

Gordon's Last Chance.

By TAYLOR WHITE.

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"Jimmie, do you speak slang?" demanded Maud Tolliver suddenly as her small brother came into the room.

"Do I walk on my feet?" demanded Jimmie in surprise. "Pipe your lay, angel face. I'll get you somehow, even if your speaks are all to the middle. Throw it off your chest."

"It's this way," explained Maud. "You know Mr. Gordon?"

"I've seen him once or twice," admitted Jimmie, with a grin. Gordon was a regular visitor at the Tolliver home.

"Papa wants me to marry him," explained Maud. "He's so strict and proper that I hate him. I thought that if I were to talk slang and 'act up' perhaps he would leave me in peace. He hates a slangy girl. He said so last night."

Jimmie grinned appreciatively. He had no great liking for the eminently staid and correct Gordon. He hated men whose suits always looked as though it was the first time they had been worn.

His own preference was for Barry Spaulding, who occasionally offered him a cigarette and who talked to him precisely as though he was a grownup.

Gordon never seemed to see him, never laughed and joked, and Jimmie entered into the conspiracy with his whole heart after being assured that Maud would never disclose the source of her education in slang.

Before the week was out Gordon looked troubled. He was very much in love with Maud after his own fashion. There was no want of real affection. He had been accepted by the family, and in his quiet, patient fashion he was laying siege to Maud's heart.

He had fancied he had been making headway until she developed a trick of interlarding her speech with slang expressions.

At first he was shocked, but as Maud acquired proficiency and grew more and more slangy Gordon withdrew from his campaign. Though he loved the girl as much as ever, he assured himself that a wife who used slang was utterly impossible.

In secret Maud gloated over the fact, but bore herself demurely when her father sharply questioned her concerning her treatment of Gordon, for the latter's visits had fallen off, and, though Gordon had pleaded business as an excuse, Mr. Tolliver had an idea that there was something else that might explain the lover's sudden lack of interest.

Then fate took a hand, and so it happened that Jimmie Tolliver, crossing the avenue, slipped on the muddy paving and fell directly in front of a rapidly advancing automobile.

There was a cry of horror from the spectators, but one man sprang forward and with an easy movement grasped the boy's arm and carried him to safety.

For a moment Jimmie was too dazed to comprehend; then he slowly came to realize that Gordon, unmoved as ever, stood beside him, answering the questions of the crowd, but refusing to give his name.

"All right, old man?" he asked as he saw that Jimmie was pulling himself together. "Suppose we move on. This crowd is a little too eager."

He signaled a passing taxicab and directed the driver to go to a tailor's where Jimmie's muddled garments might be made presentable. The rush of cold air drove the last of the cobwebs from Jimmie's brain, and, gazing admiringly at Gordon, he decided that Maud was wrong in her estimate of the man. There was fire under the ice, red blood beneath the waxen, immobile expression, and Jimmie's heart warmed to his rescuer.

"Say, Bo," he demanded suddenly, "are you still dead nuts on Maud?"

"I esteem your sister very highly," admitted Gordon.

"You're all right," declared Jimmie admiringly. "If you want to win cast your port ear over this way and make a noise like a listen."

The noise of a listener was continued long after the visit to the tailor's was concluded. Gordon's face was as expressionless as ever, but there was a twinkle in his eye.

Some evenings later Maud, coming downstairs, reached the lower hall just as Gordon was admitted by the butler. Jimmie had been cautioned under pain of losing his promised reward to say nothing of his rescue, so it was merely "that tiresome Kenneth Gordon" whom Maud greeted with perfunctory cordiality.

"I butted in to tear off a piece of talk with the boss bloomer wearer. Is he in?" asked Gordon.

"If you mean my father?" began Maud icily.

"That's the guy," interrupted Gordon. "Will you tell the delegate from the wax works to ask him to grease his heels and slide down here?"

"I will go myself," offered Maud nervously. Gordon was as coldly correct in appearance as ever, but perhaps he was drunk.

"Nix on the scamper," declared Gordon, raising a detaining hand. "Use the butter for the wireless, and we'll call out some conversation while he makes a home run."

"I must go," explained Maud. "I forgot something upstairs, and I must see about it at once."

"Tell it to wait," commanded Gordon. "I'm the head of the procession

just now. Don't you bother about the water carriers."

"But—" began Maud. And Gordon interrupted again.

"Don't be a goat and butt in," he urged. "Hit the plush."

He pointed to a chair, and timidly Maud seated herself. As she had led the way into the parlor the butler had disappeared, supposing that he would not be required further. To ring for him now would only make a scandal among the servants. Perhaps her father would come down in a few minutes.

He usually spent the evening in the library when he did not go to the club, and in either event he must pass the open door. If the worst came she could call for the butler, but meanwhile perhaps she could induce Gordon to leave quietly. She took the chair indicated, sitting nervously on the edge, ready to spring up and run should occasion demand.

"It doesn't cost any more to have a whole chair," reminded Gordon as he sank into a seat between her and the door. "I want you to put me wise to some things. What's your grouch against me?"

"I have no grouch," protested Maud eagerly. "Indeed, I like you very much."

"I never saw you on the front steps waiting for me," said Gordon grimly. "Let it come out with a rush. I'm in wrong. How can I square myself?"

"There is nothing to be squared," insisted Maud. "I don't see how you can imagine such a thing."

"Naughty, naughty!" reproved Gordon, shaking his forefinger at her admonishingly. "Look here, kiddo, put me next! You don't like me, and I like you. I can't help it if I've got a frozen face. It was wished on me, and it's none of my dolings. Tell me how I can loosen up so you'll have a yin for me."

"A yin?" repeated Maud uncertainly. This was a word not in Jimmie's vocabulary.

"A yin—a yearning," explained Gordon. "I want you to think that I'm the whole works, and you won't even let me be the second hand. Fix me up so I can come into the big tent and be a part of the program. I'm the 'what is it' out in the freak tent, and I don't like the job. I may not be quite your style, but I can learn. I'm the star pupil in the little red schoolhouse, and I'll always be at the head of the class if you'll be the teacher. I love to love my teacher."

Maud sprang to her feet, her eyes blazing.

"Mr. Gordon," she said coldly. "I will not prolong this interview. I do not know what is the matter. I do not want to know, but you must go, please. I cannot listen to you when you talk this way."

Gordon had sprung to his feet when Maud rose, and now he smiled down into the flushed, angry face.

"It seems," he said a little sadly, "that my latest effort is no more successful than the earlier attempts. They say that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and yet you are not pleased."

"What do you mean?" gasped Maud in astonishment.

"You learned slang for my benefit," he reminded. "When I do the same thing you object. Of course my slang is more pronounced than your own, but then you have only Jimmie, while I have the valuable assistance of several elevator boys, my office boy and the janitor's son, who qualifies as an expert. You use slang to disgust me—with yourself. I am using it to disgust you—with slang."

"And you know?" gasped Maud. "Jimmie has told?"

"Be it said to his credit that the temptation was great," said Gordon gently. "Do not blame the lad. He meant well in giving me my last chance to win you. He saw beneath the surface and was sorry for his part. I foolishly imagined that if I could excel you in the use of slang I might startle you into an interest that I see now you never can feel. It was a foolish experiment, Miss Tolliver, and I ask your pardon for having bored and then frightened you. It was my last chance, and I hoped that it might succeed."

"I gather from Jimmie's remarks that you fear paternal pressure will be brought to bear on you. I beg to assure you that I will so contrive the situation as not to involve you. I am—sorry that the last chance failed."

The little pauses in his speech were Gordon's only evidences of emotion. They were only little halts in the evenness of his soft, even voice, but they showed the strength of feeling, and it touched Maud with a sudden emotion.

"Don't go," she said softly, laying a detaining hand upon his arm. "Perhaps the last chance has not—I mean—But she could say no more. Gordon's arms were outstretched, and in his face, no longer expressionless, there was a look of such appeal that she suffered herself to be drawn within their protecting circle. The last chance had won.

Accounts For It.

Tell—I don't like that man you introduced to me yesterday. He has such a flaxen manner.

Nell—He can't help that. His business is making balloon ascensions.—Baltimore American.

Like the Smoke.

Gunner—He had a fancy cigarette named after him.

Guy—And how did he stand the fame?

Gunner—Oh, he is all puffed up!—St. Paul Pioneer Press.

Abstract ideas and great conceits are ever on the road to produce terrible catastrophes.—Goethe.

THE TIGER

By Charles Lincoln Phiffer.

"Anton Kronalski is to be the tiger."

The announcement was greeted with a clapping of hands. The fashionably dressed men envied the one who had drawn the lot that gave him the place of honor in the new game. It meant death, to be sure, but it was, in their sight, death with honor; and what was life to them when everything palled upon them? The women thrilled for the first time in days, and there was real brightness in their eyes as they cheered and then began talking in an animated way. The young man who had been chosen folded his arms and with raised chin regarded further proceedings, after first acknowledging the applause with a slight bow. The other men prepared lots to ascertain who was to be the hunter.

"The hunter is to be Julian Kronalski," announced the master of ceremonies.

A gasp ran through the assemblage, and then all was silent. Things were becoming interesting. If brother was to hunt brother, then society indeed had something that would thrill its jaded senses. It was therefore a great thing for these noble young people, representatives of Russia's aristocracy, when and, bowing to his brother Anton, extended his hand. Anton received it without a word, and the two men stood for a moment gazing into each other's eyes. No one knew what they thought, but they were loyal to traditions of Russian honor to evade the ordeal.

"They accept, they accept," rang through the large reception room.

"Retire to the balcony," commanded the master of ceremonies, and the gay crowd ascended the great staircase and ranged themselves at points of vantage whence they might best view the coming spectacle. Servants entered and hurriedly removed the furniture that might obstruct the hunt. The master of ceremonies bided a hoodwink over the eyes of Julian Kronalski, and then handed him a pistol. Then he hung around the neck of Anton a necklace of bells, and himself ascended the stairway.

"One, two, three," he continued. "Ready fire!"

For a moment all was still. Then the hunter began stealing stealthily toward the tiger, feeling his way and listening intently. He came close to the brother who moved out of the way, tinkling the bells as he moved. Instantly the blindfolded Julian turned and fired. Anton had stepped out of the way.

"A miss," exclaimed the audience looking down. And the women clapped their hands in applause.

Anton acknowledged the applause with a bow, and as he inclined his head the bells around his neck tinkled. Julian whirled on him and fired again. This time his aim was better. Anton, with an exclamation of pain and rage, placed a hand over his arm, which was bleeding where the bullet had struck. As his voice rang out Julian fired again; but the ball went wild. Anton was no longer listless. From now on he was struggling for his life. If he could escape three more bullets, then it would be his turn to play the hunter, and he was raging in the thought of how he would revenge himself on his brother for the smart of his arms. He stood rigid and the bells did not tinkle at all. His brother felt his way to the opposite side of the room. Then he turned and started directly toward him. As he did so, Anton sprang briskly to one side. The bells jingled and Julian fired. But Anton had been too brisk in his movements and was uninjured. He now ran around the room, and Julian, standing near the center, followed him with pistol at rest waiting for an opportunity to shoot. He knew he must conserve his shots. Only two were left him and if he failed to disable his brother with them, then he must become the tiger and face the loaded weapon while six shots were fired at him. A few moments before he had not cared what the outcome would be, but now that his blood was heated with exertion and excitement he wanted to live. He followed the fleeing man around and around the room, without firing, because he didn't want to

miss. Finally Anton stopped, exhausted, and Julian took aim at what seemed to him to be the heart of the man. But he missed. Anton was panting from exertion. His heart rather than the bells told of his position.

The listening brother slowly raised his weapon and, this time, with his last shot, aimed it straight at the breast of the hunted tiger. The latter stood with horror in his eyes, knowing it meant death, yet too much fascinated to move. In the gallery the society buds were looking on with real interest. They had seen the poor butchered in the streets of St. Petersburg; they had looked on the massacre of the Jews, until they had ceased to have a feeling in the matter. But this was different. The hunting of the tiger, the shedding the blue blood by brother's hand as a social game had not yet lost its edge by repetition. They enjoyed the suspense the agony of the elder brother facing his death below them. But they did not interfere. Why should they spoil a perfect tragedy?

The weapon was poised for a moment aimed directly at the breast of Anton. One, two, three. Nobody counted, unless it was Anton but all felt the stress of suspense. Then "crack" went the pistol.

Anton sunk on the carpeted floor, shot through the heart. Julian's face lighted with joy. He had slain the tiger and was free. The crowd cheered for was he not a social lion now?

The Little Gold-Beater

By Robert Allan England.

You can see the gold-beater's shop from the sidewalk of the crowded street. It's a basement, the windows of which rise flush with the pavement. All day long little crowds gather in front of it, peering down onto the benches where the precious metal is hammered thin with heavy mallets. All day long you can hear the thud, thud, thud, hour after hour, as the beaters' arms swing up-down, up-down, up-down, like the machines they are.

There's something fascinating in this rhythm. This endless diapason of toil. Or, maybe, it's the gold that draws the crowd. At any rate, there the crowd stands, the fortunate crowd outside, watching the people inside, the working people, the cogs in that machinery of gold leaf manufacture.

Two or three times I have stood there, too, watching the work. It interested me to see what beautiful imitations of mechanism the human worker can be transformed into, under capitalism. One cog of the mechanism particularly drew my attention. It was a boy. A boy of fifteen, maybe, though to me he didn't look within two years of that age. A boy beating gold on one of the benches with a heavy mallet like a man's.

This boy, it seemed to me, was a pretty good piece of machinery. True, he couldn't beat quite as fast as the men. His mallet rose a bit more slowly, but it was absolutely regular in its swing, and it seemed never to stop. Up-down, up-down, up-down. Thud, thud, thud, as long as I watched, it beat and beat and beat. Almost a man's work, at a boy's wage—truly, a splendid investment! A marvelous cog in the machine!

The boy, in fact, seemed to be working harder than anybody else in the shop. His mallet was full sized, and gold-beaters' mallets as you know, are formidable tools to use hour after hour. The toil was crucifying for the boy, but he was game. His arm, of course, couldn't do all the work of raising the heavy weight. The unformed biceps couldn't manage it. So the boy swayed his body back and forth, up and down, with the unceasing motion of the arm, bending his back at every stroke and straightening it with every lift. It gave him quite the appearance of an amusing mechanical toy, which is, you understand, just what every well-trained worker ought to be. He presented a splendid example of the joy and dignity of Labor—Child Labor—with his up-down, up-down. Thud, thud, thud.

His eyes never rose from the mallet, the block, the bench. His motions were never varied in any perceptible degree. How that lad must have been developing! How his mind must have been expanding! How his intellectual and spiritual facilities must have been blossoming out, down there in the gold-beaters' shop! Why, bless you, I could fairly see that boy grow in strength, wisdom, manhood, citizenship!

I walked on, with the little beaters' thud, thud, still in my ears. I mingled with the crowds in Boston's streets, Boston, the home of culture, of learning, of patriotism, civic pride and Parrott Wendell. Boston

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