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A. JORDAN

deals in two kinds. We subject ourselves, or we are to find information up

Uncle Giles' Glass Eye.

BY C. LANGTON CLARKE.

UNCLE GILES was dying—dying hard, and fighting desperately for breath.

As I stood by his bedside and looked down on his gaunt limbs and hand-bitten features, I forgave him his part in the quarrel which had estranged us five years before.

Uncle Giles was a miser—a real, genuine miser. Money was his god, and when I outraged his religion by marrying a penniless girl, he excommunicated me forthwith. He placed his anathema upon me, and he did it with so many carefully chosen adjectives that I swore I would never speak to him again, were he as rich as Croesus.

I should have kept my word, too, only Uncle Giles had sent for me, and I seemed a pity not to make up when self-interest added its voice to that of religion, and cried "Forgive your enemies."

My Uncle Giles was popularly supposed to be a very rich man—how rich no one but he himself knew. A few years prior to our falling out he narrowly escaped ruin through the suspension of a financial concern in which he was largely interested. He was shrewd enough to get out in time, however, and the shock seemed to paralyze all his enterprising faculties.

He gathered in the money which he had invested, and became a miser—the most pronounced type, secreting his hoards and pinching and scolding from day to day to add to them.

On two occasions attempts had been made to rob his house, but Uncle Giles was an old soldier of the Civil War, and the frontier, and he slept light with a pistol under his pillow. There was a simple funeral a few days after each attempt, and the coroner's jury said that Uncle Giles was quite within his rights.

I attended the last request, as a spectator, and heard my uncle give his evidence. I had not seen him for some time, and when he stood up I could not but think what a striking figure he presented—six feet two inches in height, big-boned and angular, his harsh features seemed from eye to eye, and his hair, parted by a deep furrow, and his eyes, which were as blue as a Confederal cavalryman's sabre.

But more startling than the grotesque cast of his features was the expression imparted by the great glass eye which filled the left socket. Steadfast, impenetrable, slightly larger than his fellow eye, it fastened by its basilisk glare.

As a child I had quailed before that dreadful eye, and once had asked my mother, in a too audible whisper, whether she thought it was his right eye.

My uncle heard and laughed grimly. "I will leave it to you in my will, Youmker," he said, and I thanked him with perfunctory politeness, which made him laugh more. I thought he had forgotten the incident, but Uncle Giles had a good memory. A few months after my inquest, Uncle Giles disappeared. One day when passing the little store where he pursued his trade—he was a skillful mender of broken china—I saw that he was closed. I made enquiries next door and learned that he had left New York and had failed to give his future address.

The old woman who answered my questions said she thought he had gone for a sea voyage. He had left a few weeks later, on again passing the shop, I saw through the dirty, little panes the harsh, seamed features and the glare of the glass eye, and knew that my uncle had returned. If he saw me he made no sign, and I went on my way, my bitterness against him, if anything intensified.

Now Uncle Giles had held out the right hand of reconciliation, and there was no reason why I should not grasp it. There was every reason, in fact, why I should. I was hard up. My salary in the big wholesale house of Armbrust & Mathison was altogether inadequate for the support of a wife and three voracious children, and there were bills on the horizon which would have to be met somehow. Uncle Giles was rich and I was his only living relative, for my parents had died many years ago.

As I stood by that ragged bed in the bare, miserably furnished room, and looked down on that desperate battle with death, I could not but wonder how any man with money at command could end his life in such unstarbustable squalor. A ragged strip of carpet lay on the grimy boards, a cracked basin stood on an upended soap box in the corner, a huddle of patched and threadbare garments lay on a chair in another corner, and the only attempt at decoration was a photograph of my uncle, taken God knows when, which glowered out of a tarnished copper frame on the dusty mantelshelf.

The hoarse rattle of the dying man's breath was punctuated at intervals by the clink of pots and pans from the adjoining kitchen, where an old woman, ragged, unkempt, and thoroughly in keeping with the surroundings, was busy preparing some decoction.

By the head of the bed stood a rickety table, and on it, in a tumbler of water, was my uncle's glass eye.

Large and round as a marble, it looked at me through the side of the glass, the convexity lending to it a grotesque distortion. There was something almost morbid in its expression—a disembodied power which riveted my gaze. When I looked away I was painfully conscious of its presence, and gladly would I have plucked it forth and flung it away.

"Robert," it was my uncle's voice, gasping horribly. "Nearer—I have some thing to say to you."

I bent my ear to the dry, foam-flecked lips.

"My will, Robert—it is in the hands of my lawyer—my executor—I have given you. Under the boards yonder is a tin cash-box. It contains all the money I possess—a little over two thousand dollars."

I could not repress a start of surprise—surely Uncle Giles had more money than that. "I have left it to a hospital for veterans—and to you," I bent lower.

"I have left my photograph—and—"

"I have fought wildly for breath while I propped him higher on his pillows, and waited in an agony of expectation. The proxyman passed. "And my glass eye," he gasped. "I promised it to you. It is—"

A horrible grin distorted his features, a grin as if I had died of diabolical malevolence, and he fell back dead.

"Curse you!" Even as the spirit slipped from his ungainly envelope I saw my uncle's cash into ruin, and as furious was I as the retained cruelty of the old man's revenge. That day's moment might have carried me to madness.

lengths, but for the hurried entrance of the old servant.

"He is dead," she screamed, in a thin, cracked voice.

"Yes," I answered, "he is dead. Let him rot!"

As I swung round from the bed my eye fell on my legacy, peering at me through the tumbler. To my disorderly senses it seemed as though it were laughing at me, as if it were raised up to dash it to the floor. I rested my hand on the table, and, without a look to left or right, strode from the chamber of death.

It was hard to break the news at home for our hopes had risen high, but my wife accepted the situation philosophically, and even tried to persuade me to attend the funeral. I returned a curt refusal, however, to the lawyer who sent me the intimation, and having informed him of the secret hoard, I dismissed the whole subject as far as possible from my mind, and settled down to fight the never-ending battle of the man with an income too small for his necessities.

Some three months after my uncle's death, on a birthday as it chanced, a small parcel was delivered at my door, by special messenger. My wife and I opened it with pleased expectancy, wondering who had remembered me. The first thing which met our eyes was the faded photograph of my uncle. Then I knew what the little square box contained. The executor of my uncle's will had religiously carried out his instructions. I tore off the lid, took one look at the beautiful contents, and then, opening a drawer full of odds and ends, I found in a box and all. The eye rolled out, and as I closed the drawer with a bang I could have sworn I saw it wink.

Three days later my eldest boy came to me with something clutched in his chubby fist.

"Look at the nice alley I found," he said. He opened his fingers and there, lying on the pink palm, was that detestable eye.

I substituted a stick of peppermint candy, and carrying my legacy out into my little back yard, I turned up a spadeful of earth in a corner, flung it into the grave, and stamped the soil down on the top of it.

"There," I cried, "is an end of you! You shall trouble me no more!"

I looked up from my ledger, and saw the senior partner's secretary standing in the doorway of the outer office.

"Mr. Armbrust wishes to see you."

Such a summons was so unusual that I felt a sudden sinking of the heart, and I wondered whether I had in any way neglected my duty.

"Don't look so scared," added the secretary, kindly, "he's not going to fire you."

When I entered Mr. Armbrust's private office I saw that he was not alone. Seated in the deep leather arm chairs was an elderly man with keen, clean-shaven face. He looked like an American, and yet there was something undeniably foreign about him.

"Sit down, Mr. Lawlor," said my employer, "I am about to entrust a somewhat difficult task to you. This is Mr. Allsopp, head of the Antistonia diamond house of that name. Perhaps you will explain matters, Mr. Allsopp. I think you will find Mr. Lawlor entirely trustworthy."

I blushed at the unexpected compliment.

"The matter can be explained in a few words, Mr. Lawlor," said the stranger. "You have heard of the Eisselburg diamonds?"

"Not," I replied, "I am surprised they are a part of large blue stones, quite rare and valuable, belonging to the reigning house of that little principality."

"About a year ago the Archduke, being pressed for money, commissioned us to sell one of the gems privately. He stipulated for \$200,000 and that the purchaser should disguise the identity of the stone. The price was reasonable, but the other condition made a sale a matter of some difficulty. At last I got a customer, an American, a most remarkable looking man. He was willing to pay the price, but the conditions—in fact, he was as anxious as you to see the diamonds were preserved. He paid the price demanded, and between you and me he got something of a bargain."

"Not long ago the Archduke, as you may have seen in the papers, acquired a wife and a large fortune. He is anxious to recover the stone, and has commissioned me to act for him. I have ascertained that a blue diamond, answering the description in every respect, was passed through the customs, evidently being urged by the purveyor, evidently the same man who purchased it from us. He gave a wrong name and address, however, and I have lost trace of him. I am unwilling to entrust the matter to a private detective agency; it is most important that it should not leak into the papers, and Mr. Lawlor has kindly suggested that you should undertake the task."

I bowed my willingness.

"We are prepared to pay well for the job," Mr. Allsopp continued. "The Archduke has commissioned me to offer three hundred thousand dollars. That will cover the amount of the duty paid, and give the purchaser a considerable advance on the price he paid."

"That is a matter for the future, however," I urged by the purveyor, "you understand, Mr. Lawlor, that your duties will be confined to discovering the original purchaser."

"Certainly. And the description of the man who bought the stone?"

"He should be easily identified," replied the diamond merchant. "He was a tall man—unusually tall—well over six feet. About sixty years of age, and dressed in very old clothes. He had a protruding nose, like the beak on an eagle, and angular features, with a deep scar on the right side of the face, running up and down. The most noticeable feature about him, however, was his left eye, a false one I should judge, light gray in color, and slightly larger than the right."

I sprang from my chair with an irrepressible cry of astonishment, and the two gentlemen stared at me.

"You appear surprised, Mr. Lawlor," said my employer.

"I am," I replied abruptly. "I think I know the man in question. Can you spare me an hour or two, Mr. Armbrust, that I may make sure of the identification?"

"Sharp work," interrupted Mr. Allsopp. "Go, by all means," said Mr. Armbrust, and without another word I rushed from the room, seized my hat, and started for home. Things were getting decidedly interesting.

Two hours later I placed the photograph of Uncle Giles in Mr. Allsopp's hands.

"That is the man," he cried. "Uncle Giles! Where is he to be found?"

I shrugged my shoulders. "God knows," I said. "He died several months ago. He was my uncle."

"Your uncle? We have been fortunate in our selection of an agent. And the diamond?"

"God knows," I said again. "I stood at his dying bedside—I was his only living relative—and he told me how he had left his money. It seemed to me at the time an absurdly small sum, not much more than a couple of thousand. The story of the diamond explains the mystery, but he never spoke of it."

"And did you inherit?" enquired Mr. Allsopp.

"I inherited," I said, "but neither money nor diamonds. My uncle was good enough to leave me his photograph, which you hold in your hand, and his glass eye. We had quarrelled, and I suppose that was his way of revenging himself at the last. He made a grim joke, when I was a child, about leaving me the eye. I had remarked on its peculiarities, and he kept his word."

"An odd fancy," said Mr. Allsopp, musingly. "And he said nothing of the stone? You are positive?"

"Not a word. He was a miser, and two attempts had been made to rob him. I suppose he converted his money into a valuable diamond so that he could easily carry it about with him or conceal it. It may be hidden in the house."

"It was not mentioned in the will?"

"No. I received a copy from the executor."

"And you are the next of kin?"

"I stated at Mr. Allsopp, open-mouthed. This was a new light with a vengeance. Why—if that diamond could be found it was mine. To think that three hundred thousand dollars, belonging to me, by law, was lying hidden somewhere! Three hundred thousand dollars—and I almost a pauper! And oh! the hopelessness of finding it! I wept with emotion. Uncle Giles' revenge was more complete than he had wotted of."

"We must tear the house to pieces," I cried excitedly. "We must search every inch of it. It would be useless."

"I added, "My uncle was not the man to die and leave a jewel of such a fabulous value hidden in a rented house."

"We sat and looked at one another. In Mr. Armbrust's eyes I detected a certain respect. I was no longer a mere clerk in his office—I was a man worth three hundred thousand dollars, if—if he could only find it."

"He may have buried it," suggested Mr. Allsopp, after a long silence.

"As I hid his glass eye, in my back yard," I returned, with a bitter laugh.

"Buried? It is buried?"

"I found one of my children playing marbles with it."

"Marbles? Mar—good heavens, man—do you mean to say it is round like a marble?"

"Yes," I said gruffly—how I hated any mention of that eye!—"like a very large marble."

"Did you ever see another glass eye?"

"No," I said, "and I hope to heaven I never shall!"

I stared at Mr. Allsopp in astonishment. "I never saw a man so excited."

"Quick, Mr. Lawlor," he cried. "Not a moment to be lost!"

He snatched up a hat—it happened to be mine—clapped it on my head, caught up his own, and seizing me by the arm, fairly dragged me from the room.

As we passed out I looked back, and saw Mr. Armbrust staring after us, his eyes almost starting from his head.

"So—this is the corner? Be careful now."

Mr. Allsopp and I were standing in my back yard, and I was poised a spade. My hand shook so that I could hardly hold it. I threw out a shovelful of mold, and Mr. Allsopp dropped to his knees and sifted it carefully through his fingers.

"Not here," he said. "Another."

I repeated the operation.

There was no need to search this time. The spade split, and out of the heart of it rolled Uncle Giles' glass eye.

Mr. Allsopp gazed on it and made a dash for the house, I following at his heels. Straight through the kitchen he ran, regardless of my wife's disconcerted look, and in the dining-room, he held a "bowl of hot water—quick!" he cried, as though giving an impatient order in a restaurant.

Wide-eyed, my wife brought it, and stood looking on.

Mr. Allsopp dropped the eye into the water, and carefully wiped away the streaks of mold with his silk pocket-handkerchief. Then taking a small magnifying glass from his pocket, he examined it carefully.

"Ha-h!" he said. "It is as I suspected. It has been made for the purpose."

The sweat stood out in great beads on my forehead, and my hand trembled as I took the magnifier and examined the eye.

Around the center was a line, like a fine hair, showing where the two halves were joined together.

Mr. Allsopp cut my inspection short. Enveloping the eye in his handkerchief, he twisted hard on it. I noticed how the sinews on the back of the upper hand stood out. Then there followed a swift movement of his fingers, and the moment he threw aside the handkerchief and tilted out upon the table something which caused my wife to reel back, and me to shade my eyes with my hand.

It was the Eisselburg diamond.

And such a diamond! I have spent many years among precious stones, but never did I see another like it. It seemed to fill the whole room with blue flame. From every one of its perfect facets a heart of fire seemed to break forth.

"I have mentioned the price," it was Mr. Allsopp's voice, cool and collected now. "Are you prepared to sell?"

"What does it mean?" whispered my wife.

"I put my arm about her waist, and drew her to me. "That Uncle Giles was not such a bad fellow after all. It means that I am going to sell his glass eye for three hundred thousand dollars."

She burst into tears, and laid her head on my shoulder.

"Oh," she cried, "God bless Uncle Giles and his glass eye!"



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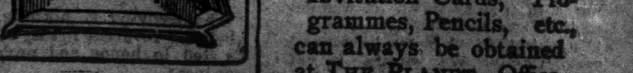
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In the Archducal crown of Eisselburg two matchless blue diamonds glitter side by side, once more united, and over the mantle of our bedroom in our new house on upper Fifth Avenue hangs a faded photograph in a cheap copper frame.

Grim and sardonic that face may look to others, but as a glass eye it seems to me that it has a look new to me.

Uncle Giles' revenge was more complete than he had wotted of.