

The FABLE

LORCHA

By HORACE HAZELTINE

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Robert Cameron, capitalist, consults Philip Clyde, newspaper publisher, regarding anonymous threatening letters he has received. He first promises a sample of the writer's power on a certain day. On that day the head is mysteriously cut from a portrait of Cameron while the latter is in the room. Clyde has a theory that the portrait was mutilated while the room was unoccupied and the head later removed by means of a string, unobserved by Cameron. Evelyn Grayson, Cameron's niece, with whom Clyde is in love, finds the head of Cameron's portrait nailed to a tree, where it was last seen used as a target. Clyde pledges Evelyn to secrecy. Clyde learns that a Chinese boy employed by Philip Clyde, an artist living nearby, had borrowed a rifle from Cameron's lodge-keeper. Clyde makes an excuse to call on Murphy and revealed. He pretends to be investigating alleged infractions of the game laws.

CHAPTER V.—(Continued).

At last I saw him half-way amenable to reason. Now that he was out of the shadow, I saw too, more clearly, what manner of man he was. His head, as I had already discerned it through the gloom, was abnormally large, yet not out of proportion with his herculean torso. His red hair, frowsy, unkempt, was of such abundance that, in the dim light, seemed the color of ripe russet apples. His eyes were nearly indiscernible, deep set, under bushy red brows.

"If you had shown the least bit of humanity to brother men in distress," I responded, in a half-jocular vein, "I'd probably never thought of this being your place, and you being you; and the incident of the morning might have been forgotten."

"I thought I heard his teeth grit together in his effort to suppress a rising rage. I certainly saw his hands clench; and then, with an assumption of indifference, he took a final puff at his cigar and tossed it, sparkling, among the weeds of his lawn.

"It was evident to me, now, that in spite of the nonchalance he affected, my reference to the Chinaman's poaching, and his presence at Cragholt, had aroused his interest, and so hoping to draw him out, I continued: "Your man told the lodge-keeper that you sent him over to borrow a rifle."

"You don't mean to tell me you'd believe a Chinaman, do you?" he retorted.

"It wasn't for me to believe or disbelieve. The lodge-keeper believed him."

"And so he borrowed a rifle, and then with one of Cameron's own instruments of destruction proceeded to destroy Cameron's game? Is that it?"

"What did he shoot? A deer or one of those starved-looking white dogs that Cameron has following him about?"

Apparently Murphy knew much more of my friend than my friend knew of Murphy.

"Neither, I fancy. In fact, I'm not sure just what he did shoot in the way of game. But he seems to have indulged in a bit of target practice. He found a piece of an old portrait, tacked it to a tree, and shot holes in it. Rather silly, eh? Foolish for him to chance getting into trouble for child's play of that sort."

"How do you know that?" he growled, with an inadvertent drooping of his mask. There was no mistaking, now, that I had made captive his attention.

before me, demanding attention. And, in the midst of it, dominating it, stretching his great shadow over it to the farthest limit, appeared that frowsy red giant, Murphy, a mystery within a mystery; for, though he seemed to pervade it, there was no point at which I could discover him quite touching it.

In vain I tried to detect a real connection. I started with the letters. They bore no single characteristic mark of this uncouth creature. As an artist he might have devised the curious silhouette signature, but there was something about that—some cunning, inventive subtlety—which I could not reconcile with the ogre I had played upon, stung to anger and aroused to curiosity.

That he could either have conceived or executed the ruin of the portrait I did not believe possible. The conception, like the letters and the signature, bore evidence of a craftiness too fine for such as he; and to fancy him, mammoth that he was, stealing unobserved into Cameron's study, was to fancy the incredible.

And so, though the impression of intimate relationship persisted, I could find no point of contact, closer or more definite than through his servant's rifle practice, which after all might have been quite without motive.

There was little, therefore, in the line of reason, to convict Murphy of any knowledge of the matters which had so disturbed us. And yet, as I have said, I felt intuitively that he possessed an intimate acquaintance with the whole affair.

At the Greenview station, I found my touring car waiting; my mother in the tonneau. My chauffeur touched his cap as I approached.

"You may drive, Francois," I said, and I took the place at my mother's side.

"You look tired, Philip," she announced when I had kissed her. "Was it very warm in the city?" Her eyes were ever quick to note infinitesimal changes in my appearance of well-being.

"Not uncomfortable," I answered, indulgently. "I had a very busy day, though. But I'm not the less fit because of it."

"We have had some little excitement here," she hastened, eager to give me the news. "Old Romney called you up on the telephone about noon. I happened to answer it, myself, and when I told him you were in New York, and would not be back until six, it just seemed he couldn't wait to unbuckle himself. 'Won't you please tell him, Mrs. Clyde,' he said, 'that Mr. Murphy's Chinaman was found at daybreak this morning, lying dead, just outside Murphy's back door.'"

"Found dead!" I cried, in amazement.

"That is what he said. Then he added that the poor fellow's head had been crushed with some heavy instrument, and that Mr. Murphy had been arrested on suspicion and was in the Cos Cob lockup."

For a full minute, I think, I sat in silent amazement. Then theories and conjectures in infinite variety gave chase, one after the other, through my excited brain. But it was more than ever difficult, I found, to reach anything like a satisfactory conclusion concerning the position the now lifeless Celestial and his accused master held in the chain of mysteries I wished so much to solve. That they were both of them more or less important links, however, I had small doubt.

"Did you know Mr. Murphy?" my mother asked. And all at once I realized that her question was a repetition. In my absorption I had not heeded the original inquiry.

"Nobody knows him," I answered, unconsciously echoing the words voiced by the man in the catboat on the previous night. "Nobody knows him. But I've met him in a rather casual way."

CHAPTER VI.

Nell Gwynne's Mirror.

With the approach of the twenty-first of the month, which is to say the seventh day following Cameron's receipt of the second letter, I observed in him a growing nervous restlessness, which with praiseworthy effort he was evidently striving to overcome. Of my visit to the red giant and the tragedy which followed it, he was, of course, informed; as he had been of the incident in the wood, including the finding of the bullet-pierced piece of canvas. Everything, save only that Evelyn was the discoverer of the portrait remnant—which I thought best under the circumstances to keep secret—was told to him in detail, and with all the circumstantiality necessary to an intelligent discussion of even the minutest point.

better view, and so had come upon the unexpected.

Seated upon a great boulder, his easel planted between the stones of the stream's shallows, was a red-headed, red-bearded Colossus, in a soiled suit of khaki and a monstrous straw hat such as is worn by harvesting farmers. Cameron told me that all three of them made bold to peep over the painter's shoulder at his work, and then, though it was of the most mediocre quality, to shower him with laudatory and congratulatory phrases.

"I can fancy how he thanked you," I broke in, smiling. "I suppose he said something very rude."

"He said nothing at all. He simply stopped painting, and turning, fixed his eyes upon me. It was as if he saw no other one of us. He seemed to be making a careful appraisal of my every feature. After a moment it grew embarrassing, and though I did not resent it—feeling rather that we, ourselves, had been in the wrong—I very speedily withdrew. To my surprise he rose from his stone seat, and, palette and brush in hand, followed us up the little acclivity to the road, watching in silence, until we got back into our car, and wheeled away."

"Did you gather from his inspection that he recognized you, or thought he recognized you?" I asked.

"I gathered only that he meant to be inferentially rude," was Cameron's answer.

"And you have never seen him since?"

"Never."

"He has evidently seen you. He spoke of the Russian wolf-dog's look about you with response."

"Well," I added, in a tone meant to be reassuring, "I think we need have little fear of a continuance of this singular method of annoyance. Though we can't trace it directly to Murphy and his unfortunate Mongolian, I thoroughly believe that one of the other was responsible. With the Chinaman dead and Murphy in jail, the persecution will cease. The threat contained in the second letter will never be executed. See if I'm not right!"

My hope of putting Cameron at ease, however, was not rewarded. He continued to exhibit signs of an almost constant apprehension. There was, indeed, a sympathy-stirring pathos about the nervous disquiet of this man, usually so impenetrably self-contained. And at moments, in spite of me, a suspicion gripped and held that he had not been entirely frank; that somewhere in his past there was something unrevealed which might serve as a clue, if not an explanation, to the present. But these doubts of him were always transitory.

The twenty-first of September fell that year on Monday. My office demanded my presence, but I arranged affairs as well as possible by telephone and devoted the entire day to Cameron. When I told him I meant to do this he protested, pretending that he was quite without foreboding; while the unconscious tapping of his foot on the rug, even as he spoke, belied his words.

We spent the better part of the day going over the Apawamis links at Rye, lunching at the club house between rounds, for as a specific for nerves I have ever found that game of rare benefit. In the present instance it more than fulfilled my expectations. Cameron, apparently at least, forgot everything save his desire to out-drive, out-approach, and out-pun me. And when it was over, and with sharpened appetites we drove back to Cragholt for dinner, he appeared stimulated by a new-found courage.

The day had passed without untoward event, and I felt sure that my friend was gradually coming around to my way of thinking. Neither of us mentioned the subject, but it must have recurred to him, at intervals, as it did to me. And as the hours went by without a sign, the conviction grew that Murphy, with hands tied, was fretting over the coup he was deterred from compassing.

Mrs. Lancaster, when I have mentioned merely as Cameron's house-keeper, but who was, in addition, a distant kinswoman and acted as a sort of duenna to Evelyn, dined with us that evening, and our little party car seemed to me more than usually merry, owing doubtless to the relaxation of the strain which both Cameron and I had been under for the past week.

It gratified me to see my host so unfeignedly cheerful. I remember how he laughed over Mrs. Lancaster's recital of an incident of the morning.

"I had no idea," she said, "that 'Andrew,' referring to the kennel master, was married. He astonished me when he told me he had a wife and three children. And when I told him he did not look like a married man he seemed rather pleased than otherwise."

It was odd," Cameron returned, "but it seems always to fatter a husband to tell him he doesn't look it. And then he laughed as though he had no care on earth."

After dinner we had the usual music, and Evelyn sang again that lyric of Baudelaire's, this time in the original French. But the melody brought back to me in vivid vision our chance meeting in the woods and all its train of circumstances.

When I had finished applauding, Cameron turned to me.

"Do you like Baudelaire?"

"I like his art," I answered, "and his frank artificiality."

"He appeals to me," Cameron confessed, "decadent though he is. I have read everything he ever wrote. I think, prose and verse. Do you ever see my copy of his 'Fleurs du Mal'? The book is worthy of its contents. It is the most exquisitely bound little volume I ever saw. Come, I'll show it to you."

I excused myself to Mrs. Lancaster, and with pretended formality bent over Evelyn's hand, brushing it with my lips.

"Won't you be back?" she whispered.

"I hope so," was my answer. "But I can't promise."

"Oh, what a trial it is to have a selfish uncle!" she murmured as I went.

Cameron led me through the library, across the hall, and thence into his study, where he dove into a miniature book rack reserved for his favorites. After a moment of fruitless search he said:

"It isn't here. How stupid! I took it upstairs a week ago. I remember. It is in my dressing room. Do you mind coming up?"

Did I mind coming up? How glad I was to see him interested! He was more like the old Cameron than he had been in any time in the past several days. My golf prescription had proved even more efficacious than I had dared hope.

At the risk of being tedious I must describe Cameron's dressing room. It was not large—probably 20 feet square—with three doors; one on each of the three sides. That which admitted from the passageway faced that which opened into the bath room. On the left, the third door connected with Cameron's bedroom. On the right were two windows, giving upon an outside balcony. Between them was a fire-place.

To the left of the bath room door was the entrance to a huge closet, guarded by a heavy curtain of old rose velvet. To the right, was a stationery wash-stand, and above it a rectangular mirror, probably ten inches wide and a foot long, and very curiously framed. Across from this, against the wall which divided the room from the passage, was an enormous chiffonier, or chest of drawers. In the room's center was a round table, on which rested a reading lamp. Between the table and the fire-place was a reclining chair. Other chairs, three or four, were variously placed.

I have given these facts because they are necessary to an intelligent understanding of what I am about to relate. That in furnishing and adorning the room was plainly utilitarian is not so material. But there is one exception to this general declaration which demands to be specified. The mirror above the wash-stand possessed a distinction quite aside from its practical utility. This was by no means the first time I had seen it. Cameron had showed it to me, with a degree of pride, early in our acquaintance, explaining that it was at once a relic and an heirloom. Originally the property of Nell Gwynne, it had descended to him through three or four generations of maternal ancestors.

The glass was framed in colored beadwork, to which were attached wax figures in high relief: at the top, a miniature portrait of Charles II. in his state robes; at the bottom, one of Nell herself, in court dress. The king appeared also on the right, in hunting costume, and on the left was another figure of his favorite in less ornamental garb. According to the legend which accompanied this interesting antique, it was Nell Gwynne's own handiwork.

I possessed for me a certain fascination due more to its history than its beauty; for it was not the most artistic of creations, and as Cameron poked about for his Baudelaire, I stood gazing at the glass and thinking of all I had ever read of the illiterate, but saucy, sprightly actress whose sole claim to fame hung on her winning the favor of that easy-going, royal hypocrite, Charles II.

"Here's the binding!" I heard Cameron say, and turned from the mirror to the table, where he had found his sought-for treasure beneath a pile of heavier, grosser works.

"You know something of book-binding," he went on, with enthusiasm. "Now examine that carefully, and tell me if you ever saw anything more exquisite. I had it done in London, last year. It's a copy of one of Le Gascon's."

At first sight it seemed all glittering gold, but on closer inspection I found that the groundwork was bright red morocco, inlaid with buff, olive, and marble leather, the spaces colorfully filled with very delicate and beautiful pointillé traceries. It was a veritable gem in its way, and I could not blame Cameron for his raptures.

When I had applauded and been praised to his content, he took the little volume from my hand and opening it, with a sort of slow reverence, observed with something like patronism:

"I'm afraid you don't quite understand Baudelaire."

"Does anybody?" I fung back.

"He is not so obscure as his critics would have us believe," Cameron asserted. "Sit down in that lounging chair a moment, and I'll read you something." And as I obeyed, he drew up a chair for himself, speaking all the while in denunciation of Tolstol and the injustice of his criticism.

One poem after another he read, while I lay back listening. To his credit be read them well, though he paused often in mid-verse to explain what he thought I might regard as an affectation or, as Tolstol has put it, "an intentional obscurity."

There was one verse which impressed me particularly as he read it, and remained with me for a long while afterward, for, in view of everything, it seemed to have a special appositeness. The lines to which I refer have been translated in this way:

From Heaven's high balconies
See! in their threadbare robes the dead
years cast their eyes.
And from the depths below regret's wan
smile appears.

Cameron sat with his back to the door leading to the passageway, and facing, diagonally, across the table, the Nell Gwynne mirror. My own gaze was on him as he read.

As he finished the verse, a portion of which I have quoted, he lifted his eyes, I thought to meet mine, but his look rose over my head, and clung, while his lids widened, and into every line of his face there came a rigid, startled expression, half amazement, half horror. And in that instant of tense silence the "Fleurs du Mal" slipped from his nerveless fingers, struck the table edge, and dropped with unseemly echo to the floor.

In a breath I was on my feet and staring where his vision had focussed. I hardly knew what I expected to see. I am sure nothing would have surprised me. And yet I was scarcely prepared for the inexplicable ruin which my sight encountered. The glass of the Nell Gwynne mirror was in atoms.

Cameron rose, a little unsteadily I thought, and coming around the table, joined me in closer inspection of his wrecked heirloom. I can find no word adequate to the description of what we experienced. Amazement and all its synonyms are far too feeble for the task. We were certainly more than appalled. What we saw suggested to me spontaneous disintegration. If such a thing were possible, which I believe it is not, it might have explained the condition of the mirror. No other ascription seemed admissible; for, though the glass remained in its frame not so much as a splinter having been dropped, it was fractured into a thousand tiny pieces, resembling a crystal mosaic, incapable of any but the most minute reflections. And the change to this condition from a fair, unmarred panel had been wrought without sound and seemingly without human agency.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

"The steamer I sailed in was a floating hotel."

"Did it employ any bell boys?"

A GOOD BREAKFAST.
Some Persons Never Know What It Means.

A good breakfast, a good appetite and good digestion mean everything to the man, woman or child who has anything to do, and wants to get a good start toward doing it.

Start Your Baby With Sound Health

Regular Bowel Movement from Childhood on Forestalls Future Serious Diseases

We cannot all start life with the advantages of money, but every child born is entitled to the heritage of good health. Through unfortunate ignorance or carelessness in the feeding of a baby its tiny stomach may become deranged. The disorder spreads to the bowels and before the mother realizes it the two chief organs on which the infant's comfort and health depend are causing it great suffering. If the condition is allowed to continue grave ailments often result.

There is, however, no occasion for alarm, and the sensible thing to do—but it should be done instantly—is to give the baby a small dose of a mild laxative tonic. In the opinion of a great many people, among them such well-known persons as the parents of Dixie Dudley, Nagolia, Ark., the proper remedy is Dr. Caldwell's Syrup Pepsin. Mrs. Earl Dudley writes: "Dr. Caldwell's Syrup Pepsin is the best medicine I ever used. It cured my baby of flatulence colic when the doctors failed; it cured my husband of constipation. My home shall never be without Syrup Pepsin." It is a pleasant-tasting laxative, which every parent likes. It is mild, non-gripping, and contains that most excellent of all digestants, pepsin.

This remedy is especially intended for infants, children, women, old people and all others to whom harsh cathartics, salt waters, pills, etc., are distressing. In fact, in the common disorders of life, such as constipation, Pink Eye, Epi-zyotic Shipping Fever & Catarrhal Fever

FOR BEST RESULTS SHIP YOUR CATTLE, HOGS AND SHEEP TO
OMAHA LIVE STOCK COMMISSION COMPANY
SOUTH OMAHA, NEBRASKA

Amateur Palmist Had Other Lines of Information Which Aided Her in Revelations.



DIXIE ASKEW DUDLEY
liver trouble, indigestion, biliousness, headaches, and the various other disorders of the stomach, liver and bowels nothing is more suitable than this mild laxative-tonic. Dr. Caldwell's Syrup Pepsin.

Two generations of people are using it today, and thousands of families keep it constantly in the house, for every member of the family can use it. It can be obtained of any druggist at fifty cents or one dollar a bottle, the latter being the size bought by families who already know its value. Results are always guaranteed or money will be refunded.

If no member of your family has ever used Syrup Pepsin and you would like to make a personal trial of it before buying it in the regular way of a druggist, send your address—a postal will do—to W. B. Caldwell, 417 Washington St., Monticello, Ill., and a free sample bottle will be mailed you.

FOR BEST RESULTS SHIP YOUR CATTLE, HOGS AND SHEEP TO
OMAHA LIVE STOCK COMMISSION COMPANY
SOUTH OMAHA, NEBRASKA

DIDN'T NEED TO READ LINES
UNKIND INFERENCE.

Amateur Palmist Had Other Lines of Information Which Aided Her in Revelations.

The fair amateur palmist looked at the left hand of the sweet girl long and earnestly. Breathlessly she waited for the palmist's next words.

"Ah! I see by your hand that you are engaged to be married," said the Palmist. "And," continued the reader of the future and the past, in a more cutting tone, "I see that you are engaged to Mr. Mooney."

"Oh! It's perfectly extraordinary," burst out the blushing girl. "How can you know that?"

"By my long study of the science," was the reply.

"But surely the lines on my hand—cannot tell you the name?"

"Who said anything about lines?" replied the prophetic one, with withering scorn. "You are wearing the engagement ring I returned to him three weeks ago."

Cleverness Required.
In these days of high-cost living, said Representative De Forest, the sponsor of the bill for pensioning ex-presidents, "we hear of many queer economies."

"On a street car the other day, at the end of a discussion on saving and retrenchment, a lady said decisively: 'Oh, any woman can cut her husband's hair; but, believe me, it takes a clever one to cut it so that other women's husbands will suspect nothing.'"

Analyzing the Philosopher.
Finley Peter Dunne was sympathizing, at a New York club, with a playwright, whose play had failed.

"Brace up," he cried. "Take it like a philosopher!"

Then Mr. Dunne smiled the whimsical Dooley smile and added: "A philosopher is one who has trained himself to bear with perfect serenity the misfortunes of others."

Red Cross Ball Blue will wash double as many clothes as any other blue. Don't put your money into any other. Adv.

You can jolly the average man by referring to him as a prominent citizen.

LEWIS' Single Binder cigar gives you the rich natural quality of good tobacco. Adv.

The oldest colleges still retain their faculties.

It's tough on the society bud who marries a blooming idiot.

Only after trying does a man realize the many things he can't do.

FOLEY KIDNEY PILLS

Are Richest in Curative Qualities
FOR BACKACHE, RHEUMATISM, KIDNEYS AND BLADDER

A good breakfast, a good appetite and good digestion mean everything to the man, woman or child who has anything to do, and wants to get a good start toward doing it.

A Mo. man tells of his wife's "good breakfast" and also supper, made out of Grape-Nuts and cream. He says: "I should like to tell you how much good Grape-Nuts has done for my wife. After being in poor health for the last 18 years, during part of the time scarcely anything would stay on her stomach long enough to nourish her, finally at the suggestion of a friend she tried Grape-Nuts."

"Now, after about four weeks on this delicious and nutritious food, she has picked up most wonderfully and seems as well as anyone can be."

"Every morning she makes a good breakfast on Grape-Nuts eaten just as it comes from the package with cream or milk added; and then again the same at supper and the change in her is wonderful."

"We can't speak too highly of Grape-Nuts as a food after our remarkable experience." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.—Read the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs. "There's a Reason."

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest. Adv.

W. V. BENNETT,
See Building, Omaha, Neb., or address Superintendent of Immigration, Ottawa, Canada.

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Fought on Vegetable Diet

Great Warriors of Homer Were Not Sufferers From Insufficient Domestic Help.

The heroes of Homer prepared their food with their own hands, and were not, therefore, sufferers from insufficient domestics. In the happy simplicity of the Homeric ages, writes Mr. F. W. Hackwood in "Good Cheer," the great heroes who dealt such terrible blows, leaving death and desolation behind them, when they repulsed after their exploits, partook of a blameless dish of beans or a plate of hominy lentils.

It may be difficult to imagine Diomedes in the act of peeling an onion or Achilles washing cabbage. But alric of Baudelaire's, this time in the original French. But the melody brought back to me in vivid vision our chance meeting in the woods and all its train of circumstances.

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The cabbages were adorned by the Egyptians, who raised altars to it. Afterward they made this strange god the first dish in their repast. The Greeks and Romans ascribed to it the happy quality of preserving from drunkenness.

Alexander found the onion in Egypt, where the Hebrews had learned to like it. He had it cultivated in Greece, and given as food to his troops, in the belief that it excited martial ardor. Whosoever wishes to preserve his health, says an ancient sage, should eat every morning, before breakfast, young onions and honey. But this does not sound like a very tempting preservative.

Asia is said to be the native soil of the asparagus. Yet the Romans cultivated it with such marvelous success that the stalks raised at Ravenna are said to have weighed three pounds each, and we are asked to believe that the African variety, grown in Libya, reached a height of 12 feet.