

THE JUDAS COIN

by G. Frederick Paul

"Then one of twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said unto them: 'What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you?' And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver."—Matthew xxvi, 14, 15.

It was eight years ago on the second of April that John Carrington disappeared. I say disappeared advisedly, for to this day I will venture the statement that no one else save myself knows what became of that eccentric man.

Every one who knew Boston a dozen years ago, knew something also of John Carrington; if not personally, then at least they must have heard some of the strange stories which were told of him—how he lived alone in that big handsome house on Beacon street with no one about save a few servants who, it afterwards turned out, knew really nothing of the man or his ways. He was said to have no relatives, which was probably true, for no one ever laid claim to the large estate which he left.

To say the least Carrington was odd. There was not one man in Boston, though he was better known there than anywhere else, who could claim to know him. It was common talk that Carrington possessed one of the finest collections of antiques in existence. Who originated the story I have no means of knowing, for up to the time the house was taken possession of by the authorities, I never heard of anyone gaining admission. It proved to be true, however, for probably no finer collection of antiques ever saw the light of day outside the British Museum than was found inside the four walls of Carrington's house.

I have made these explanations in order that the reader who never heard of John Carrington may know as much of him as any one living, myself excepted.

There are two reasons, which even to this day I do not care to divulge, why I have so long kept silent regarding this man—why I have allowed year after year to go by and have not opened my lips to his strange disappearance, when with a word I could have cleared up the mystery. But to do that I should have been compelled to disclose the purposes of my journey upon that occasion, and thus give secrets to the world which were not mine to give.

The second of April, 1888, found me in the then miserable little settlement of Mitford, some forty miles west of Calgary, on the Canadian Pacific railway. That afternoon I was to take the west-bound train through to the coast and eventually to civilization. It was with a feeling of distinct relief that I at last beheld the puffing engines, laboring with the weight of a short train of cars, come into view up the grade. When I boarded the coach the colored porter informed me that it was a light trip and with the exception of myself there was but one through passenger.

Business of a private nature kept me employed throughout the afternoon, so I saw nothing of my fellow traveler. After dinner I picked up an old newspaper and adjourned to the smoking compartment. For probably half an hour I sat reading and smoking, when the compartment door opened and closed again. I turned about, asking it was the porter, but instead, much to my surprise, I recognized the tall, gaunt form of John Carrington. He was apparently oblivious of my presence, and walking past me to a chair near the window he sat down and gazed out into the fast approaching darkness. I cannot say that I was surprised at his conduct, for it merely bore out what I had always heard of the man.

In answer to a commonplace something he turned toward me for the first time, and I had the opportunity of looking straight into the most singular and at the same time the most fascinating face I have ever seen. There was a look of keen intelligence in those big gray eyes and a depth of thought in the broad white forehead which stamped him at once as a man of unusual character.

One question led to another, and it was not many minutes before we were fairly launched in conversation. We talked politics, travel, finance—and then somehow or other we drifted upon the subject of numismatics. In a moment the conversation was entirely in his hands, and I saw instantly that it was one in which he was a pastmaster.

Such were the circumstances of our meeting and the story. Why Carrington told it at all I cannot say, nor will I attempt to analyze; but will merely repeat it as he told it to me. "Yes," he said, "I have been the most fortunate of the many collectors of antiques and at the same time the most unfortunate. Misfortune came as the natural sequence of my success."

As I was about to interrupt he commanded silence with a wave of his long thin hand, and continued.

"A strange contradiction you think it? Well, have the patience to follow

me to the end and perhaps you will think as I do.

"Twenty years ago I had already secured one of the most complete collections of coins in existence. I had traveled the paths of the numismatic student one stage and one step after another until I imagined there was nothing more for me to learn.

"It was then that I thought of the Judas coins.

"No, I see the question in your face," he continued. "I am not usual. Why should not some of the fatal silver exist? I had in my possession Greek coins of silver and of gold made five hundred years before Christ was born. I had also Greek coins of bronze and of tin and copper alloy, minted four hundred years before the Christian era; yes, and some which bore the imprint of seven centuries before the advent of the Savior. There are those of Arabia, Athens, and Rome minted fully as many years ago. The clearest and most authentic portraits of Nero which exist to-day are upon the Roman coins. The artist of that day pictured him as he really was upon his own silver pieces. A glance at one will show you the ferocity, the obstinacy, and the brutality of the man. Some of these coins I had traced to direct events.

"Was it so strange, then, after all, that I should look for pieces of silver which existed in so comparatively modern a time as eighteen hundred years ago?"

As Carrington continued to bring forth argument after argument in support of his theory, he seemed to become young again. His face lost for the time its lines of age and his eyes shone with a light which I had not

the dozens of villas which surround the three sides of Pompeii. This one was the house of Arrius Diomedes. Situated as it is on the road which leads to Herculaneum, it outdoes its rivals in splendor. From this handsome villa had been taken the greatest paintings and the richest potteries. Throughout the vaulted corridors were found works in rare mosaics which to-day are unequalled in beauty and workmanship. This was the residence of that old Roman, as the world knew it. The excavators found within these walls seventeen skeletons, but to them they were only bones, over seventeen hundred years old, and they searched no further. Had they examined as closely as I did they would have found a written record of the house of Diomedes. On the four walls which surrounded this dungeon-like room, he had cut in Latin characters an undying record of the principal events of his life.

"I will pass over a long period which was recorded, not because it lacks interest, but for the reason that it has no connection with this matter. I will merely take the last ten years that the record was kept. This portion began by telling how his friend and kinsman Terentius Avasilus had gone with Titus to the Holy Land. Next came the sacking of Jerusalem with all the attendant horrors and triumphs. Then upon Terentius Acaellus' return to Rome he sent to Diomedes present of many goods and five slaves in commemoration of the event. Among these slaves was an old gray-haired Jewish potter, who in skill exceeded any of the workmen then owned by Diomedes. For half a dozen years the potter worked well and faithfully for his master and became a favorite because of his art and industry.

"At the end of that time word was brought to Diomedes that the Hebrew slave was ill, and the overseer who brought the message, said he feared the man was a leper. The master laughed at the man's fears and told him to bring the potter before him that he might judge for himself. He was brought in and as he stood before Diomedes, the master's practiced eye told him at once that the slave driver was right. The man was a leper. Furious at having his household thus exposed to the dreaded disease he ordered the slave to be led away by his spearman and killed. At the

well to them, and the remaining fifteen pieces I myself hid in a secret place.

"Unknowingly I thus raised strife within my own house, for my younger son left aggrieved that he had not been trusted with a portion of the treasure. In a dispute which followed, the younger slew the elder and took possession of the pieces. He was then condemned and executed, and shortly afterward their mother died of grief at the loss of her sons.

"According to an ancient rite of people, the fifteen pieces which had cost me the lives of those I loved, were destroyed.

"For years I feared to touch the silver which yet remained, and the pieces lay undisturbed. Still, knowing as I did then the awful curse which followed them, my greed for gain at last overcame my fear and I took the fifteen pieces to my dwelling. It was here that they were discovered by a file of soldiers, who tried to take possession of them. I cried aloud in distress and my countrymen came to my assistance. For a time the Roman spearman were beaten off. Then other soldiers came and more Jews, until the streets all about were a mighty battle ground and the earth was red with the blood of both. Following upon this it was that the mighty Vespasian commanded Titus to destroy Jerusalem as a lesson to my revolting countrymen.

"Need I tell you of the days of pillage and fire and murder which followed? I am here a slave—condemned to death as an unclean thing—far away from my own land and people—it is enough!

"As Simon ceased speaking he cast the coin, which he held in a hand white with the marks of leprosy, at the feet of Diomedes; then he continued: 'It is the last of the accursed money. The rest perished with the city. It has wreaked its vengeance upon me and upon my land and my people. Beware, for all is not over with it yet. Misfortune, ruin, devastation, and death shall follow in its path so long as it exists.'

"Having uttered these parting words, Simon, with trembling limbs and bowed head, was led away.

"For a time Diomedes gazed at the silver piece as it lay glittering upon the stones at his feet.

"An unwhimpy tale," he muttered; "surely disease and misfortune have caused the old Jew's mind to wander. But the story fascinates me strangely. I will preserve the piece, and the tale I will tell at the feasts. In proof of the coin I will have it marked according to the Jew's story.

"Take the coin," he said to an attendant. "Have The Price of Blood cut deep upon its face and the marking laid in with copper."

"This was done according to Diomedes' orders, and the coin bearing the Latin letters P. S.—Pretium Sanguinis—was placed in his strong box.

"The stone panels then went on to tell how Diomedes related the story of the old Hebrew slave to his friends, how the wine and then the coin was passed from one to another as they sat about the board, and how the host, sitting at the head of his table, told with that old Roman taste for rhetoric and eloquence, the story, word for word as Simon has done.

"Next the inscription told of a rich feast which Diomedes was preparing for his friends. It was in commemoration of a great Roman victory, and as this old Pompeian was as much a politician as he was a plutocrat, the entertainment was to be worthy of both guests and host. Couriers bearing messages of welcome were dispatched, and guests came, until a dozen of the eminent men of the day were gathered at Diomedes' villa.

"Here the written record ceases—not, however, the narrative, for there was much more to write. What Diomedes failed to do was left for others; left for those who lived eighteen hundred years later, for the day of the great feast was the twenty-fourth of August, A. D. 79. It was on this day that Vesuvius awakened from a lethargy of centuries to bury Pompeii.

"In the gorgeous banquet hall of Diomedes the feast went on. Twelve men reclined about the table. They dined as they never had before and never would again. As the wine jars were passed again and again the story was asked for, and the coin was passed with the wine.

"When pick and shovel brought tins full of light, there were the twelve skeletons. At the head of the table was the host, and in his bony fingers was tightly clasped the Judas coin. There it lay gleaming as brightly as it did when Simon cast it at Diomedes' feet centuries before.

"My work was over. The reward of years of patient study was before me. I had but to unclasp that skeleton hand, and the most precious relic the world contained was mine. As it was, I stood there for a time, powerless to move. Mine had been a triumph over time, but could I also triumph over the coin's fateful history which Diomedes had recorded so well?

"I dreaded to touch it and yet could not resist. The power which had urged me forward through the years of my work, now held me as if in a vise. The instincts of a better nature and of a better self bade me destroy it, but I was powerless to heed the warning.

"It was thus that for a time the coin became mine.

"There is little more to tell. I took the piece to my lodgings and resolved that within the week I would leave Pompeii. The night following, I was robbed by a trusted workman who had been in my employ, and among other valuables the coin was taken. He, poor devil, knew nothing of its history, its value, nor its curse. A few days later his body was found stiff and

cold on the seashore a few miles from my lodgings. He had been stabbed to death with a dagger which still lay sheathed in his cold flesh. He in his turn had been robbed, and the coin was among the missing pieces."

With these words Carrington sank back in his chair exhausted.

As for my own feelings, I will not attempt a description. I only know that he possessed the power of carrying me along with his quiet, pathetic oratory, imbued as it was with an earnestness which of itself was irresistible.

For many minutes Carrington was silent. I attempted to speak, but it seemed impossible for me to break in upon his chain of thought. In sheer desperation I at last pressed the electric button and the porter opened the door. I gave an order in a low tone, at the same time placing a bill in his hands. When he had left the compartment upon my errand and the room was once more silent, Carrington said in a low tone, more to himself than to me:

"I was years ago that that poor fellow was murdered in Pompeii though it seems but yesterday. For all these years that coin had been in my pocket where, no one knowing its history, no one will destroy it. Up and down the world it will go, here, there, and everywhere, spreading untold misery as it moves from place to place and from land to land."

As this juncture the porter entered with a tray containing my order and the change, and retired. Carrington, not heeding the interruption, continued: "And to think that all this crime, destruction, and I know not what, has been caused through—"

He never finished the sentence.

With a wild cry he sprang to his feet. "There, there," he almost shouted as he pointed his long thin fingers at the tray. Before I could speak or even move he had jumped forward and grasped the silver which had lain there unnoticed by me until then.

Carrington's face was as white as his hair, and his big gray eyes seemed to jump from their sockets. As he stood there more like a specter than a man he held high above his head a piece of the money which he had taken from the tray. With the other hand he pointed at it muttering: "See, see, the Judas coin! Look at the marking! There are the letters—The Price of Blood."

He was holding up a coin the like of which I had never seen. Across the face were strange letters which shone like gold. As I stared, dumb with astonishment, the piece seemed to take on color. It was blue, then red, and then yellow and white. As he held it there it gave out strange fluorescing lights, subdued, yet penetrating, and changing color so quickly that the eye could scarcely follow.

With a wild laugh which was almost a shriek, Carrington sprang to the door. I made an effort to follow, but could not.

A rush of wind on my damp forehead told me that the outer door of the car was open. There was a clanking of the wheels and a whirring of the wind in the darkness. Above it all I heard Carrington's voice. It was more like a wail than anything else, but I caught the words: "The Judas coin, the Price of Blood."

Then the voice was still.

We were whirling along beside the Fraser Canon when Carrington disappeared. Whether he still lies in those impenetrable depths, clasping in his hand that coin, I do not know. The truth of his statements I did not challenge then and do not now. It may all have been the hallucination of a diseased mind or it may have been the simple truth. Some other man must say.—Peterson's Magazine.

A Large Fee.

A young couple with matrimonial intent, fresh from the green fields of their rural homes, went recently to the parsonage of a clergy in Maryland. The nuptial knot was tied. In the pause which followed the newly-made Benedict looked embarrassed as he fished about in his trousers' pockets as if looking for something.

"What's the price?" he finally blurted out.

"The State allows me a dollar," said the clergyman, "but—" and paused. Some pauses are more eloquent than words. Evidently this was not.

"Well," finally remarked the groom as he handed the astonished divine a quarter, "if the State allows you a dollar, take this and the job will have netted you a dollar and a quarter. Good day."

Always an Eye to Business.

A merry-go-round man at La Crosse, Kan., got his leg caught in the cable of his machine. The crowd could hear the leg crack, as it was broken in several places. The machine was clogged and stopped. Women fainted and men paled. The unfortunate man smiled wearily, wiggled around and unstrapped a wooden leg, and then announced cheerfully: "Get your tickets for the next ride."

Changed Her Mind.

"And aren't you married yet?"

"Well, well, I thought you were engaged to a certain young lady in Germantown?"

"No, I was engaged to an uncertain young lady in Germantown, and that's why I'm not married."—Philadelphia Press.

Vast Power of Radium.

A small fraction of an ounce of radium, properly employed, would provide a good light sufficient for several rooms and would not require renewal during the present century.

Many a man is so cool in the hour of danger that he actually shivers.

Science and Invention

Cremation makes slow progress, and Sir Henry Thompson gives the number of bodies disposed of in 1902 in the crematoria of the world as 5,520.

A Kentucky woman has discovered a new use for the telephone. Wishing to visit a neighbor, she pulled the baby's crib up in front of the telephone, opened the receiver, and told central if the baby began to cry to call her up at the neighbor's.

After studying and photographing more than forty thousand pairs of ears of persons, including those of two thousand insane and eight hundred criminals, and those of three hundred animals, an English criminologist is forced to conclude that the ear gives no clue to personal traits.

A section of cable in the Caribbean Sea was recently raised from 1,350 feet of water, where it had lain for thirty years. Tests showed its core to be in perfect electrical condition and the rubber insulator uninjured. A fear that sulphur from the rubber might injure the copper wire had no foundation.

There are about 50 species of fish known to possess electrical organs capable of imparting a shock. A special study of some of them has recently been made by Professor MacKendrick, F. R. S., of Glasgow University, with the purpose of ascertaining the source of their peculiar power. He finds that the electricity is generated in specialized organs, which are either modified muscles or modified glands, structures which in all animals manifest electric properties. In economy of production these electric organs far surpass anything yet contrived by man, just as the light of the glow-worm excels in a similar sense our best efforts to produce cheap illumination. In each case there is a secret yet to be discovered.

That taste is a reliable guide to our food needs is the theory of P. T. Borissow, a Russian physician. Such curiosities of taste as the craving for chalk, coal, acids, etc., result from real necessities, and children often eat earth, wall plaster and the like at an age when the growth of the bones is most energetic and an extra supply of mineral matter is demanded. The strong appetite of children for sweets and farinaceous foods is explained by the requirement of carbohydrates during work and the production of animal heat. To verify his theory, the author experimented on chickens, and found that roosters, which lay no eggs, have less craving for mineral substances than hens, and are indifferent to plaster, egg-shell and small stones. The lime foods, moreover, are sought by the hen periodically during her laying season.

IRELAND'S ANIMALS

The Wildest, Poorest and Weasels Are Not Found in Ireland.

It is not correct to say that there are no frogs or toads in Ireland, though it is very remarkable that the common toad is not found there, says the London Spectator. The natterjack toad is a native of Kerry, though it does not appear to be found elsewhere. It is an example of the mania which some people have for meddling with nature that a Dr. Guithers in 1690 took the trouble to procure frogs' spawn from England, since which time they have multiplied in Ireland. But the common lizard is found in many parts of the island. The slowworm is not. Though the common toad, and till recent times the frog, was not found in Ireland, it is worth remembering that the English reptiles and batrachians are very local in their distribution. The natterjack toad is only found in certain counties. The edible frog was formerly only found in Foulmire Fen, in Cambridgeshire, and the sand lizard is most capricious in the choice of a home. The "beautiful green lacertae" which Gilbert White saw on the sunny banks near Farnham are to be found there still, the males being of the green color; and also near Bournemouth, and in Dorsetshire beyond Poole Harbor.

Yet there are many suitable places where none are seen, and then they reappear again on some sand hills on the coast of Lancashire, near Southport.

On the other hand, the absence of many species in Ireland which are, or were, commonly found in the larger island can only be explained on the supposition that they never reached the country. Among these are the wildest, the polecat and the weasel. Yet the marten was always plentiful on the other side of St. George's Channel, and stoats abound in the west. Five of the fourteen species of bat found in England have not been taken in Ireland, neither is the common shrew, or the mole, though the last is found in Anglesey.

Only six of the fifteen British rodents are found in Ireland, and of these, one, the squirrel, was probably introduced. Neither is the roe deer indigenous. In support of the general theory that the immigration of the English fauna was difficult in the earlier periods, and subsequently checked altogether, may be cited the analogous instance of the Isle of Man. There, as in Ireland, there are no moles, no snakes and no toads.

That was a man woman who refused to pay the doctor after he had made her husband's life insurance policy worth real money.

Of all games of chance matrimony is the most hazardous.



WITH A WILD CRY HE SPRANG TO HIS FEET.

seen before. He never hesitated and never stopped for an instant, but hurried rapidly along.

"Possessed with these thoughts," he said, "I made my way to the Holy Land. Months I worked and studied in and about Jerusalem. The priests of the temple had purchased a field of a potter with the thirty pieces which Judas had cast away from him. The potter must be found. After weary months of research I grasped the clue. Simon, the potter, when an old man, had left Jerusalem a prisoner with Titus and his Roman Legions. From the Holy Land to Italy I went with all speed, and for a year I worked in Rome without results.

"The apparent impossibilities of my work spurred me on with a fervor to which I had hitherto been a stranger. The more insurmountable the obstacles became the more eager I was to conquer them. I seemed impelled by a force which my whole nature revolted against, but which I was still unable to resist.

"As soon as I was satisfied that Rome could not give me what I sought I turned toward Pompeii. Why should not some trace be discovered here? For over seventeen hundred years the city had remained undisturbed. It was exactly as it was on that dreadful twenty-fourth of August, A. D. 79, when Vesuvius buried it under thirty feet of stones, ashes and lava. Here was the one place on earth which centuries had not changed—the one city upon which the civilization of ages had left no mark.

"After weeks and months of fruitless research within the city, I made my way, as tireless as ever, to the surrounding country. With one exception I will pass by without mention

sentence of death the doomed man fell upon his knees and begged that he might have time to make peace with his God. Diomedes sneered at the supplication, and asked what sins a low-bred Jew might have that could be forgiven.

"Only this," answered the old slave, holding up a silver coin bearing the head of Tiberius Caesar, "only the position of this!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Diomedes as he turned to his people, "a Jewish dog cursed with money. He should have been a jester and not a potter. But go on, slave, and tell us why the possession of this bright piece of good Roman silver is a curse."

"Because," answered the leper in faltering tones. "It is the last of the thirty pieces of money which the Man of Kerith, Judas Iscariot, accepted for the betrayal of Christ. I am Simon the potter of whom the priests of the temple bought the field for the burial of the poor. I am the man who unwittingly took the coins which were the price of blood, and took with them the curse which has followed and shall follow each and every piece until they are no more."

"Proceed, slave," commanded Diomedes, "the tale interests me, though I mistake not, misfortune has turned your brain."

"Not so, master," Simon interrupted, "never at my potter's wheel has my brain been more clear than now."

"I was but a poor man, and knew nothing then of why the priests wished my land in exchange for their silver. I bargained gladly and rejoiced at my fortune. Divided into equal parts, I gave half the coins to my eldest son with the command to look