerra Street.

Yes, I was in the Cain class; unborn generations scowled at me; the air of the Country Club was thick with them, all scowling. They seemed to ask, "What are you going to do about it?" and that less for infor-

mation than to rub it in. Do? What could I do? What could anybody do? It had all got away from us like a balloon, and we could only point at it in the sky, and—

I was thankful I had to go to New York on business; Fred had got on my nerves, and besides I need an occasional glimpse of the roaring old town to make me properly appreciate Santa Dominica. I like to stand in the thickest of it, and declare I wouldn't have it if they gave it to me. I like to see Wall Street swirling, and contrast my lowly and contented lot with those harassed bandits of finance. I like to see paper money again and oysters and straphangers and frosted windows and Washington Square and newsboys darting in and out of the theatre crowds—all the life that once I shared and loved and hated, and finally broke away from.

I PLUNGE into it once more; I splutter and blow and strike out; I emerge a week later, two weeks later, much refreshed; and hurrying into my clothes, I call loudly for my ticket home. Blessed ticket home! I scan the punches and find them correct, though dissenting somewhat from my personal description thus also briefly noted by the pale young man that punched it; I run my eye lovingly along that two-foot slip of God's continent, and wonder at what precise inch I may go over an embankment or burn alive in my splintered Pullman. I buy a pound of chocolate in case of being snowed up; sew a hundred-dollar bill in my undershirt in case of being held up; I tip the striped highbinders that put me into my cab; struggle with more hatchmen at the station; bid farewell to the last Black Hand in the cavernous depths of the car. Home again, thank Heaven, to orange trees and blue mountains and

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THE BLIND MAN'S EYES

CHAPTER VII.—Continued.

By WILLIAM McHARG AND EDWIN BALMER

SINCLAIR, however, it appeared, had not yet finished his examination. "Will you pull down the window-curtains?" he directed.

As Connery, reaching across the body, complied, the surgeon took a matchbox from his pocket, and glancing about at the three others as though to select from them the one most likely to be an efficient aid, he handed it to Eaton. "Will you help me, please?"

"What is it you want done?"

"Strike a light and hold it as I direct—then draw it away slowly."

He lifted the partly closed eyelid from one of the eyes of the unconscious man and nodded to Eaton: "Hold the light in front of the pupil."

Eaton obeyed, drawing the light slowly away as Sinclair had directed, and the surgeon dropped the eyelid and exposed the other pupil.

"What's that for?" Avery now asked.

"I was trying to determine the seriousness of the injury to the brain. I was looking to see whether light could cause the pupil to contract."

"Could it?" Connery asked.

"No; there was no reaction."

Avery started to speak, checked himself—and then he said: "There could be no reaction, I believe, Dr. Sinclair."

"What do you mean?"

"His optic nerve is destroyed."

"Ah! He was blind?"

"Yes, he was blind," Avery admitted.

"Blind!" Sinclair ejaculated. "Blind, and operated upon within two years by Kuno Garri!" Kuno Garri operated only upon the all-rich and powerful or upon the completely powerless and poor; the unconscious man in the berth could belong only to the first class of Garri's clientele. The surgeon's gaze again searched the features in the berth; then it shifted to the men gathered about him in the aisle.

"Who did you say this was?" he demanded of Avery.

"I said his name was Nathan Dorne," Avery evaded.

"No, no!" Sinclair jerked out impatiently. "Isn't this—?" He hesitated, and finished in a voice suddenly lowered: "Isn't this Basil Santoine?"

Avery, if he still wished to do so, found it impossible to deny.

"Basil Santoine!" Connery breathed.

To the conductor alone, among the four men standing by the berth, the name seemed to have come with the sharp shock of a surprise; with it had come an added sense of responsibility and horror over what had happened to the passenger who had

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been confided to his care, which made him whiten as he once more repeated the name to himself and stared down at the man in the berth.

Conductor Connery knew Basil Santoine only in the way that Santoine was known to great numbers of other people—that is, by name but not by sight. There was, however, a reason why the circumstances of Santoine's life had remained in the conductor's mind while he forgot or had not heeded the same sort of facts in regard to men who travelled much more often on trans-continental trains. Thus Connery, staring whitely at the form in the berth, recalled for instance Santoine's age: Santoine was fifty-one.

BASIL SANTOINE at twenty-two had been graduated from Harvard, though blind. His connections—the family was of well-to-do Southern stock—his possession of enough money for his own support, made it possible for him to live idly if he wished; but Santoine had not chosen to make his blindness an excuse for doing this. He had disregarded, too, the thought of foreign travel as being useless for a man who had no eyes; and he had at once settled himself to his chosen profession, which was law. He had not found it easy to get a start in this; lawyers had shown no willingness to take into their offices a blind boy to whom the surroundings were unfamiliar and to whom everything must be read; and he had succeeded only after great effort in getting a place with a small and unimportant firm. Within a short time, well within two years, men had begun to recognize that in this struggling law firm there was a powerful, clear, compelling mind. Santoine, a youth living in darkness, unable to see the men with whom he talked or the documents and books which must be read to him, was beginning to put the stamp of his personality on the firm's affairs. A year later, his name appeared with others of the firm, at twenty-eight, his was the leading name. He had begun to specialize long before that time, in corporation law; he married shortly after this. At thirty, the firm name represented to those who knew its particulars only one personality, the personality of Santoine; and at thirty-five—though his indifference to money was proverbial—he was many times a millionaire. But except among the small and powerful group of men who had learned to consult him, Santoine himself at that time was utterly unknown.

There are many such men in all countries—more, perhaps, in America than anywhere else—and in

their anonymity they are like minds without physical personality; they advise only, and so they remain out of public view, behind the scenes. Now and then one received publicity and reward by being sent to the Senate by the powers that move behind the screen, or being called to the President's cabinet. More often, the public knows little of them until they die and men are astonished by the size of the fortunes or of the seemingly baseless reputations which they leave. So Santoine—consulted continually by men concerned in great projects, immersed day and night in vast affairs, capable of living completely as he wished—had been, at the age of forty-six, great but not famous, powerful but not publicly known. At that time an event had occurred which had forced the blind man out unwillingly from his obscurity.

This event had been the murder of the great Western financier, Matthew Latron. There had been nothing in this affair which had in any way shadowed dishonour upon Santoine. So much as in his role of a mind without personality Santoine ever fought, he had fought against Latron; but his fight had been not against the man but against methods. There had come then a time of uncertainty and unrest; public consciousness was in the process of awakening to the knowledge that strange things, approaching close to the likeness of what men call crime, had been being done under the unassuming name of business. Government investigation threatened many men, Latron among others; no precedent had yet been set for what this might mean; no one could foresee the end. Scandal—financial scandal—breathed more strongly against Latron than perhaps against any of the other Western men. He had been amongst their biggest; he had his enemies, of whom impersonally Santoine might have been counted one, and he had his friends, both in high places; he was a world figure. Then, all of a sudden, the man had been struck down—killed, because of some private quarrel, men whispered, by an obscure and till then unheard-of, man.

THE trembling wires and cables, which should have carried to the waiting world the expected news of Latron's conviction, carried instead the news of Latron's death; and disorder followed. The first public concern had been, of course, for the stocks and bonds of the great Latron properties; and Latron's bigness had seemed only further evidenced by the stanchness with which the Latron banks, the Latron railroads and mines and public utilities stood firm even against the shock of their builder's death. Assured of this, public interest had shifted to the trial, conviction and sentence of Latron's murderer;

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