

THE MESSES OF MISCHANCE

BY GILBERT WINTLE

A Great Human Interest Serial Filled With Action
Now Published for the First Time

CHAPTER XVII.—(Continued.)

This final exclamation had no apparent connection with the rest of the sentence. It was called forth by a sudden flash of memory, suggested by his own words, that came to him even as he was speaking. Arthur looked over to his brother, Ferdinand, their eyes met, and, as if by a common accord, they both pronounced the name "Martin".

Almost at the same time Horace said:—
"So it was Hocking who brought Mr. Canning to your door?"
"Yes," replied Arthur, surprised.
"Why do you know him?"
"I do," Horace replied. And then to the astonished Smiths, and to the no less astonished Ned Gaeconne, he proceeded to tell the whole story of Carey, and of his interview with him and discovery of how, from dissipated undergraduate he had developed into full-fledged crackman. For, whatever promises Horace had given, he rightly held that they were null and void, now that there was a question of a crime committed by very institution at which he, Horace, had been employed.

"You say this chap sprained his ankle, Arthur?" said old Mr. Smith.
"Yes, or pretended to," replied Arthur.
"You took him upstairs, I suppose?"
"Yes."
"Did you leave him alone?"
"A good ten minutes."
"Then that," said old Mr. Smith, emphatically, "explains how the impression of the key was got."
"And father," said Miss Smith, eagerly, "Tommy was right after all, and not dreaming at all, when he said that some one had been meddling with your keys."
"Good for Tommy," said Arthur. "If he wasn't in bed he should have some toffee, if we had to make a special brew. And now, Mr. Wyndham, and ladies and gentlemen all, listen to the rest of the story. For there is a rest, and Ferd and I are just the fellows to tell you all about it."

Then he proceeded to recount the picking up of Carey, or Canning, or Martin, and his subsequent departure from the Arcaea under the distinguished patronage of the great Mr. Buggins.

"What a name!" cried Maude.
"Not one to forget easily, Maude, I agree," replied her brother. "There should not be much difficulty about tracing a man with a name like that. And, of course, if we can trace Mr. Buggins, we can probably get on the track of Mr. Carey."

"But, Arthur," asked Mr. Smith, "are you quite sure that this Martin is really Carey?"
"Never a doubt, dad," replied his son.
"What do you say, Ferd?"
"I'm positive of it," replied the doctor. "I knew I knew him when we first fished him out of the sewer, and I know that he altered his appearance, and I thought I must have been mistaken. But Martin is Canning, or Carey, all right. I would bet my eye on it. And now, the question is, what are we going to do about it?"

"Write straight off to the police at Scotland Yard," suggested Arthur. But his brother, and also Mr. Smith, demurred.

"What proof have we?" asked the doctor. "We have clues and suspicions, but they are not proof."
"But what are the police for, if not to work up clues and suspicions?" asked Arthur.
However, it was ultimately decided that Mr. Smith should write to Lord Northampton, leaving it to him to take whatever action he might think proper.

"I don't like it at all, Ned," said Horace as he jogged homeward that night, for they would not let the Smiths put them up as they knew that Mr. Root specially wanted to use that sleigh in the morning.

"Of course," he continued, "fired as we are, it is our duty to make the authorities acquainted with what we know, or what we think we know; but that does not prevent its being a great nuisance."

"Are you sorry for Carey?"
"You may think me a fool, but I am sorry for Carey."
"But, hang it all two murders!"
"Yes, I know. But if Carey is hung, that won't bring either of them to life. Then there is another side to this business."

"What?"
"Just this: next spring I want to be working every minute of the day on my new quarter section, or half section, or whatever land I decide to take; and now, by the way things are shaping, it looks as if I stand a very good chance of having to go to England, and spend the spring pottering about lawyers' offices and criminal courts. I thought I had done with the beastly bank and everything connected with it."

Horace was in a bad temper, and did not conceal it.

"Are we going to tell Sandy?" asked Ned.
"No, I should say not; not at present, that is; we will wait for the answer to old Smith's letter. If it comes, or whatever land I decide to take; and now, by the way things are shaping, it looks as if I stand a very good chance of having to go to England, and spend the spring pottering about lawyers' offices and criminal courts. I thought I had done with the beastly bank and everything connected with it."

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CHAPTER XVIII.

A Little Run Westward (of Two Thousand Miles) to Meet a Friend is Nothing at All on the C. P. R.

"I ain't saying but what you may be right," said Mr. Root. "Though we shall be sorry to have you go, and that's a fact. You are three steady chaps, and it is certain that you can't do much here before spring. So, if you think you would like to try three months in British Columbia just to learn what a mine looks like, it isn't do any harm, and it may turn out useful some day. But you are worth wages now. Don't go mining, or anything else, for your board any more."

"Never fear, Mr. Root," said Ned. "We will take wages quick enough, if we can get them."

"You'll get them all right," said Mr. Root. "I'll give you letters to two or three friends of mine in Vancouver, and they will be sure to know of something between them. Sally, you go and pack a hamper of grub while I write."

"Why are our friends leaving Carey Farm?" To understand this, we must refer to the letter which awaited Horace on his return from the Smiths. It was dated at

the Vancouver Hotel, and ran as follows:—
"Dear Horace, I suppose that you will be rather surprised to get a letter from me from Vancouver, thinking, no doubt, that I was in England. If you did think so, you must have wondered at not hearing from me from there. Now, read on a little and you shall understand everything."

"Only a few days after that eventful Sunday, when you, my lord, did me the honor to capture my heart by assault, being, I suppose, too busy even to attempt, the formality of a second—really, dear, you were a little masterful, weren't you? But I like you like that. Well, as I was saying, a few days after that, mother took it into her head that I was ill—why, oh I don't know; but when she got doctors, and relatives, and people, I decided that the only chance to cure me was to send me on a voyage round the world, which, of course, means crossing Canada, I—well, I decided on it in Japan until our letters came, and then it was nearly three weeks more before your first letter from Canada got forwarded—she was in which you tell me how much you like Church Farm. I hope that there are lots more trailing after me round the world. I shall certainly be very angry if there are not; but the end of the story is, so here we are! Do you know, Horace, dearest, I've sometimes thought that when two people really love one another like we do, the world is not so big after all. And then followed four long pages of closely written sentiment, which Horace thought exquisite, but that is no reason for including it on the reader."

Next came an account of how she had persuaded Mrs. Aymer (for, of course, the letter was from Ruth) that they could not do better than spend some weeks in British Columbia, and a hope that it would not be long before Horace came to see them. By which it will be understood that, despite her geographical studies, Miss Aymer was still a little hazy about the distance from Manitoba to Vancouver. But, perhaps, she was right. Love is just the one thing in this world that has no business with calculations.

That it did not take Horace long to decipher the letter was an answer in person, may be believed. The train would go about midday, and the kitchen clock struck two as he let out the letter. That settled one question. There was to be no bed for him that night, there was too much to do. He could very well make up his sleep before reaching the Pacific coast, as he would have three days in the train in which to do nothing else.

Ned's astonishment, when informed of Horace's sudden determination, may be imagined. Nor was Horace's much less, when Ned said that he would come too.

"I've been considering it all this evening," he said; "long before you got that letter. In fact, the only objection that I saw, was that it was going to put us for a bit. Now that you are going—"

"But what the deuce should take you to Vancouver?" asked Horace, astonished.

"Because I don't want to waste my time."

"Upon my word, Ned, you are a most unaccountable fellow. If you had said that three days ago, I should not have been so surprised. But I thought, after the discovery of Theberton Farm, that you would be satisfied to pass the winter very pleasantly here."

"It's just because I have discovered Theberton Farm that I want to go."

"Had a tiff?"
"Had a tiff, be hanged! No, my dear fellow. In fact, Wyndham, I'll tell you what I should have told you, probably, in any case today, I'm engaged to be married."

"Congratulations, Ned! If, as I suppose, it's Miss Maude, all I can say is that, you've made a splendid choice. If you're not happy, it'll be your own fault."

"Who could help being happy with such a girl? Did I expect her meet quite such a charming girl in—"

"Exactly! I think you said something of the kind once before. But, Ned, isn't it rather a curious proceeding to run right away from her like this. Girls expect a little attention on these occasions, and when I operate in mine shares, I shall probably win."

"You won't repeat your experience of the quicksilver mine in China, you mean. Well, I have often thought myself, that with all these mines that were boomed formerly, and of which the shares are now going for a few cents, a man who knew something—knew it of his own knowledge—could make a nice little pile by buying the right piece of land. It is quite certain that they are not all worthless, and when British capital once more flows that way, a great many of them will pick up. But I declare I shall pinch myself to believe that it is Ned who is speaking."

"It's the air of Canada," Ned replied. "The bedroom where Horace and Ned slept was so situated that they could do their packing, and make other arrangements, without disturbing the rest of the household. Sandy was the first to be about in the morning, and when he heard their plans, he announced his intention of coming too. That is, if Mr. Root could spare him. This he agreed to do, on the understanding that all three should return for the commencement of work in spring. Thus it came about that Miss Sally and her mother, with true Canadian hospitality, bustled themselves packing a big hamper with food for three men for three days, while Mr. Root wrote the letters to his friends in Vancouver and gave good advice between whiles to Horace and Mr. Allister. As for Ned, he had begged the freshest horse, and was off since breakfast, to say good-bye to Theberton Farm. "I know a little of mining myself," said

Mr. Root as he gave Horace the letters, sharp as a Manchester broker, but always forgetful, but ought to remember, about a mine is that it is just as business, like any other. There may be romance about finding a mine, but there isn't no room for romance in working it. It's a manufacture, where you put in your money and produce gold, or lead, or whatever it may be, the thing you make. And to make dividends you must keep down cost, save a cent, here, there, and there, and there, it is as prosaic a business as any other. Here comes Gaeconne back from his friends. Now let Tom hitch up Maggers for the day, and he'll soon be time for you to be off."

Perhaps until their departure, a little later, neither of the three had ever realized how much they liked the kind of life with whom they had made their debut in the mine. From Mr. Root, shrewd and kind, solid as a British woman and sharp as a Manchester broker, but always honest and clean as the day in all his dealings, to Miss Sally, as kind-hearted, jolly Canadian girl as was to be found in all the great North-West, they were leaving true friends, whom they were fortunate in having found. How fortunate, both Horace and Ned now knew enough to understand. For, although prairie farmers are generally good folk, yet here and there are some pretty tough specimens, as one says in Canada.

The little station was reached just as the agent sauntered up, ready for the westward train. Maggers—short for Maggerston, which name Mr. Root had given his best coat of the year in honor of the deeds of the Canadian contingent—was hitched up. The hamper and other things were got out, and the agent put up the flag, as a signal that there were passengers. Soon afterwards the train came on time—"dead on time, sir"—and, with a handclasp each for Tom Peters, the friends, with their hamper and bundles, boarded a tourist, or second-class, car.

Horace, who was going west for something else besides mining, had a portmanteau of London-made clothes; but Ned and Sandy had only bundles.

The journey to Vancouver was like, yet unlike, their former experience, traveling in the "enigrant" train from Quebec to Manitoba. They had taken tourist accommodation, because neither Ned nor Horace wished to waste any cash, and Sandy had none to waste. As far as the actual car went, this tourist accommodation was just what they had had before. But there was now no crowding, for it was just about the time of lightest winter traffic, and now, too, they were experienced Canadians, no longer strangers, with all strange about them. Best of all, they were no longer dependent for their food on casual purchases, made, as best they could, at wayside stations. Miss Sally had seen to that. Knowing her friends, she had expected things to be done on a liberal scale, but the opening of the hamper was, nevertheless, a veritable surprise.

The top layer, first put aside, consisted of plates, knives, forks, cups, and so on; then came the provisions. Six loaves of home-made bread, a ham, a beefsteak pie, tea, coffee, and sugar, and several bottles of milk. The reader must agree that, considering they had only four hours' notice, Miss and Mrs. Root had done nobly in the way of speeding their party guests. Their first care was to put the bottles of milk in a cool place, just inside the car vestibule, to have put them absolutely in the vestibule would have meant that the milk would have been at once frozen solid, and this they did not wish. When he finally began to unpack, Ned began to leave Sandy to make a meal by himself.

"I say," said Ned next morning, as they began to set about preparing breakfast, "I shall never eat all that's in this hamper!"

But they did. Train traveling, logically speaking, ought not to be very hungry work; but in Canada practically it is. On their arrival at Vancouver there was nothing left but the crockery and knives and forks.

The trans-continental pulls into Vancouver at about one o'clock in the afternoon; and our three companions shouldered their belongings and set off for a certain respectable boarding house, the name of which Mr. Root had given them the address. Like all Canadian town houses, it had a bath-room, and all three were soon washing the effects of their journey. Then Horace, bath towel round his loins, began the unpacking of his portmanteau. He and Ned had the room, and Ned began unpacking in the luxury of a good long hot bath. So that Horace had time to shave and dress before the latter made his appearance. When he finally came, he was a different man. He had a clean, shaven face, and his eyes were so strange that, though Ned was not often at a loss for words, he stood a full minute speechless with wonder. "What a fine fellow! He looks like a well-dressed, nearly new suit of clothes, wearing a white shirt, and a tie bought in Bond Street, boots which had just come on from the city since leaving England, and just putting on a hat, which had been purchased on his way up from the station. He was not the Horace of six months ago, nor was he the Horace of six days ago; but he was a better looking fellow than either."

"Stand still," said Ned; "let me look at you, I can just see it without being told. Dazzled. Now, I suppose, you are off to the Vancouver Hotel?"

"That reminds me. Honest now, aren't you engaged?"

"Since you are so anxious to know, Ned, I am."

"I thought so. I've noticed a dozen little things. The way you looked out for letters from England, which never came. Then the way, that Sunday, you suddenly made up your mind to start at once. The way you opened your letter in the kitchen when we got back from Theberton Farm, and then how, with all your packing to do, you remembered about a dozen times before daylight. Oh! and a heap of other things, not much in themselves, but all pointing one way. Well, you're a nice sort of humbug, aren't you?"

"Humbug?"

"Yes, humbug—humbug. Humbug to go prancing at me for getting engaged to Maude and then going off. Why, it's the very thing you did yourself!"

And Horace had to confess that Ned was right.

Then they began to talk over what was to be done. Horace wanted Ned to come up and see the Aymer that evening. At last, he was useless enough to say so; but Ned would not have it so at any price.

No, no, old man," he said, "this is just one of those occasions when two is company and three is most emphatically none. If the old lady would be in the way, I'd volunteer to go to talk to her, but Miss Ruth will arrange all that with-out my help. Then, 'now, I haven't brought a wardrobe a la Bond Street. The best I can do in that direction is a clean shirt, but a damel one, and a

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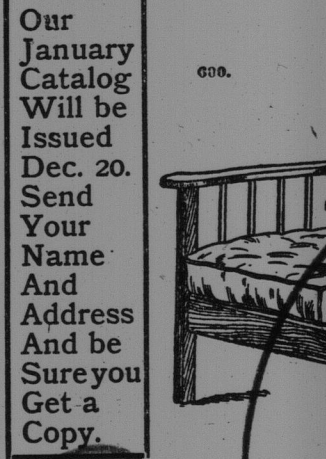
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black Felora. No, no, old chap, go in and win. Sandy and I will make our selves trading round with Mr. Root's introductions and finding out how the land lies. Tomorrow, or the next day, or some day before we start off for wherever we go, you shall prepare your plans for the sight of a nasty, rough cow-boy sort of individual, and if you really don't think I shall scare them, I will give myself a holiday calling."

So Horace set off alone. As he walked up the rotunda of the Vancouver Hotel, he gave him quite a turn to find himself addressed as if he was an English globe trotter. As a matter of fact, tanned and bronzed, and in excellent condition, he had exactly the appearance of a cavalry officer returning home from India by the Canadian route.

"Are there two ladies here by the name of Aymer?" he asked the clerk.

"Aymer? Yes, sir; 94, sir—boy, take this gentleman's card up to 94."

But one does not carry cards on the prairie, so Horace went up his name instead. But while the boy was going up by the elevator, he saw a figure at the end of the corridor, the sight of which, even at that distance, seemed to cause a sort of flutter somewhere in his nervous mechanism, and striding down to meet it, he found that he was not mistaken.

"Oh! Horace, how splendidly well you look!"

"And you, dearest! I was half frightened at your letter, but I am not so any longer."

"Doctors, like other things, have their uses," rejoined Miss Ruth, demurely. "Now come up and see mother."

But all the same it was a good ten minutes before they entered the elevator.

CHAPTER XIX.

In Which Two Letters Are Written, And a Nugget Found.

First greetings over, Mrs. Aymer, like