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DOUBLOONS

A Thrilling Novel of Mystery, Tragedy and A Stolen Fortune

By Eden Phillpotts and Arnold Bennett

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CHAPTER I.

THE WATCHMAN.

That monster, London, was just lying down to rest. The clocks of the Strand churches and the Strand hotels, keeping nocturnal vigil, showed a quarter to one under the Autumn moon. Through the windows of closed public houses could be seen barmen, who, with sleep in their eyes and dusters in their hands, were endeavoring to wipe away the last stain from their counters. The Strand was inhabited chiefly by policemen engaged in the examination of shop doors, and omnibuses that had the air of hurrying home for fear of being late; a Carter Paterson van, obviously out for the night, crumbled along at leisure. In the courtyards of the two great hotels a few cabs, with their glaring yellow orbs, waited for august patrons, while haughty commissioners ignored contemptuous cabmen. On the pavements between Aldwych and Charing Cross, there were perhaps not more than twenty pedestrians, instead of the twenty thousand that jostled one another at noon. The monster seemed to expel a fatigued sigh, as one saying: "I'll try to get a little sleep, but I'm not at all sure that I shall."

Among the score of pedestrians was Philip Masters, a young, large-boned man of thirty years, who had already had some trifling experience of life, and was destined soon to have considerable more. He loitered from the direction of Charing Cross, and, having stopped a moment in front of a jeweler's which was illuminated in order to tantalize burglars, he crossed from the south side to the north side of Wellington street, and then turned up the splendid curve of Aldwych. The vast and ornate architecture of that region rose above him in its pearly whiteness that the breath of the monster had not had time to soil; and Philip wondered, as people in Philip's condition are apt to wonder, where the money had come from to rear with the rapidity of a dream these blanched places devoted solely to luxury and pleasure.

For Philip was at his final sixpence; he carried all that he possessed on earth in a little black bag; and no one was more surprised than Philip to find himself in the midst of a city that spends twelve thousand pounds a day on cab fares, with no home and no prospect of adding to the sixpence. Philip once had quite the habit of flinging half-crowns to cab drivers in a grand careless manner. He had lost his mother at birth and his father some months earlier, and his effective parents had been a couple of trustees who, on his twenty-first birthday, had furnished him with six thousand pounds and some sound advice

They had brought him up with much common sense; had been careful to keep him out of public schools and historic universities and other pleasure resorts; had procured him a place in the office of a flourishing publisher; and, in general, had done their best for him. But they they had not taught him how to take advice, nor how to acquire a real liking for publishing nor how not to lose money on the Stock Exchange. So that within six years, besides having shown his heels to publishing and acted contrary to their advice in almost every particular, Philip had contrived to part with nearly the whole of his six thousand pounds. He was a man of many remarkable qualities; he was even a philosopher of singular enlightenment, but he happened to have been born with a hole in his pocket which nothing could mend.

At twenty-seven he had made away with everything except his peace of mind and his faith in human nature.

He had essayed various vocations, from insurance to the secretaryship of a club, and had not found the right one. He might have succeeded in the colonies, but circumstances had not sent him thither. Not every one goes to the colonies who might succeed there: Piccadilly is full of colonists who ought to be in Canada. He had stayed longest in his last situation, as half-assistant manager, half-professor in a jiu-jitsu school, for he had the frame and the proclivities of an athlete. Among the pupils of the jiu-jitsu school (Jermyn street) had been a duke. In an encounter Philip had locked the duke's arm, and it was the duke's part to yield at peril of a broken limb.

The duke, however possibly on account of his ancient lineage, had not seen fit to yield, and somehow or other the arm had gone off crack. Now, when an assistant manager of a jiu-jitsu school fractures the arm of a duke who is making the fortune of the school, the fault is clearly that of the assistant manager. Philip saw the propriety of a resignation, and he resigned, so as to avoid further risk to the arms of the British aristocracy.

That was a fortnight ago. Thenceforward he had sought in vain another profitable outlet for his talents; and though he had as yet neither opened cabs at the theatre doors, nor sold evening papers, nor enlisted, or done any of the approved things for a person in his predicament, he was rapidly acquiring a sort of philosophic desperation. The idea of not having enough to eat, which had at first appealed to his sense of wonder and his sense of humor, now struck him as a merely unpleasant idea.

His thought ran: "It can't be me who am 'going under' in London. It surely can't be me who will starve or beg." So run the thoughts of all men who have come to the end of the tether.

He passed into Kingsway, the immense artery which the surgeons have created, but, through which the blood has not yet learned to flow. Its double line of lamps stretched imposingly to Holborn, flanked on one side by the posters of every theatre and medicine in the metropolis, and on the other by the raw remains of habitations which the surgeon's knife had sheared like a guillotine. In the huge and solemn emptiness of the street he hesitated a moment.

He wanted to discover a certain new lodging house of which he had heard, but of whose address he knew nothing save that it was in a street branching westward out of Kingsway. Less than a quarter of a mile off the brazier of a watchman burned a bright red under the yellow glare of the gas lights, and a little system of red lanterns, resembling toy railway signals, showed that Kingsway itself, despite its tender age, was already "up." He could see two gesticulating figures vaguely silhouetted against the radiance of the brazier. As he walked slowly on he demanded of himself whether he would have the courage to ask the watchman as to the lodging house. His diffidence about this simple matter was such that, when he approached the brazier he crossed over the road, away from it, while trying to make up his mind to accost the watchman.

The watchman, however, had a surprise for Philip Masters.

"Hey!" called out the watchman, who appeared to be alone now, and somewhat excited.

"Hello!" Philip replied.

"Here!" Half a mo'!" cried the watchman.

"Do I look like a tramp." was Philip's mental question. "that this fellow orders me to come over to him?"

But he went over. The watchman was middle-aged and rather thin: he wore an overcoat and a sack on top of the overcoat, and two mufflers.

"Want a job?" he inquired of Philip, abruptly, after having scrutinized him. He had been a night watchman in main thoroughfares for years, and the comparitive richness of what remained of Philip's clothes did not deceive him for an instant; he judged a wanderer by his gait and his eyes.

Philip could not tell a lie, so he told the truth.

"Well," said the watchman, "sit in my cabin for three hours, and keep the fire a-going, and a bob's your's matey."

"Right, oh." Philip agreed, determined to be jovial with the watchman in the watchman's own dialect. "And what are you going to do, mate?"

"They've just come for to tell me as my poor old woman's took ill at Brondesbury, and I'm going to foot it up there. I should ha' gone anyhow, substitute or no substitute: but seeing as you'll take it on. . . . No hankey-pankey, now, mate!"

"Leave me the sack," said Philip.

"What have I got to do?"

"Watch," said the watchman crossly, and trotted off.

Philip, his shoulders enveloped in a sack, thus found himself in charge of Kingsway. He had his little house, and his hearth; and he chanced on a larder in the shape of a tea can and a red handkerchief certainly containing sustenance. But the larder was not his: it formed no part of the bargain: it was the property of an honest and ingenuous mortal in two mufflers, a husband in the midst of domestic calamity: to take it would be to rob a poor man of his bread. Still, in two minutes Philip was eating—all digestive apparatus and no conscience! So true is it that a hungry man, though he won't lie, will steal.

A cab glided swiftly down the street while Philip was warming the tea.

"Don't burn your fingers, Charlie shouted the cabman, imitating a woman's voice, as he flashed by.

"Go and bury yourself," retorted Philip, feeling that he must be a watchman to the life or perish in the attempt. As the cabman made no response, he was conscious of pride. He drank the tea. Then a policeman came above the horizon, and Philip thought he would bandy gossip with the policeman. But the aspect of the policeman awed him, and he retired into his little house and pretended to be asleep.

It might have been the sedative influence of half a pork pie, half a loaf, and a pint of tea, or it might have been simply Philip's fatigue, but he did not keep up for more than thirty seconds the pretence of being asleep; he really slept. And after an interval not to be measured in time, he woke with a guilty start. He had slept while on duty, and deserved to be taken out and shot—especially as he had an intuition that in the immediate neighborhood things had been happening which ought not to happen. Also, the fire was low.

He straightened his hat, adjusted the sack, and crept out of his residence to reconnoitre. His residence was at the corner of Strange street and Kingsway, and a trench had been dug along the south side of Strange street and nearly a third of the way across Kingsway. The trench was guarded by a rope-and-iron fence, and duly illuminated by lamps in the established manner. It was part of Philip's domain. There was nothing but unoccupied ground; to the north was a row of tall, eighteenth century houses that had survived many improvement schemes, and would probably survive many more.

Now, as Philip gazed along the trench, he saw a dim form clamber out of it at the other end at a distance of perhaps a hundred yards, and shuffle across Strange street and disappear, but whether it disappeared into a house or into a possible alley Philip could not decide. Nor could he decide whether the form was that of a big dog, a lion escaped from the Hippodrome, or a human being on all fours.

He gave forth an exclamation.

"What's up?" muttered a deep voice. He jumped violently. It was a policeman who had been standing behind the cabin.

"I—I thought I saw some one climb out of the trench there," Philip stammered.

"Oh, you did, did you?" said the policeman, approaching the fire.

The tone of the policeman semmed to indicate to Philip that he must control his thoughts better than that.

But Philip was not to be bounced.

"Yes, I did," he insisted.

"It's funny, as I saw nothing," the policeman remarked with cold irony.

"You the watchman?"

"Yes," said Philip.

"Oh, you are, are you?" sneered the agnostic of a policeman. "I'll have a look yonder."

And he marched along Strange street with a majestic tread that would have shaken the Albert Suspension Bridge.

"Nothing here," he called, gazing into the trench with noble condescension.

And then he vanished into the distance.

Philip, who had not expected the trench to be full of infantry or anything else sufficiently conspicuous to catch the eye of a policeman, seized a lantern as soon as the policeman was out of sight, and jumped into the trench. It was a nice, clean rectangular trench, with sewer pipes lying in it irregularly. At the further end, where the pipe had already been laid, the bottom was two feet higher than elsewhere, and at the junction of the two levels the end of the sewer pipe came out from the earth. Lying close by was a broken section of pipe, and lodged by accident just in the mouth of the laid pipe was a small fragment of the broken section. Philip picked it up and examined it.

There was clearly stamped on it a finger-mark in some dark substance. He carried it away; it might well be the imprint of a workman; it probably was; but, on the other hand, it might not. He saw nothing else of the slightest interest. Before returning to the cabin he ascertained that an alley named Little Grinlers alley ran north out of Strange street, nearly opposite the end of the trench. A single light burned in the entrance hall of the house at the angle of Strange street and the alley; otherwise the street was utterly lifeless.

"And my breakfast, master?"

He was thus greeted on his arrival at the cabin. The watchman, his employer, had come back breathless, and in a stormy temper.

"I've eaten it," said Philip. "I'm awfully sorry."

"Being sorry won't do," replied the watchman. "That breakfast'll cost you a bob, and no less. Here I foot all the blooming way to Brondesbury expecting my old missus at her last gasp, and she aint even ill. Sleeping like a child she is, and I startles her finely. 'What's up, Charley?' she says.

"'Why, I says, 'they told me you was dying, Sarah,' I says.

"Then it was a false alarm?"

"A false alarm it was! Some one trying to make a fool of me! Spite! There's often spite against a watchman. Then I comes back, and I finds my breakfast eat up and my tea drunk, and my fire jiggering wel nearly out. You can move on, matey; that's what you can do. There's no bob for you in my pocket."

Philip was silenced. He picked up from the cabin his little black bag.

"Can you tell me where there's a lodging house called The Corner House?" he asked the watchman timidly.

"Yes. It,s just there, at the corner of Strange street and Little Grinlers alley."

"Thank you," said Philip, after a pause.

A terrific thunder assailed his ear from the south. And in a moment a flying squadron of newspaper vans swept to Kingsway from Fleet street toward Euston —swept past and was gone. No clatter of hoofs on the hard road, no cracking of whips; nothing but the deafening whirr of heavy wheels and the odor of petrol! The monster had roused itself before the dawn, before the moon had paled.

CHAPTER II.

The Corner House.

The house indicated to Philip by the watchman was like the other houses in the row, except that it possessed a double frontage. It had five stories, a flat, plain face of dark, soiled crimson, and some nineteen windows on Strange street alone. In common with nearly all similar houses between the Strand and Euston, it seemed to have lost its illusions early in life, and to be awaiting the end with the cold dignity of a proud, unattractive woman. Little had it dreamed, in its Georgian youth, of the unique fate in store for it at the hands of Mr. Hilgay.

The light still burned in the hall, and and the moonbeams caught the nineteen sombre windows with a peculiar theatrical effect when Philip mounted the steps to the front door. He could now decipher indiscreet letters on a discreet copper plate on the door, the following legend:

THE CORNER HOUSE.

Residence and board.

Adrian Hilgay, Manager

The front door, he perceived, was not quite closed. He pushed it open, and encountered another door, whose upper part was of ground glass. On this ground glass he saw the sharp, moving shadows of two figures engaged in what was evidently a serious struggle: and he could hear the sound of battle and the hard breathing of the combatants. He opened the second door with a rapid movement and beheld a well dressed, slightly built young man in the fatal embrace of an elderly well-seasoned navvy.

"Help me," sputtered the young man, choking, with a frantic appeal in his eyes

"Certainly," said Philip, enchanted by the adventurer. He dropped his bag.

With the outer side of his right hand, hardened by special training, Philip gave one cut just under the navvy's ear. Shocked into attention by the novelty and painfulness of the attack, the navvy flung his victim to the floor, and sprang forward to slay Philip, who lay down on the flat of his back between the two doors. If the navvy had had even the slightest acquaintance with Jiu-Jitsu he would have recoiled before this master-position in the greatest known art of self-defense. The navvy, however, had never heard of Jiu-Jitsu, and the consequence of his rash ignorance was that after getting his wrist ingeniously sprained, he was propelled in a graceful curve by the upraised flat of Philip's left foot, clean into the street.

His first thought on recovering his wits was that the age of miracles had returned. Then, not being a duke, he staggered away, beaten.

Philip rose.

"Jiu-Jitsu, I suppose?" said the young man, also rising, but with more difficulty.

Philip nodded.

"I thought so. I must learn it. I'm excessively obliged to you."

"Oh, that's nothing," said Philip. "Have you a bed to let? I take it you are the manager."

"You don't know me?" exclaimed the young man, with gentle surprise.

"No," Philip answered. "How should I? But as you appeared to be trying to chuck some one out I naturally assumed"—

"You don't mean to say you don't recognize me from my portraits?" The young man's surprise was becoming almost a hurt surprise.

"What portraits?"

"Why, in the press! I've been interviewed with portrait by nearly every paper in London. I'm Hilgay. You've heard of Hilgay, the bookmaker?"

"Never!" said Philip, smiling. "You see I'm"—

"Not heard of Hilgay, the bookmaker, my dear sir! But he was a very great bookmaker indeed. I regret to have to say it, since he was my father. However, he was strictly honorable. He used to say he had lost a hundred thousand pounds in bad debts to the House of Lords alone. He died and left me extremely wealthy,and as I had the misfortune to disapprove of bookmaking I was obliged to do something to satisfy my conscience. Hence my scheme, sir."

"What scheme?"

Mr. Hilgay controlled his astonishment at Philip's surpassing ignorance and then said:

"Come into my office and I'll tell you all about it."

And he drew Philip into a tiny office to the left of the hall. It was electrically lighted, furnished with frail green furniture and adorned with reproductions of pictures by G. F. Watts. They sat down.

"Take some Cut Cavendish?" suggested Hilgay, offering a pouch. My scheme, sir, is philanthropic. It aims to do for the distressed, respectable and well-connected what is done by Lord Rowton and others for the lower classes. I have no prejudice against the lower classes: but their habits are not ours. And it has always struck me that one of the worst hardships of a gentcel person (excuse the word) down on his luck is that he is forced to adopt the habits and endure the society of his social inferiors. Imagine the feelings of a refined individual, sir, whom ill luck or unwisdom compels to lodge, for example, in a Rowton House! Imagine his natural disgust at the clothes, the manners, the accent—er—odors of those with whom he must associate. I provide a boarding house (I will not call it a lodging house) for the respectable person who is reduced to his last sixpence.

"That is my case," Philip put in.

Hilgay bowed, and continued with eagerness. "It is called the Corner House because there is a corner for everybody—of decent appearance and demeanour."

"And who settles what is decent appearance and demeanor?" Philip asked.

"I do sir. I alone. When I am not satisfied I say we are full up."

"You are always here. then?"

"This house is my hobby. I am always here. I sleep from 5 a. m. to noon; and from noon to 2 p. m. I take exercise. Between those hours new guests are not admitted. My difficulty with the person whom you so kindly threw out was caused by his refusal to believe my formal statement that we were full up. Such a person would have been impossible in the Corner House where the standard of manners is high, if the purse is low. We eat off marble-topped tables, sir, but we do not eat peas with a knife, and we allow ourselves Japanese serviettes, and we do not make noises, and we do not swear. The ladies leave the dining room first"——

"There are ladies?"

"Most decidedly. Why not? A distressed gentlewoman sir is one of the"——

"And you make it pay at sixpence a night?" asked Philip, filling the roomlet with fumes of cut Cavendish.

"It just pays current expenses. Space is rigidly economized, but not ventilation. The old rooms are each divided into two, or even three, cubicles—but by soundproof partitions. They are very cheaply furnished, but each differently, and with art furniture: and I could not deprive myself of the pleasure of putting inexpensive copies of masterpieces on every wall in the house." He waved a hand. "In days when a reminder of Raphael's 'Ansideri Madonna' can be bought for threepence"——

"Exactly," said Philip. "Now, can I have one of your sixpenny rooms?"

"It grieves me to say that we are full up," replied Hilgay.

"Ah!" said Philip. "I am not respectable enough! I guessed it! Yet I give you my word of honor that I do not eat peas with a knife."

"I beg you to believe" returned Hilgay seriously, " that we are really full up. The Corner House is a colossal success. However, one of our guests, Mrs."—he consulted a large book, open on the desk —"Mrs. Upotery, told me last night that she should leave this morning. I will reserve her room for you. And in the meantime you will do me the favor of resting in the armchair. I consider myself deeply in your debt."

He jumped up, deprecating Philip's expressions of gratitude. A clock struck five at the same moment, and a step was heard in the hall.

"My sub-manager," said Hilgay, opening the door. "I will give instructions about you. Make yourself at home here. Good morning, and thanks again."

The bookmaker's son passed suavely, with his rather melancholy smile out of the little office.

And Philip took the artistic green armchair, and slept under the electric light.

He was awakened later by the prodigious din outside in the street. The British workman was commencing his deliberate labors in the trench, and making the world aware of the fact. Philip stretched himself, looked about, and found that the window was open, and also that the pale lustre of a London dawn was competing with the electricity in the room. He rose, turned off the light, and went into the hall.

Two boys were cleaning the floor. They had apparently received their orders, for one of them touched a forelock and directed him to a lavatory which was microscopic, like the managerial office, but very complete in detail. From the lavatory he sauntered to the street, where a chill and tonic wind was blowing eastward. The sane simplicity of the early morning, tranquilizing the feverish pulses of the night hours and dispelling their wild thoughts, made him feel that, despite his misfortunes and his unenviable situation, it was an excellent and goodly thing to be alive, with sound health and a cheerful mind.

And then he approached the trench and looked over the ropes. The earth above the laid portion of the pipes had a peculiar appearance on the side nearest to him. It seemed not to lie quietly; it seemed to be somewhat uneven; to have been disturbed and to have been replaced. The group of workmen were moving pipes at the other end of the trench, near Kingsway, their figures vaguely mingled in the uncertain and feeble light. A milkman passed by, one arm weighted by a heavy can and the other stretched horizontally. As Philip stared out into the trench a regiment of strange suspicions, created out of innumerable half remembered circumstances of the night, took possession of his brain. A foreman approached him along the trench.

Philip addressed him.

"You notice nothing remarkable about the lie of that earth, there?" he suggested diffidently, pointing.

"I notice as it's been badly filled," replied the foreman, who was munching a piece of bread. "I told 'em about it yes'day arternoon. But I don't know as that's any concern o' yours. You ain't his majesty the chairman of the County Council, I presoom?"

Philip broke into his imperturbable smile.

"I was only thinking it had been disturbed in the night," he said.

"Not it!' said the foreman.

"Going to have them do it again?' Philip asked.

At that instant his face being in the direction of the street so that he commanded both the trench and the Corner House, he saw in the tail of his eye a blind lifted and let fall momentarily in one of the windows of Mr. Hilgay's establishment for the respectable.

"Not much," said the foreman. "This is a contract job. What do you think?"

"I see," said Philip laconically. The regiment of suspicions fled before the ganger's matter-of-fact tone.

He left the foreman and strolled into Kingsway, and then up toward Holborn. He had his next meal to find.

But the foreman, visited in his turn by some disconcerting motion, continued to gaze at the accused earth.

"Bill!" he shouted at length.

And the old man in the gang at the other end of the trench glanced up, and the foreman summoned him with a jerk of his head.

"Look at that, Bill," said the foreman. Bill scratched his head.

"Funny, aint it?" murmured Bill, in a guttural voice that indicated brandy.

In another minute four laborers had received orders to remove the earth. In another five minutes there was a high commotion. First a boot, then a leg, then the whole dead body of a man had been brought to view, laid flat against the sewer pipe. The group of laborers stood round it, awed by the pathetic dignity of death, waiting for a policeman.

"That was luck, that was!" murmured the foreman, holding in his hand the half-eaten bread. "If I hadn't looked at it curious like, he'd ha' lain there till—goodness knows how long he would ha' lain there."

CHAPTER III.

Sixpence.

When Philip Masters got into Holborn he turned westwards, as a horse will turn toward the stable, even when the manger is empty. In the West End he had always lived, and he scarcely felt at home east of Mudie's. He thought of no device for getting a breakfast. It is true that he possessed still the sum of sixpence, but he considered that Mr. Hilgay had a lien upon that sixpence for the promised room, to say nothing of Raphael's Ansidei Madonna. Doubtless having regard to the singular way in which they had become acquainted, Mr. Hilgay had probably given instructions about a breakfast. But, simply because he really had need of it, and for no other reason, Philip did not wish to accept Mr. Hilgay's hospitality. Had he been a man of ample means, with a regular increase of twentyfive shillings or so tumbling in every week, he would have accepted a meal and a bed from Mr. Hilgay, and looked on it all as a great joke and picnic. Philip was a philosopher, but he was not an unnatural prodigy: and in social matters he was apt to be excessively human.

The curbstone of Holborn was decorated with dustbins at irregular intervals, and all the shops, except Pearce and Plenty's, were closed so thoroughly that they looked as if they would never reopen again. A stream of people passed from the east to the west, hurriedly, with a certain gloomy preoccupation. They seemed chilly; the men had their collars turned up and their hands in their pockets, while the women, mostly young, used their feminine pride to keep themselves warm. The tube Railway threw up quantities of the same sort of people out of the earth. They were the vanguard of the black-coated workers. They all had to be at a particular place at a particular minute; they had the air of trying to catch the trains, but they were only trying to avoid fines.

Philip alone had no rendezvous with Capital. He was a loafer: he knew he was a loafer; and the workers knew it, too. They obviously scanned him with superciliousness as a part of the submerged tenth, and he could not challenge their eyes with a denial. When one is submerged, one feels it and shows it. But Philip's revenge was nigh.

A magnificent automobile swept down Bloomsbury street into the main thoroughfare. It was driven by an august being in furs. Philip, who, like many improvident persons, loved and understood motor-cars, at once perceived that it was a four-speed, eight-cylinder Panhard, sixty-horse power, with coach work by Vedrine, and that the chauffeur was imprudently running on the fourth speed. He stopped to behold it. There is nothing surprising in a man stopping to gaze at a motor-car; but when a motor-car stops to gaze at a man, there may be a fair matter for stupefaction, and Philip's mild astonishment as the automobile jerked itself back on its haunches exactly in front of him may therefore be excused.

The freight leaned its splendid furs over the side of the car; out of the furs smiled a youthful face, with blue eyes and a long fair mustache.

"Phil, isn't it?"

"Hallo, Tony!"

They shook hands.

"What are you doing up so early?" Philip demanded.

"Haven't been to bed yet. Look here, are you busy?"

"No."

"Well, come and breakfast with me, eh?"

"Where?"

"My rooms. The Devonshire Mansion. You're bound to breakfast somewhere."

"I don't know that I was bound to. Still I accept."

"Go ahead," said Tony to the chauffeur as Philip embarked "and shove her along."

"Yes, Sir Anthony."

The car swam arrogantly away. Philip no more formed part of the submerged; in an instant, by the magic of the car and the furs had been transferred into the envy of all Oxford street.

"It's three or four years since I lost touch with your stupendous calm, " said Tony, after a short silence.

"Five," said Philip. There was a pause such as frequently occurs between friends after a long separation.

"I notice your talent for small talk is as striking as ever," said Tony.

"Why talk, when others will talk for you? And why does your man address you as Sir Anthony?"

"I'm almost ashamed to tell you, Phil." replied Tony. "But really these accidents will occur even in quite respectable families. I'm a baronet—a twelfth baronet. My cousin died two days before the day fixed for his marriage."

"Never knew you had a cousin."

"That's because you never ask enough questions. So I got the title."

"A pretty toy! Anything useful with it?"

"Fifteen thousand five hundred a year."

Philip paused; the philosopher in him had enough to do to maintain his sang froid. Five years ago, when Philip was helping to mismanage a proprietary club in St. James's Square, Tony Didring, then aged twenty two, was beginning a career of cheerful and irresponsible failure as a barrister. The contrast between their characters had helped to draw them together at the club, of which Didring was a member, and for a year or so a club friendship had mightily flourished between these two needy nobodies. And now Tony had a stake in the country and an income of fifty pounds a day. Sundays excluded.

"You're spending it, I suppose?" Philip murmured.

"Oh, quite easily. What are you doing?"

"I'm a man of leisure."

"The deuce you are! You don't look it."

"Yes, I do," said Philip. "That's just where you're mistaken."

In no time the car drew up at the Devonshire mansion on the confines of Hyde Park. The vast pile, which comprised within its eleven floors a hotel, a restaurant, a cafe, several clubs, Chreistopoulos's cigarette shop, a barber's, a billiard academy, a circulating library, a post and telegraph office, and some scores of flats unsurpassed for elegance, had not yet commenced its brilliant day. The remnant of commissionaries on duty in the great hall where three tape machines are, were in the mufti of sleeved waistcoats, and the lift-boy, who lifted Sir Anthony and the gentleman of leisure to the fifth floor, had not yet brushed his hair.

An oldish, clean-shaven, iron-gray man received them gravely at Sir Anthony's door.

"Good morning, Sir Anthony."

"Morning, Oxwhich. Breakfast for two. Caviare, kidneys."

"I have ventured to order grape-nuts, Sir Anthony."

"Ridiculous, man!" Mr. Masters has not come all the way from Bloomsbury to eat grape-nuts."

"Your digestion after these nights, sir—or, rather, I should say, your indigestion"——

"You're quite right, Oxwhich. But this gentleman"——

"I insist upon grape-nuts," said Philip.

The portly Oxwhich took charge of hats and furs, and presently it was no secret that Sir Anthony was wearing evening dress.

"You see," he explained apologetically, "we had a bit of a flutter here last night—must enjoy life—and two of my friends, jolly chaps, missed the last train for Manchester. Didn't miss it; forgot it. So I promised them they should catch the first. Why Manchester, of all the places, I don't know! But it seems they had an important appointment. I shan't change before breakfast, Oxwich. I'm too hungry. Besides, I'm more comfortable as I am."

"I have ventured to prepare your bath, Sir Anthony, and your new gray lounging suit, with the sapphire necktie. I've had the lower carrying bottom of the waistcoat altered."

"Oh, very well, very well! Take Mr. Masters to the other bathroom." Tony fled.

"Certainly, sir. One moment, sir" said Oxwich to Philip, and picked up the end of a speaking tube and whistled. "Nother grape-nuts," he whispered into the tube. "One kidney en brochette."

Then he permitted himself a discreet smile at Philip.

"Not for me, Philip protested.

"Yes, sir, for you," Oxwich insisted. "This way, sir."

Guest and host met again in the latter's dressing room, and when Philip had seen Tony's thirty-three waistcoats, his eighteen suits, his seven frock coats, his forty-one sublime examples of fancy trousering (all in stretchers), his hundred and eighteen cravats, his thirty-three walking sticks and 7 umbrellas, his quadruple row of boots, shoes, slippers and pumps, his thirteen overcoats, his twenty scarfpins, his four drawers full of shimmering braces, his safe of jewelry, his gold-backed brushes, and his unique assortment of hats and caps, he came to the conclusion that, even with an income of fifty pounds a day, it was just as well for a young man who had taken up the expensive profession of being a dandy to economize from time to time with a grape-nut breakfast.

In the distinguished Chippendale apartment, where breakfast was laid, Oxwich assumed control of the proceedings. He put Sir Anthony, resplendent in the sapphire tie, at one end of the table, and Philip at the other, and he kept their meals strictly separate.

"Oxwich," said the Baronet snddenly, "these grape-nuts are delicious. Will you go to the telephone and retain my usual table in the restaurant for to-night?"

"Now, sir?"

"Now."

"Yes, sir."

"Quick, Phil my boy!" Tony jumped up as soon as Oxwich had, in his senatorial manner, quitted the apartment. "Give me one of your kidneys, will you?"

And without waiting for an answer he robbed his guest of a kidney and began to eat it.

"Afraid of Oxwich?" Philip questioned.

"Only morally," said Tony. "His empire over me is purely moral, I assure you. And he's quite right about my digestion."

"How did you get hold of him?"

"I didn't. He got hold of me. He was my cousin's valet, and seemed somehow to go with the estate."

"I like him," said Philip.

"So do I. He resembles grape-nuts—he's good for me. And his taste in neckties—amazing!"

Tony gulped down the last of the stolen kidney as Oxwich senatorially returned.

"Done it," said he, sinking back into his chair.

"Yes, sir," Oxwich murmured; "it is arranged."

"I don't mean what you mean," said Tony blithely.

"A little more grape-nuts, sir?"

"No, thanks—excellent as they are. If you've finished, Phil, let's go into my study, eh? Oxwich, the cigarettes."

"Your study?" Philip repeated, surprised, knowing Sir Anthony's indifferance to literature.

"Well, my den—my whatever you like to call it. I'll show you something."

Followed by Oxwich bearing nine kinds of cigarettes, they crossed the passage to a Sheraton apartment, larger and richer than the other. In the middle of the room, next to the grand piano on which lay the vocal score of "The Spring Chicken," was a peculiar oblong table, the top of which was painted to represent a pack of cards laid out in four rows, according to suits; all around the pack was a wide border of green cloth, and at one end was marked a circle with the mystic word "joker" in the centre of it.

"What's this?" Philip demanded.

"This is it," was Sir Anthony's reply, and his face brightened. "This is what I wanted to show you. The latest machine for having a flutter. It's just out and it'll be all over the Riviera next season. It's called card roulette. It's better than roulette—no ball spinning, no noise. You simply shuffle and cut a pack of cards, and put your money on either a particular card, or a suit, or a number, or a color."

"And instead of zero, you have a joker in the pack, eh?" asked Philip.

"You've tumbled to it, my son. Pack of fifty-three cards. We were playing till five o'clock this morning. I never tire of it."

"Did you win or lose?"

"I won. I was a banker. How much did I win, Oxwich?"

"When I retired to rest the bank was two hundred and eighty pounds in hand, Sir Anthony," said Oxwich striking a match and holding it for Philip.

"I could enjoy this game, I fancy." Philip remarked. "It's Monte Carlo in the home."

"Yes. Isn't it?" Tony agreed enthusiastically. "Why not have aflutter now?"

"All right."

"It's a fifty-one to one chance against any card you see. Three to one against any suit, and twelve to one against any number. Will you bank, or shall I?"

"Oh, you'd better bank," said Philip.

"Right, Oxwich shall shuffle and cut, eh? Oxwich, the cards."

Philip drew sixpence from his pocket, and put it on the queen of spades.

"You're getting cautious in your old age," Sir Anthony commented, emptying his pockets on to a corner of the table. "Now, Oxwich."

Oxwich majestically shuffled and cut the queen of spades.

"Good for you," said the Baronet. "Better than bridge, isn't it? Oxwich—fifty-one times sixpence?"

"One pound five and six, sir."

"Leave all the money on the queen of spades," said Philip. "I'll try her again."

"We have a limit of a couple of quid on the big chance," Sir Anthony explained.

"Now, Oxwich."

Oxwich shuffled and once more cut the queen of spades.

"The devil!" muttered Sir Anthony. Oxwich, fifty-one times one pound five and six?"

"Sixty-four pounds and sixpence, sir."

"Excuse me, sixty-five pounds and sixpence," said Philip.

"My fault entirely, sir," said Oxwich. "I should have said sixty-five."

"Don't mention it." Philip smiled. "What's your maximum stake on the suits?"

"Twenty quid," said Sir Anthony, taking notes from a breast pocket.

"I'll go the maximum on spades," Philip announced. And Oxwich cut spades.

Philip counted his winnings—a hundred and twenty-six pounds six shillings, plus the original sixpence.

"What are you going to do next?" Sir Anthony inquired.

"Well, if it's all the same to you, I'm not going to do anything next," Philip responded.

"Why?"

"I'll tell you some other time," said Philip, in a strange voice.

The baronet looked at Oxwich, who faded from the study.

"What's up, old chap?" Sir Anthony asked.

"Nothing! Look here, I'll give you your revenge I'll toss you double or quits."

"Done!" snapped the baronet, picking up a coin. "Sudden death!"

"Tails," said Philip.

It was.

Philip sat down.

"I'm not quite well," said he.

"You ought to be," said the baronet, parting with more notes.

"The fact is——" Philip began, hesitated and proceeded: "You remember I put sixpence down, to start with?"

"You did."

"It was my last in the world. I was starving when you picked me up this morning. Now I'm worth an immense fortune—two hundred and fifty pounds! I've never gambled before in my life, and I shall never gamble again, Tony. On that you may stake your bottom dollar."

"Well, I'm dashed!" breathed the baronet, softly,

(To be continued.)

WOODSTOCK FAIR CLOSED LAST NIGHT

Attendance 5,000 Yesterday — Results of Horse Racing and Sports.

Woodstock, N. B., Sept. 28—(Special.)—The Woodstock exhibition closed this evening in a blaze of glory. About 5,000 people were present. It was an ideal day for the ending of a most successful fair. The 67th Regt. Band was present all day. The sports in the park were most interesting. Judges in the athletic contests were R. E. Estabrooks and Captain Bull. Judges in the horse races were Starter Sandy Williams, W. B. Nicholson, H. E Gallagher. The following is a summary:

Running Race, Half Mile Heats.

May Wilkes	1	1
Jess	2	2
Gertie Mac	3	3

Time—59½, 58½.

Colt Race, Half Mile Heats.

Bell Al Fondly, Gallagher	1	1	1
Major Bell, Bolger	4	2	2
Stelletta, Dugan	2	4	4
Lucy Glen, McLean	3	3	3

Time—1.19½.

Roxy D., owned by Birmingham Bros., gave an exhibition half mile in—quarter, 35; half, 1.13.

Half-mile bicycle race—Ralph Allingham, 1st, rifle; A. Edwin Raymond, 2nd, bicycle pump.

100 yards dash—Vale, 1st, military brushes; Ken McLean, 2nd, snap shot book.

Running broad jump—Ken McLean, 1st, necktie case; Alf Atherton, 2nd, pearl handle knife.

Potato race—George Atherton, 1st, knife, Walter McKinley, 2nd, ball mit.

Quarter-mile race for boys—Andrew Andrews, 1st, rifle; Ralph McAdam, 2nd, necktie case.

High jump—Arthur Saunder, 1st, whisk holder; Alf Atherton, 2nd, knife.

Three-legged race—Harold Rymes and M. McQuarrie, 1st, knives and forks, combination; Douglas Winslow and Fen Nicholson, 2nd, knives.

Standing broad jump—Alf Atherton, 1st, portfolio; Ken McLean, 2nd, knife.

Throwing base ball, Ken McLean, 1st, ball; Arthur Saunders, 2nd, mitt.

Sack race—Alfred Dunn, 1st, snap shot boko; S. Bailey, 2nd, match holder.

Bicycle slow race—Ralph Watson, 1st, portfolio; S. Bailey, 2nd, bicycle pump.

There can be no question that one of the most interesting features of the exhibition was the school exhibit, this being an entirely new phase of exhibition work. The exhibition consisted of maps of Canada and New Brunswick, industrial drawing, writing, letter writing, essay writing, collection of botanical specimens and of native wood, products of school gardens and manual training work. Nearly 500 entries were received in these different classes. Naturally, the town of Woodstock leads in the number of exhibits, two of the most attractive town exhibits are those in manual training work and school garden products. The former exhibit obtained first place at the St. John exhibition, and in addition five individual prizes were awarded there. It reflects great credit on the teacher, Miss Louise Wetmore. The judges of these exhibits were Inspector Meagher, Dr. John Brittain, A. C. Calder and N. F. Thorne. Many money prizes were given to the successful scholars.

Successful St. John Boy.

John C. Goodspeed, who, for the past three months, has been in the employ of the Boston & Northern Street Railway Co., Salem (Mass.), is in the city, but will return at once to enter the employ of the general electric, having secured an appointment in the turbine testing department of that institution at good pay.