



The DAY OF DAYS

By LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE

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PROLOGUE.

"It breaks the speed limit to smithereens." That's a candid opinion about this story. There may have been swifter tales, but not recently. It's an aeroplane of a yarn, moving so fast that you lose your breath while you follow it. But you don't need any breath, anyway, because you forget about respiration with your eyes on reading of this kind. Every man has his day of days. Yours may have come and you may be swimming in the full tide of fortune. If so, read how P. Sybarite found his. If your own ship is still in the offing, you will enjoy learning how the little spunky red headed bookkeeper won a fortune and an heiress, foiled all his enemies and had some of the most amazing adventures ever penned—all in less time than it takes the hour hand to round the clock dial twice.

CHAPTER III. Aftermath.

THROUGH the halls resounded the cacophonous clangor of a cracked zong announcing dinner. Sighing, P. Sybarite rose and knocked the ashes delicately from his pipe, saving the dottle for a good night whiff after the theater.

Being Saturday, it was the night of ham and beans. P. Sybarite loathed ham and beans with a deadly loathing. Nevertheless, he ate his dose of ham and beans. He sat on the landlady's right and was reluctant to hurt her feelings or incur her displeasure. Besides, he was hungry.

Miss Lessing sat on the same side of the main dining table, but half a dozen chairs away. P. Sybarite could not see her save by craning his neck. He refused to crane his neck—it might seem ostentatious.

Violet and her George occupied adjoining chairs at another and smaller table. Their attendance was occasionally manifested through the medium of giggles and guffaws. P. Sybarite envied them.

By custom the landlady relinquished her seat some minutes in advance of any guest. When P. Sybarite left the room he found her established at a desk in the basement hallway. Pausing, he delivered unto her the major portion of his week's wage. Setting aside another certain amount against the cost of laundry work, tobacco and incidentals, he had \$5 left.

He wondered if he dared risk the extravagance of a modest supper after the theater, and knew he dared not—knew it in a wretchedness of spirit, cursing his fate.

There remained half an hour to be killed before time to start for the theater. George Bross joined him on the stoop.

They smoked pensively. It was spring—the tenth spring P. Sybarite had watched from that self same spot.

Discontent bred in him a brooding despondency. He felt quite sure that the realists were right about life—it wasn't worth living, after all.

At his side, George Bross, on his behalf, was nursing his private and personal grudge.

But presently Miss Prim and Miss Lessing appeared and changed all that in a twinkling.

"Well," observed Violet generously, "I thought little me was pretty well stage broke, but I gotta hand it to Oik. He's some actor. He had me going from the first snore."

"Some actor is right," affirmed Mr. Bross with conviction, "and some show, too. If you wanta know, I could sit through it twice. Say, I couldn't quit thinkin' what a grand young time I'd start in this old burg if I could only con this 'Kismet' thing into slipin' me my day of days. Believe me or not, there would be a party."

"What would you do?" asked Molly Lessing, smiling.

"Well, the first flop I'd fall down all the coin that was handy, and then I'd buy me a flock of automobiles—and have a table reserved for me at the Kalckerbocker for dinner every night—and—Imagination flagged.

"Well," he concluded defensively, "I can tell you one thing I wouldn't do."

"What?" demanded Violet.

"I wouldn't let any ward politician like that those Wazir, or whatever them Arabs call him, kid me into trying to throw a bomb at Charlie Murphy—or anything like that."

"But, you bochehead," Violet argued candidly, "he had to. That was his part. It was written in the play."

"G'wan! If he'd just strolled round and refused to jump through the author'd've framed up some other way

out. Why—blame it—he'd've had to." "That will be about all for me," said Violet. "I don't feel strong enough tonight to stand any more of your dramatic criticism. Lead me home—and please take baseball all the way."

With a thankful grunt Mr. Bross clamped a warm, moist hand round the plump arm of his charmer and with the curb in front of the theater, where the little party had paused, to the northwest corner of Broadway. P. Sybarite, moving instinctively to follow, leaped back to the sidewalk barely in time to save his toes a crushing beneath the tires of a hurtling taxicab.

He smiled a furtive apology at Molly Lessing, who had demonstrated greater discretion, and she returned the smile in the friendliest manner. His head was buzzing, and her eyes were kind. Neither spoke, but for an instant he experienced a breathless sense of sympathetic isolation with her, there on that crowded corner.

The wonder and the romance of the play were still warm and vital in his imagination, infusing his thoughts with a rosate glamor of unreality wherein all things were possible. For three hours he had forgotten his lowly world, had lived on the high peaks of romance, breathing only their rare atmosphere that never was on land or sea.

Diffident he found it now to divest his thoughts of that enthralment, to descend to cold and sober reality, to remember he was a clerk, his companion a shopgirl, rather than a prince disguised as Calander esquiring a princess dedicated to fatal enchantment—that "Kismet" was a quaint fallacy, one with that whimsical conceit of orient fatalism which assigns to each and every man his day of days, wherein he shall range the skies and plumb the abyss of his destiny alternately lord and puppet.

But presently, with an effort, blinking, he pulled his wits together, and, a traffic policeman creating a favorable opening, the two scurried across and plunged into the comparative obscurity of West Thirty-eighth street, sturdy George and his modest Violet already a full block in advance.

"If I hurry we might catch up," suggested Molly Lessing.

"I don't miss 'em much," he admitted, without offering to mend the pace. She laughed softly.

"Are they really in love?"

"George is," replied P. Sybarite, after talking thought.

"You mean she isn't?"

"To blush unseen is Violet's idea of nothing to do—not, at least, when one is a perfect thirty-eight and possesses a good digestion and an infinite capacity for amusement à la carte."

"That is to say—the girl prompted."

"Violet will marry well if at all."

"Not Mr. Bross, then?"

"Nor any other poor man. I don't say she doesn't care for George, but before anything serious comes of it he'll have to make good use of his day of days—if 'Kismet' ever sends him one. I hope it will." P. Sybarite added sincerely.

"You don't believe—really?"

"Just now? With all my heart! I'm so full of romantic nonsense I can hardly think."

Again the girl laughed quietly to his humor.

"And since you're a true believer, Mr. Sybarite, tell me what use you would make of your day of days."

"I? Oh, I—Smiling wistfully, he opened deprecatory palms. "Hard to say. I'm afraid I should prove a fatuous fool in George's esteem equally with old Halj. I'm sure that, like him, the sunset of my day would see me proscribed, a price upon my head."

"But—why?"

"I'm afraid I'd try to use my power to right old wrongs."

"After a pause she asked diffidently, "Your own?"

"Perhaps. Yes, my own, certainly. And possibly another's, not so old, but possibly quite as grievous."

"Somebody you care for a great deal?"

Thus tardily made to realize into what perils his fancy was leading him, he checked and weighed her question with his answer, gravely judgmental.

"Get rid of this microbe," interrupted the other savagely, "unless you want to see him buried between glass slides under a microscope."

The girl turned to P. Sybarite with pleading eyes and imploring hands.

"If you please, dear Mr. Sybarite," she begged in a tremulous voice, "I'm afraid I must speak alone with this—there was a barely perceptible pause—gentleman. If you won't mind waiting a moment—at the door—"

"If it pleases you, Miss Lessing, most certainly." He strutted back to the brown stone stoop, out of ear shot, but within easy hail.

Hearing nothing, he made little more of the guarded conference that began on his withdrawal. The man entering the doorway had cornered the girl in

"Only, Miss Lessing," he said soberly, "of my futile, my painfully futile, good will."

She seemed to start to speak, to think of it, to fall silent in a sudden, shy constraint. Punctuations snote him. With his agile and clumsy hanker he had contrived to turn her thoughts to sadness. He would have given worlds to undo that blunder, to show her that he had meant neither a rudeness nor a wish to desecrate her reticence, but only an indirect assurance of gratitude to her for suffering him and willingness to serve her.

He respected her silence and held his own in humility and mortification of spirit until they were near the doorway of their boarding house. And even then it was the girl who loosed his tongue.

"Why, where are they?" she asked in surprise.

Startled out of the depths of self contempt, P. Sybarite realized that she meant Violet and George, who were nowhere visible.

"Violet said something about a little supper in her room," explained the girl.

"I know," he replied. "Crackers and cheese, beer and badinage, our humble pleasures. You'll be bored to extinction. But you'll come, won't you?"

"Why, of course, I counted on it."

"But—"

"They must have hurried on to make things ready—Violet to set her room to rights, George to fetch the wash pitcher to the corner for beer. And very

hesitatingly, in a tone little above a whisper, "I must go," she repeated. "I can't refuse. But—alone. Do you understand?"

"You mean—without him?" P. Sybarite nodded toward the man fuming in the gateway.

"Yes, if you could suggest something to detain him long enough for me to get into the cab and say one word to the chauffeur—"

"Leave it to me," said P. Sybarite. "Molly" cried the man at the gate.

"Don't answer," P. Sybarite advised. "Molly?"

"Do be quiet," suggested P. Sybarite, not altogether civilly.

The other started as if slapped and strode in to the stoop, "Do you know who you're talking to?" he demanded wrathfully, towering over P. Sybarite, momentarily forgetful of the girl.

Stepping aside, as if in alarm, she moved behind the fellow and darted through the gate.

"I don't," P. Sybarite admitted amiably, "but your nose annoys me."

"You impudent puppy!" stormed the other. "Who are you?"

"Who—me?" echoed P. Sybarite in surprise. (The girl was now instructing the chauffeur). "Why," he drawled, "I'm the guy that put the point in disappointment. Surely you've heard of me?"

At the curb the door of the taxicab closed with a slam. Simultaneously the drone of the motor thickened to a rumble. The man with the twisted mouth turned just in time to see it drawing away.

"Hi!" he cried in surprise and dismay.

But the taxi didn't pause. To the contrary, it stretched out toward Ninth avenue at a quickening pace.

With profanity, appreciating the fact that he had been tricked, he picked up his heels in pursuit. But P. Sybarite had not finished with him. Doffing plucking the man back by the tail of his full skirted opera coat, he succeeded in arresting his flight before it was fairly started.

With a vicious snarl, the man turned and snatched at his coat. But P. Sybarite added implacably:

"We were discussing your nose," he persisted.

At discretion, he interrupted himself to duck beneath the swing of a powerful fist. And this last, falling to find a mark, threw its owner off his balance. Tripping awkwardly over the low curbing of the doorway walk, he reeled and went a-sprawl on his knees, while his hat fell off and (such is the impish habit of toppers) rolled and bounded several feet away.

Releasing the cloak, P. Sybarite withdrew to a respectful distance and held himself coolly alert against reprisals that never came. The other picked himself up quickly, cast about for the taxicab, discovered it swiftly making off, already forty yards distant, and with a howl of rage bounded through the gate and gave chase at the top of his speed as the taxi turned the northern corner.

Gravely, P. Sybarite retrieved the stranger's hat. Then he went back to the stoop and sat down.

Turning the affair over in his mind, P. Sybarite decided (fairly enough) that it was on the whole mysterious, lending at least some color of likelihood to George's gratuitous guesswork.

Certainly it would seem that one now had every right to assume Miss Molly Lessing to be other than as she chose to seem. She might very well be Marian Blessington after all!

In which case the man with the twisted mouth was, more probably than not, none other than that same Bayard Shaynon, whom the young lady was reported to have jilted.

Turning the topper over in his hands, it suddenly occurred to P. Sybarite to wonder if he did not in it hold a valuable clue to this enigma of identity. Promptly he took the hat indoors to find out, investigating it most thoroughly by the flickering, bluish glare of the lonely gas jet that burned in the hallway.

It was a handsome and heavy hat of English manufacture. It carried neither name nor initials on its lining, and lacked every least hint as to its ownership—or, as it seemed, until the prying fingers of P. Sybarite turned down the leather and permitted a visit-

ing card concealing flutter to the floor. The hat rack was convenient. Hanging up the hat, P. Sybarite picked up the card. It displayed in conventional script the name Bailey Penfield, with the address, 97 West Forty-fifth street. One corner, moreover, bore a penciled hieroglyphic which seemed to read, "O. K.—B. P."

"Whatever," P. Sybarite mused, "that may mean."

He turned the card over and examined its unmarked and taciturn reverse.

Stealthy footsteps on the stairs distracted his studious attention from the card. He looked up to see George descending with the wash pitcher wrapped in, but by no means disguised, by brown paper.

"Hello! Where's Molly?"

"Miss Lessing?" P. Sybarite looked surprised. "Isn't she upstairs—with Violet?"

"No."

"That's funny."

"Why, when'd she leave you?"

"Oh, ten minutes ago or so."

"She must have stopped in her room for something."

"Perhaps."

"But why didn't you come up?"

"Well, you see, I met a man outside I wanted to talk to for a moment, so I left her at the door."

"Well, five minutes. Run on up. I won't be five minutes. And knock on Molly's door and see what's the matter."

"All right," returned P. Sybarite serenely.

Local News

From Tuesday's Daily. D. J. Pittman of Murray came up this morning from his home to look after matters of business at the court house.

Mrs. Edith Hamburg and children of Greta who have been here visiting at the William Budig home departed this afternoon for her home.

Joseph Vefersnik and two sons of Alberton, Montana, who have been here visiting with their relatives, departed this afternoon for their home.

J. C. Meisinger, wife and little daughter departed this afternoon for Madison to attend the wedding of Fred Meisinger and Miss Annie Solomon.

J. E. Johnson and wife of Omaha came down this afternoon from their home to visit for a short time at the home of Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Johnson.

Mrs. A. E. Smith from the vicinity of Rock Bluffs was in the city today for a few hours looking after some matters of business with the merchants.

Walter Meisinger and sister Miss Lena Meisinger were among the passengers for the north this afternoon going to Madison to attend the Meisinger-Solomon wedding.

Clarence Stenner was among the passengers on the early Burlington train this morning for Omaha where he will spend the day looking after some matters of importance.

George Stander departed this morning for Omaha where he goes to bring his daughter, Miss Sylvia home from the hospital where she has been for the past two weeks undergoing an operation for appendicitis.

Henry Mauzy, wife and daughter, Miss Marion returned last evening on No. 2 from Kearney where they have been visiting at the home of Dr. and Mrs. T. J. Todd. Mrs. Todd is a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Mauzy.

A. M. Holmes and Dr. J. F. Brendel of Murray were in the city yesterday afternoon for a few hours looking after some business matters here and having brought Dr. B. F. Brendel this far on his eastward journey.

Albert Funk, who is engaged in bridge work for the Nebraska Construction Co., in the capacity of foreman was a passenger this morning for Lincoln where he will visit the head office of the company and secure instruction as to his work.

Mrs. Emma Drew and son, Gerald Drew of Omaha who visited in this city over Sunday with their relatives and friends departed yesterday for their home in the metropolis. Dr. Drew is a former Plattsmouth young man who has become quite prominent at the Douglas county bar.

Former County Commissioner L. D. Switzer motored over from his home at Weeping Water yesterday accompanied by his son to spend a few hours here looking after some matters of importance. It was certainly a pleasure to meet Mr. Switzer again as it has been some time since he has visited this city and his friends were more than delighted to see him.

B. L. Philpot and Lee Brown of Weeping Water and John M. Fitch and son Eugene of the vicinity of Nehawka motored to this city today to attend to some important business matters. Messrs Philpot and John Fitch were pleasant callers at this office. Mr. Fitch has just recently purchased a Maxwell car and the trip to this city was made in this new car.

Mrs. A. C. Dean of South

Have, Michigan, who has been visiting here for the past summer at the homes of her granddaughters, Mrs. Oscar Gopen and Mrs. Hill Jean departed last evening on No. 2 for her home in the east.

Conrad Meisinger and wife and daughter, Miss Mathilde departed this afternoon for Madison, Neb., where they go to attend the wedding of Fred Meisinger and Miss Annie Solomon at that place tomorrow afternoon. The groom is a grandson of Mr. and Mrs. Meisinger.

Dr. B. F. Brendel came up yesterday afternoon from his home at Murray and left on No. 2 for the east where he will visit for a week or ten days at his old home at Indianapolis, Indiana. The doctor has not been back at the old home for some years and he is anticipating a most delightful time in reviewing the old familiar scenes.

Father William Higgins of Manly returned home this afternoon after a short visit here with Father M. A. Shine.

Miss Fanny Will was a passenger for the metropolis where she will visit for the day looking after some items of business.

Jacob Tritsch and wife were passengers this morning for Omaha where they go to spend the day in consultation with a specialist there.

Mrs. Georgia Creamer from south of the city was here today for a few hours looking after some business matters for a few hours with the merchants.

Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Tritsch and daughter Esther returned today from Norfolk, where they were called about a week ago on account of the serious illness and death of Mrs. Tritsch's mother, Mrs. Amelia Hagel.

Cecil Amick of Weeping Water came in yesterday afternoon and spent several hours here looking after some matters of business at the court house.

Mrs. John Speed and children of Sioux City, Iowa, are here for a short time visiting their relatives in this city and in the vicinity of Mynard.

Mrs. Louis Thomas was among those journeying to the metropolis today for a few hours attending to some business affairs there for the day.

Mrs. L. V. Copenhaver was a passenger this morning for Omaha where she goes to assist her brother, Charles Freese home from the hospital.

Mrs. S. S. Gooding was a passenger this morning for Omaha where she goes to visit for the day in that city with her son Everett at the hospital where he is recovering from the effects of an operation.

Letter files at the Journal office.

The Best Flour on the Market

Wahoo Mill Co. Forest Rose Flour



"Get rid of this microbe."

likely pending our arrival they're lingering at the head of the stairs for a kiss or two."

The girl paused at the gate. "Then we needn't hurry," she suggested, smiling. "Wait just a minute, Mr. Sybarite."

"As many as you wish," he laughed. "As a matter of fact, I loathe draft beer."

"Do be serious," she begged. "I want to thank you."

He was aware of a proffered hand, slender and fine, in a shabby glove, and took it in his own, unselfishly conscious of a curious disturbance in his bosom.

"It was kind of you to come," he said jerkily in his embarrassment.

"I enjoyed every moment," she said warmly. "But that wasn't all I meant when I thanked you."

His eyebrows climbed with surprise. "What else, Miss Lessing?"

"Your delicacy in letting me know you understood—"

Disengaging her hand, she broke off with a startled movement and a low cry of surprise.

A taxicab, swinging into the street from Eighth avenue, had boiled up to the curb before the gate and, pausing, discharged a young man in a hurry.

In a stride this man crossed the sidewalk and pulled up in silence, trying to master the temper which was visibly shaking him. Tall, well proportioned, impressively turned out in evening clothes, he thrust forward a handsome face, marred by an evil accident, and peered searchingly at the girl.

Instinctively she shrank back inside the fence, eyeing him with a look of fascinated dismay. As instinctively P. Sybarite bristled between them.

"Well?" he snapped at the intruder.

An impatient gesture of a hand, immaculately gloved in white, abashed him completely, as far at least as the other was concerned.

"Ah! Miss Lessing, I believe?"

The voice was strong and musical, but poisoned with a malicious triumph that grated upon the nerves of P. Sybarite. He declined to be abashed.

"Say the word," he suggested serenely to the girl, and I'll bundle this animal back into that taxi and direct the driver to the nearest accident ward. I'd rather like to, really."

"Get rid of this microbe," interrupted the other savagely, "unless you want to see him buried between glass slides under a microscope."

The girl turned to P. Sybarite with pleading eyes and imploring hands.

"If you please, dear Mr. Sybarite," she begged in a tremulous voice, "I'm afraid I must speak alone with this—there was a barely perceptible pause—gentleman. If you won't mind waiting a moment—at the door—"

"If it pleases you, Miss Lessing, most certainly." He strutted back to the brown stone stoop, out of ear shot, but within easy hail.

Hearing nothing, he made little more of the guarded conference that began on his withdrawal. The man entering the doorway had cornered the girl in

Advertisement for Fred P. Busch Tailoring Co. featuring a 'New Fall Suit' for \$27.50. The ad includes an illustration of a man in a suit and text describing the quality and fit of the clothing. The store is located at Hotel Riley Building—Main and Sixth Street—Plattsmouth, Neb.

A collection of various advertisements and notices. It includes 'Local News' with several short reports, 'Make Your Wants Known' with various real estate and business listings, and 'The Best Flour on the Market' advertisement for Wahoo Mill Co. Forest Rose Flour. The flour ad features an illustration of a flour sack and text describing the product's quality.