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C. J. Mitchell

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The MASQUERADER

By Katherine Cecil Thurston, Author of "The Circle," Etc. Copyright, 1904, by Harper & Brothers

But Chilcote had followed his movements restlessly, and now as he watched him a flicker of excitement crossed his face. "God, Loder," he said again, "it was a relief to see you! I dreamed I was in hell—a horrible hell, worse than the one they preach about." He laughed to reassure himself, but his voice shook pitifully.

Loder, who had come to fight, stood silent and inert. "It was horrible—bestial," Chilcote went on. "There was no fire and brimstone, but there was something worse. It was a great ironic scheme of punishment by which every man was chained to his own vice—by which the thing he had gone to pieces over, instead of being denied him, was made compulsory. You can't imagine it." He shivered nervously and his voice rose. "Fancy being satiated beyond the limit of satiety, being driven and dogged by the thing you had run after all your life!"

He paused excitedly, and in the pause Loder found resolution. He shut his ears to the panic in Chilcote's voice, he closed his consciousness to the sight of his shaken face. With a surge of determination he rallied his theories. After all, he had himself and his own interests to claim his thought. At the moment Chilcote was a wreck, with no desire toward rehabilitation, but there was no guarantee that in an hour or two he might not have regained control over himself and with the inclination that had prompted his letter of the day before. No; he had himself to look to. The survival of the fittest was the true, the only principle. Chilcote had had intellect, education, opportunity, and Chilcote had deliberately cast them aside. Fortifying himself in the knowledge, he turned slowly back to the bed.

"Look here," he began, "you wrote for me last night." His voice was hard. He had come to fight.

Chilcote glanced up quickly. His mouth was drawn and there was a new anxiety in his eyes. "Loder!" he exclaimed, quickly. "Loder, come here! Come nearer!"

Reluctantly Loder obeyed. Stepping closer to the side of the bed, he bent down.

The other put up his hand and caught his arm. His fingers trembled and jerked. "I say, Loder," he said suddenly, "I—I've had such a beastly night—my nerves, you know."

With a quick, involuntary disgust Loder drew back. "Don't you think we might shove that aside?" he asked. But Chilcote's gaze had wandered from his face and strayed to the dressing table; there it moved feverishly from one object to another.

"Loder," he exclaimed, "do you see—can you see if there's a tube of tablets on the mantelshelf or on the dressing table?" He lifted himself nervously on his elbow, and his eye wandered thencefully about the room. "—I had a beastly night; my nerves are—horribly jarred, and I couldn't—think." He stopped.

With his increasing consciousness his nervous collapse became more marked. At the first moment of waking the relief of an unexpected presence had surmounted everything else, but now, as one by one his faculties stirred, his wretched condition became patent.

With a new sense of perturbation Loder made his next attack. "Chilcote," he began sternly.

But again Chilcote caught his arm, pinching at the coat sleeve. "Where is it?" he said. "Where is the tube of tablets—the sedative? I'm—I'm obliged to take something when my nerves go wrong." In his weakness and nervous tremor he forgot that Loder was the sharer of his secret. Even in his extremity his fear of detection clung to him limply—the lies that had become second nature slipped from him without effort. Then suddenly a fresh panic seized him, his fingers tightened spasmodically, his eyes ceased to rove about the room and settled on his companion's face. "Can you see it, Loder?" he cried. "Can't you see the light's in my eyes. Can you see it? Can you see the tube?" He lifted himself higher, an agony of apprehension in his face.

Loder pushed him back upon the pillow. He was striving hard to keep his own mind cool, to steer his own course straight through the chaos that confronted him. "Chilcote," he began once more, "you sent for me last night, and I came the first thing this morning to tell you"—But there he stopped short.

With an excitement that lent him strength, Chilcote pushed aside his hands. "God," he said suddenly, "suppose 'twas lost—suppose 'twas gone! The imaginary possibility gripped him. He sat up, his face livid, drops of perspiration showing on his forehead, his whole shattered system trembling before his thought.

At the sight Loder set his lips. "The tube is on the mantelshelf," he said in a cold, abrupt voice. A groan of relief fell from Chilcote, and the muscles of his face relaxed. For a moment he lay back with closed eyes, then the desire that tortured him stirred afresh. He lifted his eyelids and looked at his companion. "Hand it to me," he said quickly. "Give it to me." Give it to me, Loder, quick as you can! There's a glass on the table and some whisky and water. The tablets dissolve, you know!—In his new excitement he held out his hand,

But Loder stayed motionless. He had come to fight, to demand, to plead, if need be, for the one hour for which he had lived—the hour that was to satisfy all labor, all endeavor, all ambition. With dogged persistence he made one more essay.

"Chilcote, you wrote last night to recall me!" Once again he paused, checked by a new interruption. Sitting up again, Chilcote struck out suddenly with his left hand in a rush of his old irritability.

"D—n you!" he cried suddenly. "What are you talking about? Look at me! Get me the stuff. I tell you it's imperative." In his excitement his breath failed, and he coughed. At the effort his whole frame was shaken.

Loder walked to the dressing table, then back to the bed. A deep agitation was at work in his mind. Again Chilcote's lips parted. "Loder," he said faintly—"Loder, I must—I must have it. It's imperative." Once more he attempted to lift himself, but the effort was futile.

Again Loder turned away. "Loder!" With a fierce gesture the other turned on him. "Good heavens, man!" he began. Then unaccountably his voice changed. The suggestion that had been hovering in his mind took sudden and definite shape. "All right!" he said in a lower voice. "All right! Stay as you are."

He crossed to where the empty tumbler stood and hastily mixed the whisky and water, then crossing to the mantelpiece where lay the small glass tube containing the tightly packed



He dropped the five tablets one after another into the glass.

Chilcote lifted his head. His face was slightly drawn, but the feverish brightness in his eyes had increased. "Five," he said sharply. "Five. Do you hear, Loder?"

"Five?" Involuntarily Loder lowered the hand that held the tube. From previous confidences of Chilcote's he knew the amount of morphia contained in each tablet, and he realized that five tablets, if not an absolutely dangerous dose, was at least an excessive dose, even for one accustomed to the drug. For a moment his resolution failed. Then the dominant note of his nature—the urgency, the fundamental egotism, the self-interest—asserted itself beyond denial. It might be reprehensible, it might even be criminal to accede to such a request made by a man in such a condition of body and mind; yet the laws of the universe demanded self-assertion—prompted every human mind to desire to grasp and to hold. With a perception swifter than any he had experienced he realized the certain respite to be gained by yielding to his impulse. He looked at Chilcote with his haggard, anxious expression, his eager, restless eyes, and a vision of himself followed sharp upon his glance.

A vision of the untiring labor of the past ten days, of the slowly kindling ambition, of the supremacy all but gained. Then, as the picture completed itself, he lifted his hand with an abrupt movement and dropped the five tablets one after another into the glass.

(To be continued.)

Children Cry FOR FLETCHER'S CASTORIA

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County of Brant

FAIRCHILD'S AND MANWARING CREEK BRIDGES, GOVERNOR'S ROAD. SEALED TENDERS, clearly endorsed on the outside "Tender for Reinforced Concrete Abutments, Fairchild's Creek and Manwaring Creek Bridges," will be received by the County of Brant up to 12 noon on Wednesday, 30th of June, 1915. The bridges are each of 60 feet clear roadway, 16 feet roadway, and are situated within 1/4 mile of each other, 3/4 miles south-west of Harrisburg Junction. The abutments contain 152 cubic yards and 170 cubic yards of concrete respectively. Plans and specifications may be seen at the office of the County Engineer, Jackson & Co., Temple Building, Brantford, from whom tender forms may be obtained. Tenders must be addressed to the County Clerk, County Building, Brantford. ALAN MAIR JACKSON, County Engineer.

Township of Brantford

MORDUE AND WILLIAMS BRIDGES OVER JONES' CREEK, FIRST CONN. SEALED TENDERS, clearly endorsed on the outside "Tender for Mordue and Williams Bridges," will be received by the Township of Brantford up to noon on Saturday, 19th June, 1915. The bridges are both of 12 feet span and 14 feet roadway, and are situated on the side roads between Lots 42 and 43 and 36 and 37 respectively. They contain 112 and 60 cubic yards of reinforced concrete respectively. Plans and specifications may be seen at the office of the Township Engineer, Jackson & Company, Temple Building, Brantford, from whom tender forms may be obtained. Tenders must be addressed to the Township Clerk, County Building, Brantford. ALAN MAIR JACKSON, Township Engineer.

NOTICE

is hereby given that a by-law was passed by the Council of the Township of Brantford on the 7th day of June, 1915, providing for the issue of debentures to the amount of \$15,000.00 for the purpose of acquiring and paying for a site for a school-house for School Section Number Six in the said Township of Brantford, and for the purpose of building on said site a school-house and equipping said school-house for said School Section, and that such by-law was registered in the registry office of the County of Brant on the 8th day of June, 1915. Any motion to quash or set aside the same or any part thereof must be made within three months after the first publication of this notice, and cannot be made thereafter. Dated the 8th day of June, 1915. J. A. SMITH, Clerk.

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