

THE COPPER HOUSE

A Detective Story

BY JULIUS REGIS

AUTHOR OF "NO 18 TORONTO"

"It must be you," he accused her. "You are intelligent and determined; you said for me to take the responsibility, Sergius is too weak." You watched over your son at night, whilst he slept, didn't you? You need not answer; the thing is obvious; you took the document secretly, that you might hide it more securely. You felt yourself strong enough to bear the responsibility alone. Very good. The entire responsibility is yours, since you will have it so. Now you must answer me."

Lona Ivanovna replied sturdily and unhesitatingly: "Yes, I took it whilst Sergius was asleep. Only I know where it is to be found now—and you cannot frighten me!" She laughed grimly:

"I think I have baffled you this time. You may kill me, but you won't find what you are looking for. Those brutes have ransacked the whole house twice, and you may do it again. You have no chance of succeeding, and you may believe that I know what I am saying, when you recollect that I have all my life been accustomed to play hide-and-seek with the Tsar's secret police. Go your way, Gabriel Ortiz, you have failed. An old woman has beaten you!"

The adventurer showed no sign of discomposure; he allowed her biting scorn to pass unobserved; not so her challenge.

After a few minutes calculation, he said, more to himself than to her:

"There are only two or three places where you can have hidden it; but why waste time in guessing? There is a much simpler way."

As he said this, he showed his white, even teeth, not in a smile, but rather in the fixed grin of a wild beast, while a grim look came over his face, almost transforming its expression. He turned to the marines, and gave the word of command:

"Ready! The first to stir from his place will be shot."

Half a dozen rifle-muzzles were pointed at the prisoners.

"Rastakov, take your revolver and place it against Sergius Tassler's forehead. I will count three—and at the word 'three,' you will fire."

The six marines took careful aim, and nobody stirred, while Rastakov crossed the room, and placed his heavy weapon against Sergius' right temple. There was a breathless silence, for they all realized Ortiz' intention. Marcus Tassler turned ashen-gray; without a sound he left the room, and was not seen again.

"I forbid anyone to stir a finger," Ortiz continued; "this business is between you and me, Lona Ivanovna. I have your son—you have the document: will you exchange?"

A dead pause ensued. The lady raised her hand slowly to her throat, and gazed as though fascinated at Rastakov's forefinger, which was touching the trigger.

Sergius had closed his eyes. "Don't think of me, Mother," he said, softly; "think only of our cause."

She opened her mouth, but no sound issued from her lips.

"One!"

Sonia sprang up, but Leo caught her in his arms, at a glance from the journalist, who was now very pale. Lona Ivanovna remained stiff and immovable.

"Let me go!" cried the girl hysterically. "Oh, you cowardly wretches! If only I were dead!"

She sank down, half fainting.

but weeping as though her heart would break. Wallion clenched his hands, but kept still; he seemed to be waiting for something.

"Two!"

A glazed look came over Lona Ivanovna's eyes, and she stared at Ortiz as though she had never seen him before; she seemed to look at him as though from an immense distance, and to be straining every nerve to control herself. She saw his pitiless eyes, his lips unclosed for the third time.... she tore the workbag from her left arm, and threw it on the table.

"There!" she exclaimed, "Let Sergius go, you murderer! The paper is in the bag."

"In the bag!"

The adventurer put out his hand, but drew it quickly back.

"If you are lying...." he said threateningly.

"I am not lying," she replied wearily. "I took the paper out of the stick whilst Sergius was sleeping. I was certain that nobody would look for it in a place that was so apparent to everyone. The paper is very small, and in a tiny roll; it is lying amongst the lacework.... Forgive me, Sergius!"

She sank down on a chair. Ortiz turned the bag upside down, and shook out the work on the table. Wallion was carefully choosing a cigarette from his case; he smiled: the matter was taking the turn for which he had hoped from the beginning, and Ortiz had already wasted nearly two precious hours; his own opportunity was come at last.

"Well, Gabriel Ortiz," said he, in a nonchalant tone, "is the memorandum there?"

The adventurer had searched all through the contents of the workbag; he now pushed it aside, and began to examine the folds of the lace with nervousness.

"You won't find anything there," the journalist proceeded; "Lona Ivanovna made a mistake. The paper is not in her workbag; I have it!"

CHAPTER XIX

Wallion Speaks Out And Rastakov is Balked of his Prey

The journalist's utterly unforeseen announcement electrified everyone, and all faces were turned towards him, with intense surprise. That Maurice Wallion could have obtained possession of Tarraschin's memorandum, had occurred to none of them, least of all to Lona Ivanovna.

"You, you!" she stammered

"How is it possible?"

Ortiz' cold, hard voice broke in:

"Are you trying to shield her son? She is lying, the bag is empty—I do not believe you."

"Allow me to explain the situation," said the journalist, who still held in his left hand the cigarette which he had taken from his case, and, in his right the cigarlighter, whose little flame burned clearly and evenly; his hands were perfectly steady.

"The paper really was in Lona Ivanovna's bag—until the time when, after hearing the story of the Bernin family, I demonstrated to them that the stick was empty, to Sergius Tassler's great astonishment. Following your example, Ortiz, I concluded that his mother, wishing to shift the responsibility on her own shoulders, had secretly removed the paper, but unlike you, I went a step further, and assumed, from what I knew of her character, that she had hidden it in her workbag, that well-known receptacle which everybody was accustomed to see hanging on her arm. I fully anticipated that you, my dear Ortiz, would pro-

ceed to the sort of compulsion we have just witnessed, and what would have been the good of her stratagem then? I at once decided to remove the precious document to its third best, and final hiding-place. Under the pretext of examining Andrei Bernin's room, I was left alone with Lona Ivanovna for a few minutes, and—'hey presto!'—Russia's fate lay snugly in my waistcoat pocket. That is the story. You conscientiously leave mother and son in peace, my dear Ortiz; the thief—that thief who caused the baron such heart-searchings—is none other than myself!"

"Damnation!" ejaculated Ortiz, his eyes bloodshot and staring; "shall I ever get hold of that infernal paper?"

"The outlook doesn't seem very promising," agreed the journalist, smiling. "It has passed through various hands in the last day or two, and its present owner—well, I have a pretty good idea that he will not let it out of his possession!"

His unshaken audacity took Ortiz aback; he hesitated for a minute, and the journalist availed himself of the pause.

"Let us talk things over," said he. "If anyone attempts to come near me, or to threaten me with his gun, I swear that you will never have the document."

"Where have you got it?" asked the adventurer reluctantly.

"Ah, where!" laughed Wallion. "One of your men searched me just now, didn't he? Did he find it? No. And yet I can assure you that he saw it. I believe he even touched it! You see this tiny flame, and this little cigarette? The moment I light my cigarette, your dreams for the future will vanish in smoke, Ortiz."

"You would pay dearly for it!"

"You would, you mean. A far too expensive cigarette, and that's a fact! Now, then, stand still, all the lot of you. Ortiz, keep them quiet. It wouldn't take me a second, and my death wouldn't be much of a compensation for your loss."

"I do not believe that Tarraschin's memorandum could be compressed into so small a space," Ortiz objected incredulously.

"Don't you?" returned the journalist. "Didn't Lona Ivanovna say that the paper was quite small, and tightly rolled up? The idea struck me when I removed it from her bag, and just before you came, I made this arrangement, on the chance of my things being searched. You don't believe me? Look here, then."

He squeezed the little cylinder between his fingers, so that the cigarette paper burst, and fluttered to the ground, whilst a thin layer of tobacco fell from the ends; there remained in his hand a tightly rolled sheet of white paper, which began to uncurl as though a spring had been released. Ortiz leaned forward.

"No, keep back!" said the journalist. "You observe that the flame is all but touching the paper now. You can see perfectly well where you are—do you recognize Prince Tarraschin's handwriting? Shall I tell you that it is written in French? Shall I read it out to you?"

"You are mad!" muttered Ortiz hoarsely. "What can you do? If you leave this room, you will be shot."

"Yes, from behind, I suspect. But I prefer to stop here. I have something to say to you...."

"If you stay here with that paper in your hands, you will be shot. You have never been in greater danger than you are now."

"I'm not so sure of that! Have you really the moral courage to watch Tarraschin's document burn? Make up your mind, I am waiting."

Ortiz watched the journalist's movements like a lynx, but Wallion had gauged him

had got started, they said it was the unsettling of people's minds because a democrat had been elected. And when in 1907 big business republicans could not blame it on the democrats, they said it was Roosevelt's reforms. And now some will try to say that it is the light being made on new tariff robbery, others that it is Mr. Hoover's little experiment in Socialism for farm relief. Many will actually believe that it is Mr. Coolidge had run again and been elected, this overdue break in the market, inflated under the Coolidge-Mellon regime, would have been averted.

How we ask to be fooled and then to excuse our disregard of safety

correctly; he could not bring himself to run the risk, however willingly he would have given the order to shoot the man who was daring to thwart him on the very threshold of success. He gave a reluctant signal, and the weapons were lowered.

"Speak out!" he said, "what do you want?"

Wallion stepped back a few paces. His bold "coup" had made him master of the situation for the time being, but the outlook was dangerous in the extreme. He must keep an eye on practically all his enemies at once; should but one of them succeed in raising his gun, he would be lost; he was a prisoner, and compelled to plan his escape as best he could, alone and unarmed, under the eyes of his captors. Speed was all-important; never had he felt his mind clearer or cooler than now, as he reviewed every possibility. He knew that Sergius Tassler had a revolver within reach, hidden presumably among the rugs of his armchair; and he remembered that Max Raebel only awaited a signal to come to his assistance: on these two facts, his entire scheme must be built up.

"Order Rastakov to stand back," he said briefly; "Sergius Tassler has nothing more to do with this case."

The Russian had remained standing near Sergius, but at a nod from his employer, he thrust his revolver back into his pocket, and returned to his place by the door. As he did so, Wallion exchanged a rapid glance with the Austrian. He saw Raebel's intelligent eyes widen inquiringly, and he nodded almost imperceptibly. The Austrian understood the signal, and would now be ready to play his part; Wallion relied implicitly upon his experience and ready wit. The important thing now was to engross Ortiz' whole attention for the next few minutes, and the journalist began again with a laugh:

"Yes, I have something to say to you, Ortiz; this is a good opportunity, for I am afraid we shall not meet again after tonight. You intend to kill me, if you can; I intend to render you harmless, if I can; the situation is not without its piquancy."

Ortiz had pulled out his handkerchief, and was drying his hands nervously; there was little of the Great Napoleon about his strained features at this moment.

"You talk too much," he said hoarsely; "get to business."

"By all means. Your line has run out, my dear Ortiz. There was a time when I admired you, in spite of my position as your natural enemy. Your former adventures attracted me by a sort of simple and greathearted freshness which characterized them, but the gigantic plan which is now dragging you to the verge of a precipice, is marked by an arrogance which the gods might envy. I can no longer admire a man who allows murder and robbery to be the milestones on his road to success; you should have kept your hands clean, Ortiz: there is too much blood on them! All the millions which you have distributed so lavishly, cannot alter the fact that you are a murderer, at war with society, and, there, self-condemned."

The adventurer glared angrily at him, and exclaimed:

"I do not expect you to understand me! You and I stand at opposite ends of the great, unimpressionable fabric of society; how could you enter into my plans and my dreams?"

The journalist did not reply immediately. He had seen Max Raebel move a shade closer to Sergius Tassler, and exchange two or three words with him, and a suppressed excitement began to rise in him, as he continued:

"Vote for the blanks and keep prosperity!"

SUGGEST GAS REMEDY

LONDON—England, too, is complaining about the escaping carbon-monoxide from its buses and automobiles and several suggestions have been offered to remedy it. The most practical method of eliminating this gas evil suggested so far is to extend the exhaust to the top of the car, expelling the gas above the heads of pedestrians. The gas is lighter than air and would not settle.

"If we'd only known what we know now. If ever we get another chance—Another chance for what? There's an election next year. Wait for the campaign ory,

signals—ask to be fooled again about who is to blame. We knew the market was too high. Or if we did not know that, we knew there were men in the game who had made it their life study. It was part of the game to point to the prosperity of the country as proof that stocks were worth many times what their earning power showed. They succeeded beyond their wildest dreams—and for many of the insiders also this is the morning after.

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OF INTEREST TO FARMERS

GET BOYS SOME RABBITS.

You don't have to run clear to the end of the rainbow to find your pot of gold. There are a score of home or back-yard enterprises that can show profit if worked at in the proper spirit. Raising something—chickens, rabbits, guinea pigs—is one of these favorite back-yard businesses, and can be made quite profitable. Rabbit raising is becoming more popular every day. There is a ready market for meat or fur. Not much equipment is needed, so that the initial investment is small. Following are a few things the beginner in rabbit breeding should do: Before purchasing any stock it is well to have hutches ready. You do not need a lot of room or expensive buildings. Dry goods boxes, about two by four feet, with a wire door and a shady place, will take care of the doe and her young until weaning time. Have one of these for each rabbit you start with. Order good stock from a reliable breeder. You may want to get plans for better hutches, and the breeder who supplies you can probably give you the best plans. Good pedigreed does, eligible to register, should be purchased for your start. As in poultry raising, it costs no more to feed a good individual than a poor one. I have found that it costs 20 cents a month to feed a rabbit, says one who has found their propagation profitable. With care, each doe will produce four litters a year, and will average five to six to a litter, so you see in a year's time one doe will produce from 20 to 24 rabbits; some of her offspring also will be for sale for you before the year is up. These young, sold at meat prices, will bring you a good price at five months old, and you will have the pelt to sell, which will bring anywhere from 50 cents to \$2.50, according to the condition and primeness of the skin. Each doe should bring you a good profit each season. If you get good breeding stock to start with you can command better prices, for you own best stock, as breeders. Rabbits are subject to few diseases, and these are not hard to keep away if you keep hutches clean and free from drafts. Any person should be able to care for something like 100 rabbits in about two hours each day. Rabbits require plenty of clean fresh water twice a day; roughage, in the form of alfalfa hay, one a day. They should also have a little grain once a day, a small handful of oats and barley is good; if you do not have barley, oats alone is all right, either rolled or whole. You will find that a rabbit eats but little. After two or three feedings you can tell about how much they will clean up, and do not feed them more than this amount.

HEALTH PROGRAM NEEDED.

Poultry breeders throughout the middlewest are annually sustaining tremendous losses from parasitic infestation and disease infection of their flocks. Most of the losses from these two sources can be avoided by proper methods of sanitation. It is just as essential to raise chicks on fresh ground as it is to raise pigs on clean ground. Old poultry yards are full of roundworm eggs, and it is impossible, when raised on ground of that kind, to keep worms out of the birds, and birds infested with worms and other parasites are much more susceptible to disease infection than those that are free from parasites. In this connection, there are two important factors to keep in mind. First, raising the chicks on clean ground and feeding them a growing ration up to maturity and an egg production ration later on, and giving them all they can eat to enable them to produce up to their maximum capacity. The other is to keep disease out of the flock by constant, rigorous culling. The next thing is to sell off the old birds as soon as they are no longer profitable layers, and get them out of the way before the next set of pullets is ready to go into the laying house. The fewer old hens that are kept over, other things being equal, the less difficulty there will be from disease infection. Tuberculosis is one of the diseases that is causing much loss to poultry raisers, and it is mainly a disease of the old rather than of the young birds. If the old birds are promptly disposed of and the young birds are raised on clean ground, tuberculosis may be reduced to a minimum in a single season. It is not a disease that can be cured by medication. The moment it is known that a bird is affected with tuberculosis, it should be disposed of. A tuberculosis bird is never a profitable bird from an egg-laying standpoint, and it is a menace to the remainder of the flock.

CAUSES OF SOFT PORK

In the extensive soft-pork experiments conducted co-operatively by the United States department of agriculture and a number of the state agricultural experiment stations, it has been found that unless the ration is distinctly softening the rate of gain of the pig is an important factor contributing to firmness of the pork. Firmness of pork is of great importance to the consumer, and to the pork producing and meat industries. This federal-state co-operative work has been in progress for 10 years. The work has involved a great number of experiments and thousands of animals. Variations in firmness of pork are due mainly to feeds, some producing a pork that is soft, or even oily, and others a product that is satisfactorily firm. Other factors entering into firmness are initial weight of the animal, rapidity of gain, degrees of finish, etc. Each year representatives of the United States department of agriculture and the state experiment stations conducting this research work hold a conference to discuss and analyze results, issue statements of results based on the work completed, and to make plans for future work. Following is the latest statement of results: (1) Pigs with initial weights

PROPER FEEDING OF PIGS.

"Hoggishness" and "eating like a pig" are traditional phrases to describe unmannerly greediness and gluttony. Recent experiments in the feeding of pigs suggest that the phrases do not always apply. When pigs are fed by hand they do in fact, rush in to make sure of their share of the feed. But, put hogs in a pasture and they graze leisurely and in contentment. Instead of feeding by hand the owner installs a self-feeder from which the hogs and pigs may eat what they want, when they want it, and in whatever quantity they desire, they soon lose

of 100 pounds or more and gaining at least 1-3 pounds daily on a mixture of ground corn (9 parts or 12 parts) and ground soybeans (1 part) self-fed, free choice, with mineral mixture in dry lot, through a period of approximately nine weeks of longer. Have produced firm carcasses in the majority of cases. (2) Pigs with initial weights of 100 pounds or less and gaining a maximum of one pound daily on a mixture of ground corn (9 parts or 12 parts) and ground soybeans (1 part) self-fed, free choice, with mineral mixture in dry lot, through a period of 15 weeks or less, have produced soft carcasses in the majority of cases. (3) Pigs with initial weights ranging from approximately 40 to approximately 70 pounds fed raw soybeans with corn and minerals in comparison with cooked soybeans with corn and minerals both rations in dry lot, have produced carcasses of approximately the same degree of firmness at comparable finished weights. (4) Pigs with initial weights of approximately 50 pounds gaining a maximum of 50 pounds on rations of rice polish or rice bran with tankage and minerals during an eight-week feeding period followed by a gain of at least 70 pounds on brewers' rice with tankage and minerals during a period of eight weeks or more, have produced firm carcasses in the usual cases. (5) Pigs fed low-fat rations varying widely in protein content, with dried blood the principal source of protein, have produced carcasses which were strikingly uniform in composition and firmness of fat. All rations were composed of hominy, dried blood, alfalfa meal and minerals. Owing to variations in proportions of dried blood and hominy used, the nutritive ratios of the rations varied from approximately 1.2 to 1.10. (The nutritive ratio is the proportion of digestible protein in relation to the sum of the digestible carbohydrates and the digestible fat.) (6) Experiments have shown that when corn oil, peanut oil and soybean oil are present in the ration, either as naturally contained or as added, they have a softening effect on the body fat which increases with increase in the oil content of the ration. Cottonseed oil, on the other hand, has shown a distinct hardening effect when added to the extent of 4 per cent of the mixture to basal rations of corn or hominy with supplements. When the amount of cottonseed oil is increased to 8 and 12 per cent respectively, a progressive decrease in firmness results. The 3 per cent addition of cottonseed oil softened hard or medium hard carcasses, and the 12 per cent addition medium-soft or soft carcasses, as compared to hard carcasses on the 4 per cent addition.

CUTTING LABOR COSTS

The first great item of expense in caring for the poultry flock is that of feed. This constitutes over half the cost. Next in line comes the labor cost. This approximates 15 to 20 per cent of the total cost. There are a number of simple practices which will reduce the labor operations. First comes the installation of some automatic water system to the laying houses. The most tedious and exacting labor operation in handling the flock is carrying water. There are many automatic systems which will greatly reduce this item. Maintaining the litter in a clean, healthful, sweet condition is a heavy burden. The use of a peat-moss litter will accomplish this and will make it unnecessary to clean out the litter often. A substantial supply of feed located in bins in each pen will greatly reduce the labor of carrying heavy containers filled with feed about the plant. Large barrels or bins constructed on the wall of the house will hold two or three weeks' supply. The cleaning of droppings boards can be greatly facilitated by using tools especially designed for the purpose. Special dropping board cleaners which take a wide area at each pull of the handle and are so constructed that they scrape the droppings off clean, through the presence of a sharp cutting head set at the right angle, will greatly speed up cleaning. If a suitable box or container is constructed to catch the droppings, still greater speed is accomplished. The raising and lowering of curtains and the opening and closing of windows take a great deal of time. If these can be arranged to operate by counterweights and a number of them controlled by ropes and pulleys from one point, much greater speed and ease in adjusting them are the result.

BETTER METHODS SAFEGUARD

Whenever the price of eggs takes a slump, even though such a slump naturally should be expected, the cry goes up that there is no money in poultry and the faint-hearted put their fowls on the market. A more sensible thing to do would be to plan methods of cutting down the expenses and of marketing to better advantage. Whether everything is going well the overhead is likely to creep up because profits come easy, but when the tide sets the other way, this overhead often proves too heavy to carry and by proper methods can be reduced to the point where a profit is still possible. Sometimes it is found that by more carefully balancing the ration and making better use of waste products the flocks can be fed better for less expense, so that more frequent collecting of the eggs, keeping the nests cleaner and more careketed will increase the quality and, full handling until they are marketed, therefore, the price of the eggs quite considerably. Good quality comfortable housing, in both summer and winter, will bring an increase in production without any additional cost for feed, care, etc. All these things should be thought of at all times, but in particular at times when prices of poultry products go down and profits are endangered.

their gluttonous ways. Commenting on a series of comparative feeding tests in which sows were self-fed and hand-fed, the United States department of agriculture says a noticeable fact was that the sows in the self-fed lots was that "there never was any crowding at the feeders. Scarcely ever were there more than two or three sows eating at the same time, even when a dozen or more sows were being fed from the one feeder. Only a small quantity would be consumed at one time. It was taken slowly and apparently thoroughly masticated and digested."