

GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN.

By JAMES BARNES.

If you ever wish for happiness don't gamble.

He laughed rather bitterly, I think, and then went on:

"We've had some good times together, you and I said the Rajah, and he'd tell you the same thing." (Roach had gone upstairs.)

"Now the good times may come back again, I hope they will, I've watched you," he said, tipping back my chair as he spoke.

"I'm sure it's very kind," I began. "I can't tell you—"

"No, it is not very kind," he interposed. "at least, I'm not so sure. I have not finished what I was going to say. Perhaps it would have been better if I had just nodded to you today or cut you dead. But I could not have done it, you know," he added, "even if I'd thought."

He paused, and I was about to speak, when again he stopped me.

"Listen," he said, "you need not talk—afterwards you can do what you please."

"Just now you can't possibly harm yourself by letting me be your friend. When the time comes—the time you cannot do I will find it out, or if you don't I will tell you—mark me."

"It will never come," I burst out, half extending my hand, for I was touched.

"You can't tell," he answered. "I think it will."

I had not noticed until then that Roach had crossed while we were talking. He stood there, big and silent, cigar in the corner of his mouth, his heavy eyebrows arched and his forehead wrinkled in great folds, while his eyes had a far-away, thoughtful expression in them. He was listening, I could see that plainly.

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The cards whirled softly, shuffled by deft fingers, and the ivory chips clattered musically, like castanets.

Joyous days Pearson and I had together when we left the city behind us every Sunday, and how his spirits used to rise until he was a boy again. Of the delightful far niente times, when we drifted out toward the Golden Gate or lolled in the shade under the trees on the islands. And so the weeks rolled by.

It was upon one of these excursions that Pearson first suggested to me the idea of adopting a profession and taking up the law. "Vogue lo salere," Pearson had exclaimed when I had rather doubted my ability to succeed, which means, pitch in, come what may, and I know you can do it.

"This statement had given me a thrill of intense delight, as might the encouraging confidence of an elder brother.

"Small things change the current of one's life. I there determined to become a lawyer. My self-interest began to grow at once.

For the six months following I read law steadily and Pearson coached me in my Latin. He seemed delighted when I asked a question, leaning heavily on my shoulders like a proud affectionate tutor.

And here an odd thing that I had noticed long before.

Pearson did not have much to say to the frequenters and casual patrons of the upstairs apartment. But Roach used to greet them in a rather over-mannered way.

Usually so tactful, he was gracious in his every tone and gesture—the graciousness of the proprietor anxious to conciliate or to reassure. It amused me to watch him.

But a cloud was growing—and all this was soon to end. Business steadily decreased and Roach grew sullen. It was now quite a year—how quickly it had gone—since I had first begun to spend my evenings in a gambling house. I was becoming deeply interested in myself and the possibilities that the future held for me. I felt that Pearson was cooling towards me, when in fact it was the other way. I was changing to him and I know now that he saw it.

It was at this time that I entered a law office at a nominal salary and Pearson closed the doors upon me. The money had come. I am sure my seeming ingratitude must have hurt him badly.

One night I found the law library, from

the little front room, at my lodgings, without a word to explain its presence, and calling to seek an explanation (even against orders) I found the door of a paring cab, so many happy hours closed and deserted. Once, after a few weeks, I met Roach on the street and inquired for his partner, but I did so. I am ashamed to say, in an offhand manner that gave me many a qualm of conscience afterward.

Why should I have been ashamed of the deep affection, nay, even love, that I bore Pearson, when he had done everything for me, and why should a nature such as his have become so warped and twisted out of line, and yet remain so strong and true. I cannot tell. He was certainly an exception to the universal rule corruptio optima pessima.

To my surprise Roach answered curtly that he knew nothing of Pearson's whereabouts, denied all knowledge of the law books and showed no pleasure at my volunteered information about my prospects. So I parted without even a nod of good feeling and went our different ways.

I saw him many times in the next two years, but his life and mine were wide apart and he seemed to have forgotten my existence.

Three years sailed past in the fog. Before the next would come and so I would be a member of the bar of California. I was of age and had fallen in love. With a certain self-reliance some small success had brought me, must have changed me somewhat. Yet when I saw Pearson's face looking out of the window of a passing cab, I forgot my dignity, and with my green bag over my shoulder I ran after the rattling door wheels, and, catching it, jerked at the door handle and almost plunged into Pearson's arms.

He was never exactly demonstrative, but he was overjoyed to see me and shook me by the shoulders until my head ached.

But he was sadly changed. His neatness in his dress was gone and then he smelt of liquor. His face was pale and rather worn and his eyes were not so clear and bright as they used to be, despite his sleepless nights. I saw he had been ill.

Almost his first inquiry was for Roach. "Had I seen him?" "No, not for months," I felt piqued that he did not ask about myself. It seemed unkind.

"Don't leave me, Tommy boy," he said. "Drive with me, we must find the rajah."

The cab rumbled on again.

I looked at Pearson closely. I felt as if he were not he at all. He placed his hand on my knee in the old way and at last he broke the silence. "I saw him, but only just arrived in town. Back from hell and nowhere," he said. But one thing he must find Roach at once.

I grew frightened at his persistence and tried to tell him about my own position and future, almost in desperation.

It was no use. He paid no attention to me; looking out of the windows from side to side and bolting out of the carriage into the places where he thought he might find Roach with a "Wait here, I'll be back" and a slam of the door.

Two or three times I was tempted to clear out and leave him in the lurch. But for some reason I did not do so.

From the last place he entered he shot out on a run.

"He's been there," he shouted. "Back to the hotel, drive! Drive! You lazy devil!" he screamed to the man on the box. "Drive quickly!"

On the way he apologized for his abstraction. He spoke in a high, excited voice. I could just hear what he said about the roar of our fast driving.

He was in a hurry to get everything about him, he said. But just now he must find Roach.

Tonight he'd tell me everything—we'd have an old-time pow-wow.

I tried to smile and nodded, as we swung sharp about a corner and pulled up at the hotel. It was well we stopped, the horses' knees were trembling and their heads pitched forward. Pearson glanced at the clock and gave a sigh of relief. He paid the fare in small change, fished up from various pockets and was somewhat short of the amount. It was quite pitiful to see his fingers searching fruitlessly. He flushed like a school girl when he handed it to the driver, but made no comment.

"The reeking horses were slowly driven off and I turned to Pearson.

"How long is it since you have seen Roach?" "Three years—we split, you know."

"But you were making money?" I half inquired.

"It's all back in a hole in the earth. I blew it into the place it came from—fast as we made it," Pearson answered. "It was just a fool. I wanted to get rich and quick. But Tom, old chap, my luck's gone—and worse, too. I fear." He stopped and bit his teeth into his lower lip, which was trembling.

"Look here," he went on nervously. "I've been praying lately—think of that and eye know, I'm going away—soon. Back to a little place where most people have forgotten me. There's an old man living there whose heart I've broken, and, he'd die happy if I knelt down beside him—I'm going to do it, lad, God willing and God help me."

"Could this be the old courageous Pearson? This man whose eyes were filled with tears and whose voice broke so sadly. I found myself studying his face intently. Before I knew what was coming, I had slipped the gold ring he wore upon his middle finger, saying: "Keep it, Tom; not for luck, dear boy, but just because I want you to be."

As I took it I noticed that Pearson's palms were calloused and the inside sur-

face of the ring was scratched and dented. I balanced it in my hand and for the life of me I could not think of one word to say. I wished to put my arm about him and comfort him. But, of course, I could not do so then, and we stood there silent in the lobby, Pearson glancing up and down the street and back into the long corridor of the hotel.

"Don't think me inquisitive, pray don't," I said, at last; "but why are you so anxious to find Roach?"

He looked at me.

"Tommy," he said. "I don't find him before somebody else does, something will happen, mark my words."

"Why?" I said.

"It's all on account of a woman," he said. "But what under the sun a man like the rajah can see in a creature like that put me out of it; and yet, at a nod of her head—and it isn't even a pretty one—I believe he'd go to hell. It's strange, d—d strange!"

"I don't exactly understand," I said.

"Well, the situation is this, son," said Pearson, speaking slowly and pulling at his long mustache. "Do you remember the picture of the 'Dance of Death' in the library?"

I recalled at once the drawings of Roland—the skeleton, armed with a dart about to attack some unsuspecting person in the midst of happiness or contentment.

"Yes, I do not exactly understand," I said. "Speak plainer."

Pearson appeared to look over my head, but he answered slowly and distinctly.

"There's some one looking for Roach, and death is with him," he said. "Something will happen here, I tell you, in the next few minutes if—"

Suddenly he about faced, and walked slowly into the hotel lobby. He was breathing loudly and trying hard to swallow like a man whose throat is parched with thirst. Standing close to the elevator were a man and woman. The man I knew by sight. He was dressed in a long black coat, his hair was gray, and his eyes, small and narrow, glittered evilly like a hawk's. His name was Terris. I remembered having heard it said that, in the old days, the vigilantes had overlooked him. The woman never took her eyes off his face. The paint on her lips, drawn tight across her teeth, was blotted, and her mouth had a blurred appearance. Her frightened hands rubbed against the side of her skirt. I saw all this from following Pearson's eyes. The elevator slid down and stopped softly. The man grasped the woman by the arm and went inside. But before the boy could close the door Roach stepped quietly around the shaft, coming from some side entrance.

Pearson and I were close behind him and we all three entered the narrow box together.

What happened then came so quickly and was such a shock to me that I feel almost faint now when I remember it.

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DOWN THEY WENT ON THE FLOOR.

gether, and he caught his own lips between them, and the blood reddened over his chin.

Just then the elevator struck the top and nearly threw me off my feet. Terris drew the woman figure under his arm, the boy ran shouting down the hall, and I was left alone with all that dreadful struggle on the floor.

Pearson glanced at me sideways and spoke in a hard voice—he was panting loudly.

"It was just in time. Pull that rope and run us down, hurry!" he said.

I obeyed without a word. How slow it seemed to drop, and all the time Pearson was talking to the manning figure under him, whose wrist he held in the clasp of his strong fingers.

"Don't struggle, Dick. D—n it, man, I had to. Don't you hear me? He was going to shoot you; she told me so, listen! It's I, old pal Pearson. I had to do it. Listen! There, stop, I won't hurt you, Dick. Dick, old boy, he'd shot you through his coat. Come all the way from Pinto just to do it. My God! he doesn't hear me, O—n the woman's soul!"

Roach was maddening his hands, still attempting to free himself. His eyes only showed the whites and he was blowing bloody bubbles through his teeth.

Pearson looked up at me. "What am I going to do, God help me," he asked. "I'm going to kill his body."

"We reached the bottom at last with a creaking blow on the woodwork. There was a crowd gathered there already.

Pearson let go his hold and got up on his feet. He was so cool and earnest and appeared so right that no one offered to touch him and he backed slowly out into the hall.

Two or three men raised Roach and he stood there swaying, deaf and blind with the desire to kill, his head thrust out, as if he peered through smoke, and his bloody jaw dropped horribly. They might have known, it seems to me, but the movement was so quick, perhaps they could not have stopped it. The flash and report came together. It seemed as if something went off inside my head and breast.

I saw a man lurch forward across an easy chair, coughing and strangling. There was a spattering on the white tiled floor. Roach drew himself up, with the air of a drunken man who tries to keep his dignity, handing the revolver to the bystander nearest him, and staggering away asking for an officer in a hasty voice.

The pistol smoke smelt like a noxious gas and nearly overpowered me.

They carried Pearson, or dragged him rather, into the nearest washroom and laid him on the floor, with some dirty towels underneath his head. I knelt beside him and placed my cheek close against his. One of his lungs was filled with blood, but he could whisper.

"Have you a pistol, Tom?" he said in my ear. "Put it in my pocket. It'll go easier with him if they find a pistol—he was crazy—meant to save him—stood between me and a knife, he did, once long ago—cut him to strings." He was laughing thickly.

"Get them on train, she managed to tell me. Terris got hold of Roach's letter; they were going to clear out—swore to kill him—Terris did. Fought Terris—him—the last nerve—blabbed—been going on for years. O, Tom, I fight to die—don't let him know—ride straight! Pray quick, prayers—O, God!" I held my breath while he was dying, the doctor fumbling about his chest.

I remember they covered him with a cloth from the billiard table and a man in a blue coat took down my name and I struggled through the crowd.

I could not think of what had happened, and looked stupidly at the heavy seal he had slipped off his finger into my hand but a few minutes before. The crest had been defaced and I could make out the word "veritas" spelt backward.

Perfunctorily I finished the errand I had started on earlier in the day; the filing of some papers at the court house, and still I heard the newsboys calling "extra" on the street.

There is the sum of the following day, and I have finished. I did not go to bed that night. I thought I should never sleep again, and I made all the arrangements for Pearson's funeral, after the inquest, with his heavy heart. No one knew anything of his family or his past. I seemed to be his only friend. One thing I knew—he was a gentleman.

The second day I slept, and when I awoke there was a note brought to me from Roach, imploring me to call and see him. He was dead a prisoner—it was not his first affair.

For some reason I felt no resentment toward Roach. I was still numbed. I could not analyze my feelings for him. I did not care whether they hanged him or let him go—Pearson was dead.

So I went; and found him, not in a cell, but seated in a large, cage-like structure in the jail corridor. He appeared quite comfortable, and was smoking.

There was a skylight in the roof above, and the place was full of sunshine. The reality and horror of the whole occurrence struck me more forcibly. Up to this time I could hardly realize it.

Not a detail of the place or of the interview escaped me. I did not believe I said a dozen words. One sentence was in my mind. "Call you've killed my brother."

As soon as he saw me he arose and began to talk. I would be a witness for him—I saw the assault, how unprompted it was and then "before a lady." He "was in the right."

I did not answer; if I had I would have blurted out the truth.

Roach went on and called Pearson a "crazy fool"—Pearson "a crazy fool!"

Just then some one came down the corridor and handed him a piece of paper through the bars and went away. I saw the man. It was Pearson, in a piece of handwriting, that note. I knew that piece of paper; Pearson had scribbled it in the cab the day before and left it at the "Turf Exchange."

Roach grew old as he read it. I had never thought he was so old a man. I noticed many strange things. His mustache was dyed, his hair was very thin, his gaubled face was full of wrinkles. The great scar down his cheek stood out like a fresh burn. The cigar smoothed out like a fresh burn. The cigar smoothed out like a fresh burn. The cigar smoothed out like a fresh burn.

His eyes were full of tears. He was shivering sound as if he were cold or freezing. He patted my hand and asked me to sign myself along the bars for support. He did not say a word. I could not lift my eyes to his and turned away.

Then I heard a sound that made a chill run up my back.

"Pat! Pat!" the noise that people often make to attract attention in a crowd.

I glanced around and such a sight I saw! Roach had one arm stretched at full length through the cage across the narrow passage to the left. There was a narrow of Springfield rifles there close against the wall.

Have you ever seen a person reach for something on a high shelf, something they could just touch with the fingers?

"Tip it, Tommy" (the never called me by that name before). "Tip it," he said in a ringing entreaty. "Go ahead; you can do it," he added with a hideous inscription.

I could not stay there longer. I became so weak. In my mind now as I write I can see a big-muscled, hairy hand with a diamond flashing on the middle finger, reaching—reaching.

Almost as I went through the swinging doors the report came to me.

I heard voices inside the building and a reporter rushed past me, his face ablaze with news.

The papers were all wrong. They who remember it and read this will learn the truth.

To secure the original worth halve save ask for DeWitt's Witch Hazel Salve, well known as a certain cure for piles and skin diseases. Beware of worthless counterfeits. They are dangerous.

THE OMAHA DAILY BEE: THURSDAY, MARCH 29, 1900.

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