

THE COPPER HOUSE

A Detective Story

BY
JULIUS REGIS

AUTHOR OF "NO. 13 TORONTO"

"Idiot!" he cried. "You will chatter your head off some day! We don't speak about dead men."

When the baron loosed his hold Tassler filled and drained his glass once more; his hands were trembling, and his eyes wandered uneasily round the room.

"I don't like that business with B.22," he muttered. "What's the sense of employing persons whom one has to kill as soon as they get to know anything? The chief said nothing about murder, when we first discussed our plans."

Nonsense. In such an undertaking as ours, there must always come a time, sooner or later, when we can stick at nothing. But that's no business of yours. Have you been to see Burchardt?"

"Yes, I have been to him."

Tassler thrust his hands into his trouser pockets, and confronted the baron.

"Yes, I have seen the damned lawyer! Fayerling, they mean to fight us; there is something up. Maurice Wallion is at the back of it, devil take him!"

His bloodshot eyes turned towards the glass, but he abstained, and went on with dry lips:

"That Burchardt is a fox. He looked at me quite differently when I came in, and was twice as oblique as he had been before. I mistrust people who grow polite the better one knows them! He was ready to lick my boots! I thought everything was going smoothly, and I was saying that as I had heard that the owner of the Copper House was in town, and the matter was urgent—when suddenly, the old rascal, who had been listening to me without turning a hair, said, quite softly:

"Mr. Grath has changed his mind. He is not thinking of selling the Copper House, before he has gone into the matter thoroughly. I can tell you, I nearly fell off my chair; 'Not sell!' 'No, very sorry—old traditions—family inheritance' and all the rest of it. The hell with the old traditions! They are on our track, Fayerling, they mean to go into the matter thoroughly!"

Tassler almost groaned as he said these words, but after a minute, he glanced at the baron with the humiliated stare in for a fight."

"Fayerling, Tarraschin's memorandum will be the ruin of us!"

"It would if we were all as blind and as cowardly as you. Can't you understand that no human beings ever had greater luck than we had, when Bernard Jenin, contrary to all expectation, fled for refuge to the Copper House?"

"But Rastakov couldn't get hold of him!"

"We have to thank the old she-grenadier for that. Andrei Bernin and his sister evidently mean to play for their own hand, but I intend to smoke out that wasp's nest—the Bernins won't be of any more use to us. Of course, Bernard Jenin counted on their help, although Lona Ivanovna seems to have played the wrong card. Oh well, the document is there, at any rate, as safe as though it were in a strong-box...."

"Who is Bernard Jenin really?"

"How should I know? A knave or a fool. You have heard that in Moscow he went by the name of Doctor Zero, and he managed to get the document from our agent, who was on the point of bringing it here. At first I thought it was all up, but thank goodness, Jenin was idiot enough to travel direct to Stockholm,

and had B.22 at his elbow during the whole journey; he simply had him on a string! And, not content with coming to Stockholm, no sooner had that journalist rescued him from room 23, than the silly fool runs straight off to the Copper House. And then you come and say that we have no luck!"

Tassler sneaked away at his cigar with his thick lips; his eyes looked like two china marbles.

"Can I see his photograph?" he asked in a hesitating voice. Fayerling threw it down in front of him, without a word.

One might have thought that Tassler was afraid of the picture, he held it at arm's length, between his thumb and finger, while a curiously fixed expression came over his face; he felt as though an electric shock had gone through him, and he tottered slightly.

"You must be drunk!" said the baron, with cold disapproval; but this diagnosis, though founded on past experience and supported by the witness of the empty glass, was incorrect. Marcus Tassler was perfectly sober, though his legs were giving way under him, and his brain was spinning like a Catherine wheel. He sat down.

"Fayerling," he whispered almost inaudibly, "do you know who Bernard Jenin is?"

"A common thief," replied the baron contemptuously.

"Don't call him that!" snarled the other, with sudden vehemence. "A common thief! And what are we, then?"

"Well, who is the creature, then?"

"It is Sergius!"

The baron started. The news fell upon him like a bolt from the blue, and he stared at Tassler with a look of keen inquiry. Finally he gave a short and somewhat ironical laugh, and said:

"Sergius! The much talked of Sergius, whom I have never seen! Of course! Now we know what took him out to the Copper House. I might have guessed."

He reached for the photograph, and examined it carefully, after which he put it back in his pocket.

"So little Sergius has a finger in the pie—on his own account! This will amuse Ortiz immensely. What a joke! Now we have only to hold out our hands for Tarraschin's memorandum; Sergius will be delighted to give it up to you as soon as he sees you, Tassler."

"He loathes me."

"That's no business of mine, it's your own affair. All I can say is that you must manage to get speech with him, by Lona Ivanovna's help. Why, man, with such cards in our hands, we can't help winning the game. When is the next train to Karkby?"

Tassler's fishy eyes seemed to conceal all manner of dark and crafty thoughts.

"When is the chief to arrive?" he asked after a pause.

"This evening, or, at latest, tomorrow."

"How much does he know?"

"Nothing of Sergius' arrival, or Wallion's interference. He expects to find Tarraschin's memorandum in our hands; his plans are ripe, and he is growing impatient. Things are going to move a bit in the Copper House, before we are many hours older. Every man is at his post, and we mustn't let any risks hinder us now. Come along."

He took Marcus Tassler by the arm, and they went out together.

As soon as breakfast was over Leo hurried up to his room but Maurice Wallion was

no longer there. A little thread of blue smoke was still curling up from a cigaret in an ashtray on the window-ledge; the window had been fastened which Leo interpreted to mean that the Problem-hunter had not left the room that way but was making a reconnaissance inside the house.

The young man went out into the corridor, and before he could say "Jack Robinson," the journalist confronted him, calm and smiling. Leo started, and looked anxiously round, but Wallion said:

"Go downstairs again, and try not to look as though you were accessory to a crime! I have only been looking about me a little. Where does that winding staircase lead to, in the lumber-room at the back?"

"Down to a little passage between the kitchen and the back door," replied Leo.

"Can one reach the first floor that way?"

"Yes, there is a landing and a door there."

"That's fine! Have you met Andrei Bernin?"

Leo described in a few words what had taken place.

Wallion smiled again, and said:

"So they are expecting me?"

"Yes, anxiously. Something seems to have alarmed them; they have quite changed their attitude since yesterday."

The Problem-hunter nodded thoughtfully.

"That's to be expected; they are beginning to wake up now. I shall set to work when Marcus Tassler has been here."

"Do you think he is coming?"

"Yes, he is bound to. You must receive him!"

Wallion fixed his gray eyes for a moment on Leo.

"You are keeping cool, that is right. Don't forget that I am here."

He nodded once more, and slipped quietly away. Leo saw him vanish in the direction of the back stairs; he was beginning to think that this man was independent of sleep at night, and breakfast in the morning, and he marveled at the buoyancy of his disposition.

Sonia Bernin's voice called from below:

"Mr. Grath, where are you?" and he went downstairs.

A bank of cloud was drifting slowly up from the direction of Stockholm; the sun shone palely from an almost colorless sky. A distant rumble of thunder sounded through the uncomfortably close atmosphere like the echo of a cannonade.

The young man went out with the girl into the garden. He could see through the dining room window, the blind man sitting in the shadow of the curtain, with his sister, who was working as usual. At some distance away in the garden, a man with a knife was cutting a bunch of red flowers. He wore a broad brimmed straw hat, and a blue apron. It struck Leo that the garden was the only part of his property that showed signs of being carefully, and even lovingly tended. It was fragrant with the scent of old-fashioned flowers: silky-soft sweet peas, white stocks and modest mignonette, growing between beautiful crimson and deep yellow roses. A carpet of velvety pansies contrasted with the brilliant display of sunflowers, peonies and dahlias. Some way off, the orderly ranks of the useful vegetables were marshaled; pale green, dark green and purple cabbages, crimson beetroots, and regular masses of radishes, carrots and parsley. Cucumbers lay beneath the panes of the forcing frames, and behind the glass walls of the hot-houses was a mighty though nondescript array of reserve forces in green uniforms.

"What colors!" said Leo.

"Your gardener must be an artist...."

"That's Rosenthal," said

the girl, pointing towards the man in the blue apron. "He is mad on flowers!"

They approached the man, who looked up as they reached him. His face was fair but sunburnt, with light blue eyes and a kindly mouth. He touched his cap, but in such a way that Leo saw at once that he was a well-bred man.

"Good morning," said Leo; "il faut cultiver notre jardin, n'est-ce pas?"

Voltaire was wrong there," replied the man quietly; "it is not a duty, but a pleasure to cultivate a garden."

He spoke as to an equal, and Leo raised his eyebrows and looked at him more attentively. There was something military in his bearing, but his speech was that of an educated man, and his thoughtful eyes were those of a poet.

"You love color, don't you?" Leo continued.

"Yes," answered the man. "Especially purple; it is the color of royalty—and of revolution."

"A good idea," Leo agreed. At that minute he felt the girl give his arm a little tug.

The man went on quietly with his flower cutting, and after a second's almost awkward silence, Leo turned away, feeling that he had been tacitly dismissed.

"Why did you pull my arm?" he asked, softly.

"It is Rosenthal," whispered the girl. "He speaks in a way that somehow frightens me. And Rastakov too...." Sonia's voice broke a little. Her complexion looked transparently clear this morning.

"Everything seems so strange since last night," she went on. "Something is going to happen!"

"What is it? Why don't you be frank with me?"

The girl did not reply. They were standing amongst the rose bushes at the corner of the terrace. Some distance away in the garden, Rosenthal straightened himself up, shading his eyes with his hand. As he looked down the avenue a whistle sounded suddenly from the direction of the gate; he threw down his knife, and went off to the kitchen, carrying the cut flowers in his apron. He came out again almost immediately, and walked quickly away. At the same time, Lona Ivanovna opened the front door, and stepped out on to the terrace.

Two persons now appeared in the avenue: one was Rastakov, the other a short, stout gentleman, who looked very warm and agitated.

"Do you know who that is?" whispered Sonia.

"No," answered Leo.

"It is Marcus Tassler."

The newcomers went up to the terrace, where Lona Ivanovna received them with what seemed to Leo to be an air of undisguised hostility.

"You come in good company, Marcus! But, to make your trio quite complete, you should have brought the baron with you. What do you want?"

Tassler went up to her; his eyes were bloodshot, and his face had turned a sort of sickly gray color.

"Baron Fayerling is here," he answered hoarsely, "he is coming immediately; where is Sergius?"

"And you ask for Sergius?" she exclaimed shrilly—"you have no right...."

"Who has a better right than I?"

"You have forfeited it. Besides, things have changed; and I don't trust you any longer, Marcus. Mind what you are about! The fire is kindled, opposition awaits you at every turn—and as for Sergius, he is where you will never get hold of him!"

"Lona Ivanovna," said Tassler in a stifled voice: "I warn you, it is impossible to stop us!"

Sonia had seized Leo's hand quite unconsciously in hers, and was squeezing it tightly.

OF INTEREST TO FARMERS

"ROPHY" MILK

Frequently dairymen complain that their herd milk, upon standing a short time, acquires a thickish consistency and that when poured from one vessel into another, it appearsropy and slimy, sometimes also acquiring a disagreeable odor. Nothing abnormal can be detected in the milk while it is still warm, but before it would normally sour it becomes slimy. This rophy or slimy condition of milk is the result of the action of certain species of bacteria with which the milk has become infected and the remedy lies in ridding the place of these germs. That being the case the question arises as to where the germs come from. Do they exist in the feed of the cows, on the outside of their bodies or in the milk utensils? Seldom, if ever, are they found inside of the udder or inside the teat ducts. They may, however, be present on the outside of the udder or on any other part of some body of the cows and drop into the pail at milking time or they may be hiding in imperfect seams of some of the milk utensils. In ridding a farm of these bacteria it is well to proceed according to some definite system. If the pasture contains low places where water accumulates during heavy rains and the cows get into the habit of standing in those places on hot days, bear in mind that rophy milk bacteria thrive in such places. As the cows stand in such wet places some of the mud is splashed on their bodies and as it dries particles containing billions of the germs are almost certain to drop into the milk pails. Where such mud holes exist in a pasture they should either be drained and kept dry or else fenced off from the pasture to keep the cows out. If, after this has been done, rophiness still persists, the next thing is to give the milk cooling tank a good cleaning to be followed by disinfection with a solution of chloride of lime, also known as bleaching powder. For this purpose add 100 gallons of water to the cooling tank and dissolve a 12-ounce can of chloride of lime therein. In addition to this wash all utensils used about the dairy, sterilize them with boiling hot water, then soak in the cooling tank containing the chloride of lime solution. After removing the utensils from the tank, again wash them in scalding water and place them outside where the rays of the sun can shine directly into them. Then clean the cooling tank once more. Also wash the udders and flanks of the cows with a damp cloth wrung out of a disinfecting solution. This should be done at least 10 minutes before milking so that the udders will be perfectly dry when milking starts. In the disinfection of the milk utensils make certain that every vessel ever used for milk is included. If, for example, a dipper that is frequently used for milk is forgotten, the contaminated germs may become reinfected as soon as that dipper is used again. The barn should be thoroughly cleaned and if necessary the inside walls and floor sprayed with a whitewash solution. Such cleanup campaign will usually get rid of the rophy milk bacteria, after which rophiness of the milk will automatically disappear. Sometimes a muddy approach to the barn may be the home of the bacteria and the elimination of that may overcome the difficulty without further work, except the washing of the udders and flanks of the cows before each milking for a week or so.

LESS RISK EACH YEAR

Pages could be written giving a multitude of reasons why there is less risk in making a success with poultry. In the first place, improvement is being made each year in the quality of poultry pertaining to raising poultry; the big majority of poultry raisers are requiring a higher standard of quality in their flocks. Another important requirement is that of vigor, and more attention is being paid to vigor—without vigor success in raising poultry is impossible.

Every one no matter how much he may think he knows about the breeding and management of poultry, can still learn. A good many of us still have a lot to learn about poultry.

Through the agency of our poultry experiment stations and our poultry publications, and other agencies, information is available, relative to every phase of the poultry business. There can be no good reason given today for anyone making serious mistakes in their poultry operations, if they will only take advantage of and make use of the facilities for obtaining information, which may be had for the asking.

Much credit is due the manufacturers of poultry feeds for their part in helping to bring about the conditions that exist today. Proper feeds are all important in making a success with poultry. Proper housing and equipment has ceased to be a problem, and no one should think of engaging in the poultry business without first providing good housing and equipment for their plant.

It should also be said there must be a liking for poultry work, or with all the help that is available, and the uncertainties that have been overcome, by investigation and experimentation, instead of success, in most cases there will be failure.

SOME CHLORATE POINTERS

Sodium chlorate has given such striking results as a weed killer that large quantities of it are being used in various parts of the country on nearly all of the most noxious weeds. Because of the comparative newness of this weed spray, the best method for its use has not been worked out for all sections. In general it appears that the strength of solution—that is, the number of pounds of chlorate to use in water—is not important, but it is important that anywhere from 100 to 300 pounds of chlorate be used per acre. It is safer to use the larger quantity, as it seems that quantities just a little smaller than necessary to kill are wasted when applied. Other requirements for the use of sodium chlorate are the application of it when there is considerable moisture in the plants and on the ground. Just after a good rain appears to be a satisfactory time of application. Weeds are most easily killed at the time they are in blossom. Also, at this period they have a large surface for absorption of the spray material. Lower temperatures seem to give better killing results than higher temperatures when using chlorate. Although any type of spray outfit may be used to apply the chlorate, the outfit should be large enough to get considerable spray material on the plant. Grasses, like quack and Bermuda, should be thoroughly soaked and the ground around the grasses should receive plenty of the spray material. Because of cool and moist conditions in most sections the fact appears that "fall spraying" of the chlorate may be satisfactory. In all events, the weeds should not be cut either before or after spraying. The chlorates are the cheapest satisfactory weed killers which are now being used. Sodium chlorate varies in price from eight to twelve cents per pound, depending upon quantity purchased. Growers should always keep in mind the fire hazard connected with the use of sodium chlorate. Boots and slickers which may be washed should be worn by users. Calcium chlorate does not have the fire hazard. Also, it appears to give satisfactory results when used as a powder.

MAKE FARM ATTRACTIVE

Spiraea bushes are valuable for landscape planting in this region. These bushes may be kept in good condition by proper pruning. Pruning will prevent the formation of large, ugly clumps of canes. Soon after the blooming period a few of the old canes should be removed close to the ground. Such a practice will provide room for the development of new shoots. The general rule to follow in pruning shrubs, which are valuable on account of flowers, is to do the pruning soon after the blooming period is over.

KEEP UTENSILS CLEAN

All dairy utensils should be rinsed, with cold water immediately after using, then washed in warm water containing washing powder, and finally scalded or rinsed in a good disinfectant solution. Separators should be washed in the morning and evening. If washed only once a day, it should be rinsed with water and then with a disinfectant solution.

MANURING ALFALFA

We doubt if there is any better place to put manure than on alfalfa fields. This is especially true when manure is applied in the fall and early winter. It will not only stimulate the growth of alfalfa in the spring but it will help protect the alfalfa against the rigors of winter. We do not hesitate to suggest manuring alfalfa during the summer immediately after the crop has been removed unless it is too strawy or contains too much other coarse material. The spreader distributes manure so evenly that very little trouble is experienced in gathering a crop of hay following an application of manure. We have ob-

erved this year alfalfa fields where the stands were materially thickened by an application of manure last fall. It has been pretty well demonstrated that alfalfa is not so likely to winterkill if it is provided with a good fow supply.

WEST ORANGE COMPETITION

West Orange competition has probably brought forward a 16-year-old boy who has unusual possibilities. He could guess that he has an excellent chance of attaining success in scientific fields, a fair chance of gaining world fame, and almost no chance at all of becoming, for very obvious reasons, a second Edison. To expect more of Wilbur Huston is to do the lad a grave injustice. The questionnaire, after all, brings him merely opportunity and not, by any stretch of imagination, a gilt-edged guarantee to fame.

Belgium, with a territory of 11,372 square miles, has passed the 8,000,000 mark in population.

EDISON'S "SUCCESSOR"

From Minneapolis Tribune.

We suppose that congratulations are in order today for Wilbur B. Huston of Port Madison, Wash. A year ago Wilbur was just plain boy with lively interest in the world and its phenomena. A week ago he was the brightest boy in the state of Washington, by committee decision. Today he has become, via the questionnaire, the smartest lad in the United States, the winner of a college education, the protégé of Thomas A. Edison, and the heir apparent to all the scientific genius of the Wizard of Menlo Park.

Well then, Wilbur, congratulations, and congratulations of the very heartiest sort. You have won signal honors, and you have won them, we have no doubt, by a great deal of hard work and conscientious preparation. Yet frankly, young man, you have our deepest sympathies as well as our felicitations. Your mature friends will warn you if they have your best interests at heart, that the honor which has befallen you is not an unalloyed blessing. They will remind you that boy prodigies have an uncanny faculty of losing themselves, about the time that most is expected of them, in the shuffle of mediocrity. They will tell you that questionnaires can reveal a great many things, but never the divine spark of genius that fires a young Edison.

The world will confer a kindness on Wilbur B. Huston if it will shortly forget that he is the nation's brightest boy, and that he is nominally, at least, the successor to the outstanding inventor of our times. If it will not expect too much of him, nor believe that he is literally a potential Edison, nor look for impeccability in a boy who has done nothing more, in the last analysis, than win the highest rating in a questionnaire which a trainboy named Thomas Alva Edison might once have flunked dismally. The

(TO BE CONTINUED)