



KING'S PLATE DAY ON THE MEMBERS' LAWN AT THE WOODBINE.—"THE SCENES IN THE ENCLOSURE SET APART FOR SOCIETY WERE BRILLIANT IN THE EXTREME."

—Photographed expressly for The Toronto Sunday World

The Rudigan Girdle.

A Story of the Plan to Purloin a Pricess Diamond Ornament, and How It Failed.

It was night when I, Maecenas Hadger, arrived at Tranquillity Spa. The three drawn curtains of the veranda the decorous shadows of those dining more prudently than well could still be seen, hundreds of twinkling lights above indicated that many others were already preparing to follow that regime which would make them healthy, wealthy and wise. Dr. McWilliams looked me over, as the saying is, "There is nothing radically wrong with you, Mr. Pheasant," he said, for it was by such name that my irrefragable credentials had presented me; "but you are not exactly fit. Rest and quiet are what you need, the rest and quiet which I warrant as active and intense a young newspaper man as you have not seen for many a day. We'll soon have you in hand, my dear sir; it is all a matter of nerves."

I agreed with him in his last statement, the eliminating the terminal "Rest and quiet, hey?" I mused; "quest and riot rather. Quest for the famous Rudigan diamonds, and then riot on so much of the proceeds as my taskmaster, old Gratz, may allow."

"I should imagine that such a prescription would not be to the taste of the many fashionable folk I hear you have with you," I ventured. Dr. McWilliams smiled indulgently.

"That is one of the characteristics of our system," he replied, rubbing his hands. "We give our people what they crave, but fear they should avoid, in a form so reduced and refined that it agrees thoroughly with them."

"Society? Poof, the very best of it! Balls and romps and banquets? To the queen's taste! Dress? Well, Paris is a country town in comparison! But no sound of music and dancing can penetrate the deadened walls; and who ever caught cold from a décolleté gown with a needle bath and an oil rub as a preventive? There is champagne, too, but not a drop of alcohol in it, and even the cards and counters for bridge are medicated. In fine, as old Mrs. Rudigan says, who, I may whisper, has been an inveterate belle for a time beyond which the memory of man runs, she is not to the contrary—even that distinguished society leader is so good as to say that, forty itself is sublimated into its own antidote at Tranquillity Spa."

"I have often read of her, of course,"

devotion to her aunt. You will enjoy the privilege of meeting her. Mr. Pheasant. She is interested in all literary matters and has more than once been mentioned as the author of that anonymous success of last year, 'Knobs and Mats.' And you had best prepare for bed. Lights are reduced to a candle power at 10, and fifteen minutes later the scorching air begins to diffuse thru the health radiators."

I sat at my window smoking contentedly enough as I awaited the nocturnal eclipse. True, a beautiful young lady, devoted and brilliant, was a complication I had not counted upon when I undertook this adventure. But she would serve to put me on my mettle, and as I had noticed it was under the

Rudigan had worn for so long and so habitually as to make it a very part of her conspicuous personality. Mine, then, was the task to substitute this paste imitation for the real jewel; and then decamp with it into the respectable obscurity which surrounded the meager menage and pretensions of Maecenas Hadger, an attorney at law.

I reflected, I say, not discontentedly, on the prospects, until the long lines of lights above, below, on either side, dwindled into a faint glow, until, as I lingered in the soothing twilight an unwanted drowsiness crept over me; and then, I too, became a loyal citizen of that world-wide kingdom over which sleep holds sway.

I soon knew Mrs. Rudigan—it was a

distinction, and her beautiful head divinely poised, there was a directness in the gaze of her great gray eyes that was disconcerting. Evidently she resented my attentions to her aunt; that was to be expected. But did she also distrust my claims? Then, indeed, indignation and suspicion, under her firm, skilled hand, might crash a victorious chariot thru the thin line of my defenses.

However, current gossip—it flowed on forever at the sanitarium—brought me relief. Beatrice had troubles of her own. Our head waiter, Roberts, it seemed, was a college man, advancing to the higher life over a succession of tips. He was melancholy, graceful, with sad eyes and a soulful curl; Byronie in a word, if that word should define a pose.

It was said that they strolled thru the meadows and read poetry together; that he had collaborated in "Knobs and Mats"; that she was reviewing the Phillipps with him—Lord, what didn't they say? I know that before I had half finished repeating what I had heard to Mrs. Rudigan that lady's personal thermometer shot from the temperate zone of good nature to the apoplectic torridity of rage; the her vulgarity, being a constant quantity, remained normal.

"A watter in the family!" she sputtered. "Why, I could never see him before me without thinking he ought to be behind me; and when he wore evening clothes it would be all the more confusing. I won't stand it, that's flat. You don't know all I have endured from that girl, Mr. Pheasant, for the sake of not being utterly alone in the world. Oh, I know what you would say; she strikes you as perfection, just as she does every one else; but I have brought her up in the lap of luxury since she was a babe, and if I lay on my dying bed this very moment, the one thought that would trouble her would be which one of my two wills would be found after my death. She has discovered that I have made two—in her favor and one to found an asylum for distressed old women; and it is just this uncertainty and nothing else that has served to keep her within bounds."

Here was a revelation, to be sure. Vastly different from Dr. McWilliams'

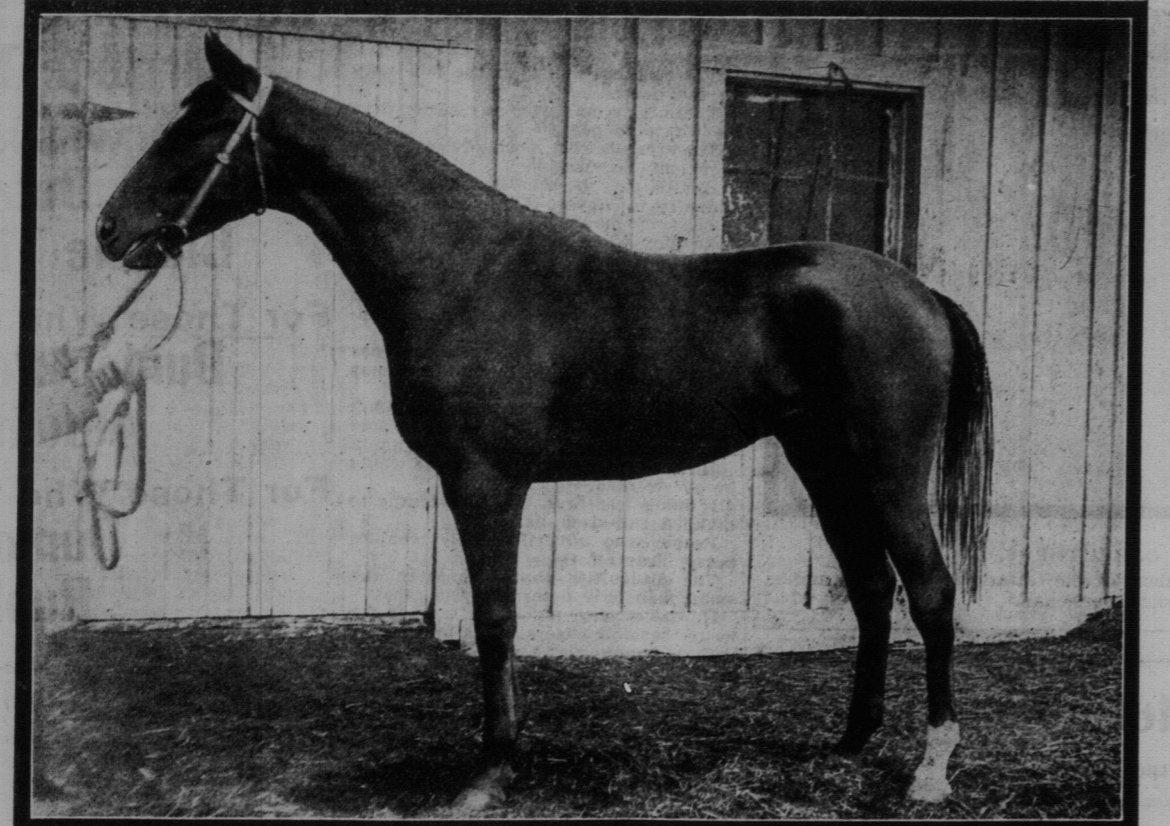
honeyed words, but all the likelier to be true for that. I reprehended myself, advised caution and expressed the hope that quiet observation would establish the fallacy of the sanitarium's common talk. All the while, I was wondering whether I could not turn this unexpected situation to my own advantage.

Granted that Beatrice was as cold and calculating as her aunt represented, granted that, notwithstanding she was infatuated with Roberts—a very pretty fellow in his way, for a fact. Did not so unusual a break from settled characteristics reveal the strength of the girl's passion and prease the lengths she would go for its sake? Time was flying, and I was no nearer the diamond

girdle than on my first meeting with Mrs. Rudigan. She wore it that evening, she wore it every evening, but invariably, before the lights had dwindled into candles and the health radiators had begun to soothe, it was locked in the great metal safe in the office by the doctor, delivered over to him either by the old lady herself or by Beatrice.

What hope, then, was there for a substitution which would give me a living chance to escape without suspicion, unless, unless, I could so contrive that the girl should make it herself? So it was that the scheme, inchoate, fragmentary, began to present itself and to

Continued on Page 5.



MR. N. DYMENT'S TONGORDER, WINNER OF THE TRIAL PURSE, THE FIRST EVENT OF THE O. J. C. SPRING MEETING AND THE TORONTO CUP ON WEDNESDAY.

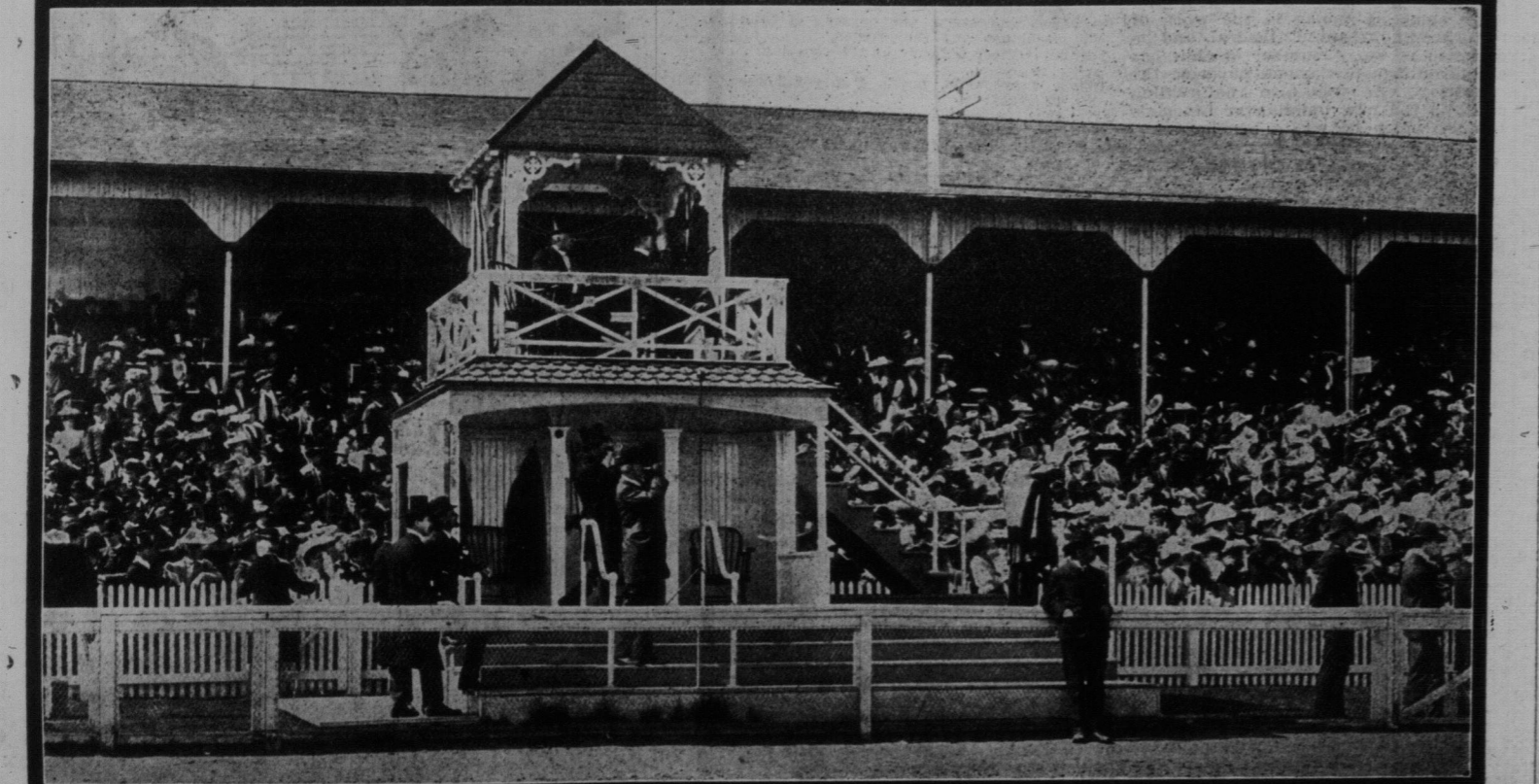
the candle at both ends while getting fourteen hours of solid sleep out of the twenty-four, ha, ha!"

"It must be lonely notwithstanding for a childless widow with only a retinue of servants."

"Ah, but you forget her niece, Miss Beatrice Rudigan, a young lady, I assure you, who must be reckoned with under every possible circumstance; as brilliant as she is beautiful, and all

characteristic of the jolly old woman, fat, red-faced, short-breathed, as hopelessly vulgar, to know everybody. I listened interestedly to the one subject the liked best to talk about, herself; and thru unlike that master key to human regard, I got into her good graces. But the niece, Miss Beatrice, was a different proposition. A tall, straight slip of a girl, carrying her perfect form with

distinction, and her beautiful head divinely poised, there was a directness in the gaze of her great gray eyes that was disconcerting. Evidently she resented my attentions to her aunt; that was to be expected. But did she also distrust my claims? Then, indeed, indignation and suspicion, under her firm, skilled hand, might crash a victorious chariot thru the thin line of my defenses.



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