

## The World Outside

(Continued From Page Three.)

By Harold MacGrath

ed the last name because I did not want anybody to stumble upon the truth before I was ready. I wanted to make some real friends; for until I met you two I had never had any. I was the son of the village pariah—the village miser. My poor father! The honestest man God ever permitted to walk this earth! Do you want the story now? It will prove to you that Nancy is in no danger."

"But you?"

"Well, I honestly don't believe I am, either. Here is the letter my father wrote to me before he died. Read it."

Jenny took the letter and resealed herself upon the bed. While she read, Bancroft walked over to a window and stared into the street. Presently a taxi shot around the corner, rolled into Ninth street, and drew up in front. Instantly Bancroft comprehended that this vehicle was to carry him to Stewart. He smiled, and inexplicable smile; he was conscious that he smiled, but not why. To face the man when the fury would be full, blind, and ruthless! There was no escape. He heard Jenny sigh, and turned.

"Jeremiah, your father was a white man," said Jenny, unsteadily; "an' you're a white man's son. But seven millions! An' me an' beginnin' t' fear you might go bust!"

A hand fell upon the door. Bancroft briskly answered the summons.

"Your taxi is below, sir," said the chauffeur, his face expressionless. "I'll be down in five minutes."

"Yes, sir."

Bancroft closed the door and turned to Jenny. "Rather nice of him to save me a long walk. Now, I'm going to tell you my side of the story." It was a short narrative.

"After all," said Jenny, "you sure are a hick—signin' a thing like that. Why, it's as plain as th' nose on your face. All he wanted was your signature, th' notary's seal, an' th' witnesses. It's a pipe he's changed th' body o' th' thing, an' you're goin' to be nicely squeezed."

"But it was printed in regular type," he declared, not agreeing with her. "He couldn't clean that parchment without showin'—"

"Oh, he couldn't, huh? Well, let me wise you up. There are men in this burg who can turn a one-spot int' ten, an' fool Uncle Sam with it. What's a little type t' a bird like that?"

"But this man isn't a counterfeiter."

"You don't know what he is—now."

Bancroft had to admit that this was true. "But it doesn't run with what he was, or what I know of him."

"You ought t' have a nurse. Where's the guy been all these years, an' what's he been at that he didn't turn up before? It's my hunch that he's been in jail. Jerry, do you love Nancy?"

The words shocked her quite as much as they shocked Bancroft. Jenny would never be able to figure out how the words had come to be uttered. They had not been consciously in her thoughts. But once spoken, she let them stand.

"That isn't quite fair, Jenny. Still the answer is yes."

"I kid o' thought so. An' I guess this ol' pal of your father's thought so, too, or he wouldn't a' picked on Nancy."

"Written on my face?"

"Often enough, Jeremiah. You've got a lot o' book stuff under your hat, but what you know about this world could be written on a postage stamp. You, runnin' around loose, with seven millions in your jeans!"

"Jenny, do you believe I have any chance?"

"You poor nut, you can't win at poker unless you bet, can you? You can't tell what chance you have with a woman unless you give it th' once over. Nancy ran to help you, didn't she?" She uttered a hard little laugh as she saw his face light up—with the suddenness of Broadway at 6 o'clock. "Why, you've got 'em. You're goin' t' rescue her—real hero stuff. Why, if I was a handsome young man an' had seven millions, I wouldn't be afraid o' th' queen o' Roumania. Not me! Well bring her back as soon as you can. But suppose this guy won't believe th' letter?"

"He's got to. He's a madman on one subject, but aside from that he has reason. Besides, when he sees that I am commanded to give him half of what I have—"

"You're goin' t' give him three millions? That's tough. Knock on my door when you come back. I'll be here."

"She doesn't care for Craig?"

"She threw him down. Maybe she heard you had seven millions."

"You don't mean that, Jenny?"

"Tis a mean pup! t'f course I don't mean it. Nancy wouldn't marry a billion if she didn't love th' man who had it."

They went out into the hall, Bancroft with a light and Jenny with a

heavy step. At Jenny's door he suddenly caught both her hands and kissed them—ahyly.

"If only I had had a sister like you, Jenny! I wouldn't have cared."

"Well, I'll be your sister from now on. Better toddle along—before Nancy has hysterics."

As she saw the top of his head vanish below the floor level, she leaned against the wall and let the flood of tears fall—silently. Oh, Jerry, Jerry! Suddenly she saw herself, 10 years hence, wrinkled and fat, and both jobs gone.

Bancroft jumped into the taxi and slammed the door behind him. No need of asking the chauffeur any questions as to this or that or whereabouts; the end of his journey would be at Stewart's door, wherever that might be. As he settled back against the cushion he sought the feel of the letter. He had not left it behind. Then he remembered the copy of the affidavit stuck behind the bow in his hat band. He would not require this now; so he tore it up.

The mind has an odd way of disheveling at times. His thoughts now should have been exclusively of Nancy—and were divided between Nancy and Jenny. He was very fond of Jenny; he wanted to help her in some way. The notion had been in his head for some days, nebulously, where he could not attach it to a settlement. Now the notion came into the clear. He would purchase a half interest in the dressmaking shop where Jenny posed. He would lend this half interest to Jenny. If, by some stroke of bad luck the establishment should fail, the loan would not become a liability, but would automatically cease to exist. On the other hand, Jenny should pay him annually as much as she could, until the loan was wiped out.

He chuckled. Despite the fact that, by placing himself unreservedly in the hands of a madman, he might be rolling toward permanent injury or death, he could find something to chuckle over. Jenny was right. If he went on playing the Good Samaritan to everybody he took a fancy to his solvency would be of short duration. No matter. If this night's business turned out well, Jenny would have her chance.

The taxi stopped so violently that Bancroft was shaken to his knees. The chauffeur opened the door.

"First door to the right as you go up, sir," said the chauffeur politely enough.

Bancroft got out and brushed his knees. The locality was utterly unfamiliar. As for that, there was a good deal of New York unfamiliar to him.

"Am I expected to pay you?"

"No sir. The gentleman who sent me for you paid me in advance. He said Mr. Bancroft, room 4. He said you expected him to send for you."

"That's tolerably correct."

"None of my business, but nobody lives in this house. You can take that for what it's worth."

The chauffeur jumped back into his seat and whizzed away into the deepening night.

Thoughtfully Bancroft proceeded into the house and began slowly to mount the trembling stairs. A dusty smell suggested vacancy. The house was tenanted; Stewart had borrowed a room in it. Bancroft had decided upon one phase of his conduct; he would offer no resistance to any physical encounter. This passivity would serve to lessen any violent intention on Stewart's part. All that was required of the fates was light and a straight look into Stewart's face.

The upper and lower hallways were lit by thin, wavering gas jets. The air was chill, almost as chill as it was outside. First door to the right, the obliging chauffeur had said. Bancroft could not describe his emotions as he laid hold of the door-knob. He did not feel particularly courageous; neither did he sense any large panic. He was well armed, but would he be given time to use the one formidable weapon he possessed—his father's letter? Madmen—one could never anticipate them; and Stewart was mad, as any man is mad who has fostered an obsession for years to a point where it becomes murderous inclination. And yet Bancroft could only reiterate in his thoughts: "The poor, unfortunate devil!"

Well, there must be no doddering. He turned the knob and opened the door. Utter darkness within.

"Here I am, Mr. Stewart."

Silence. Rather impatiently Bancroft stepped over the threshold. He had to cross it; there could be no backing out; and Nancy to think of. Queer thought! Everything this man wished him to do, he did, and had done from the beginning, for one reason or another.

This cogitation wasn't quite finished when he felt his elbows struck from behind in a merciless powerful grasp. It was instinctive that he

should resist, but he recollected in time his plan of passivity, and relaxed. Rope suddenly burned his wrists. Then, with amazing swiftness, this rope began to encircle his body, eventually pinning his arms and legs. After this he was let be. He stood balancing himself, rather a difficult feat in the velvet blackness of the room.

There came a click out of the silence. A spot of light from a battery lamp struck the floor and moved toward the wall.

"Melodramatic," said an ironic voice from behind the light; "but the Great Adventure company must keep to the letter of its contract, which consists mainly of thrills—man-stuff, if you will remember. Besides, I heard about that alley fracas, which, of course, I had nothing to do with. You are a husky boy, and I have ceased to believe in luck. Ah! Here comes the jet." A phosphorescent thread appeared upon the wall, and a match flamed. The gas was feeble. Stewart and the few objects in the room had the effect of being seen in the nebulosity of water. Bancroft saw a deal table and two chairs, one on each side of the table. "Young man, a little learning is a dangerous thing."

"I might counter that, sir, by saying that a little misunderstanding is equally a dangerous thing." Bancroft's voice was thick, for his heart was pounding. He must do nothing to inflame this madman; he must wait patiently for the denouement.

"Oh! So you and I misunderstand each other?"

"Yes, sir."

Stewart did not reply, but approached Bancroft and carried him one of the chairs. Bancroft was forced to sit. Nancy was probably in some room above; numb with cold and terror. Whatever he did, he must always keep this fact in mind.

"Do you know who I am?" Stewart demanded, roughly.

"You are Charles Jeremiah Kennedy, my father's friend?"

"Your father's trusting friend?" Demoniical laughter followed this, and it broke queerly. "Ah, my God! And in another minute I should have had my hands upon his throat!"

"In a little while you will thank God, sir, that he died before you reached him."

"It would have been an extraordinary miracle. I have wandered, these 20 years, through all the labyrinths of hell; so don't expect any mercy."

"Do you intend to kill me in his stead, sir? I should like to know."

"I haven't decided," said Kennedy moodily. "It remains to be seen."

"I have never harmed you."

"What has that to do with it? You are his son." Then Kennedy burst into the ironic strain again.

"The Great Adventure company—some absurd business to start your wonder. And a little later you put two and two together and connected me with the man who entered your father's office. Everything I planned for you to do you did. You reasoned that by stepping into each pitfall you would eventually learn what I was up to. Clever, but not clever enough."

"That is true, sir. I'm not much more than a boy. Still, I found out who you were."

"Charles Jeremiah Kennedy. It is many a year since I heard that name spoken." Kennedy began to move about, with abrupt turns, abrupt gestures. He did not want to hurt the boy; and yet . . . the father's mouth and eyes of him stimulated the will to murder. So, to keep moving, to tire out the inclination. Once he paused gloomily before his prisoner. "Are you afraid of me?"

"Yes. But only as a normally sane man has the right to fear another who is—"

"I wonder," mused Kennedy. "Why not? What has there not been to drive me insane? I have killed a man. I have spent 14 years in prison. I have lost all that earth held dear—my wife, my child! Fourteen years with iron bars between me and sunshine—because of your father's perfidy! I trusted him absolutely, and he beggared me. My child! She may be dead, she may be hungry, she may be a drab thing of the streets. Day after day I have sought her in the crowds. Oh, I would know her instantly. She would have her mother's smile."

Tears welled into Bancroft's eyes and began to roll down his cheeks. What an Odyssey of sustained misfortune! Lawyer Snell's comment returned: Johnny Jones of South Dakota, content to be a cowboy, but whose bones rotted in France because a man by the name of William Hohenzollern—the innocent bystander! He must let this unhappy man relieve his soul of all its accumulated bitterness; tell his story; then he should have the truth. But what a weak little staff it seemed to these colossal miseries to lean

on! The truth would not bring back the wife and child, return the 14 years wasted in a dungeon keep; it might not bring back even the man's faith in mankind.

Kennedy went on. He did not address Bancroft particularly. "What had I done that God should pile all these miseries upon my head? I had never harmed any human being. I had played square. And here I stand, guilty of an innocent man's death, guilty of the death of your father, if not by deed, by intent. From a kindly man, something of a dreamer, I became a piece of machinery, dedicated to destruction! . . . Rooked me, when I was thousands of miles away and could not defend myself! For 14 years I had nothing to do but think and plan, think and plan. But your father had hidden so cleverly that I found him only that day."

Bancroft's head sank to his chest. Innocent bystanders! This unhappy wretch, Silas Bancroft and Silas Bancroft's son, all three innocent bystanders, rooked and pulverized by chance-medley! Bancroft thought of his father's agony; never daring to throw his arm across his son's shoulder for fear the emotion might snip the slender thread by which his life hung.

"I knew nothing of finance," continued Kennedy, resuming his pacing. "That was your father's game. So I turned everything I had into cash—borrowed on call loans—dumped it into his hands, and sailed for South America. I sailed away!" Kennedy laughed again. "I sailed away! When I returned two months later my wife was dead and buried, my child gone, the savings of years wiped out. Why, I didn't even know your father's brokers . . . I was that trustful! I immediately wrote to a friend of mine in La Paz and turned over the mine to him in trust. To buy that mine had taken up most of my ready cash; and I would need capital to work it. I then destroyed all my luggage and papers—anything that would identify me as Kennedy—and started out to kill your father. But first I wanted one more look at the old home where I had known such happiness. There was a crowd about the door. An auctioneer was chanting inside. The world became red. I pushed people aside. A policeman interfered. I knocked him into the arcaway. He died almost instantly from concussion. An hour later I was in the Tombs for manslaughter, under the name of Stewart, the first that came into my head. Manslaughter!" Kennedy covered his eyes for a moment. "I suppose God wanted to see how much a human being could stand and selected me to experiment on. So I became Stewart. I was mugged and thumb-printed and numbered, and stowed away in a coffin-like cell of gray stone. I soon became a trusty, due to my education, and in a little while they fell to calling me professor. I had killed a policeman; so the general run of convicts looked upon me with veneration."

The gas jet began to whistle mournfully, and Kennedy modified it.

"Of course, the first thing I sought, on being liberated, was your father. He was in neither telephone nor city directory—naturally. But in the end I found him—a second too late. Imagine me, entering that village home of yours and finding my books, my porcelain, my chairs! Loot!"

But Bancroft now knew that it was not so. His father had rescued these treasured objects out of the crash, intending some day to restore them to Kennedy, should Kennedy ever return.

Kennedy once more paused in front of Bancroft. "I have here a document. It is a deed of transfer for the sum of \$3,000,000 in cash, stocks, bonds, realty—particularly the house in Ninth street. These \$3,000,000 represent what I now should have had, including compound interest for nearly 20 years. In the beginning I had intended to kill you. But it came to me that in so doing I should become a hunted man; and I want to live the last few years in quiet. So I decided to break you and shanghai you. But even then the Old Man of the Sea would still be on my shoulders. Wherever I dropped you you would find manual labor and work your way back. So I am going to take only that which is lawfully mine, and die an honest man. I shall always carry that advantage over your father, even after death. I want only my own. This document"—Kennedy produced it—"is signed by you and witnessed by my two clerks and the notary, who affixed the seal. Two things have happened to this parchment. The original body has been destroyed and the surface restored. I defy any expert to prove that this paper has been tampered with. A little secret I learned from a celebrated counterfeiter."

Bancroft wanted to ask if Ken-

nedly considered this method honest, but he dared not. The initial venom was gone from the man's tones; at least, in a degree to render it negligible.

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(To be continued.)

... The...  
Boss' Bounty

(Continued From Page Two.)

transportation paid, some money down, and a good job when you get there. Of course, this'll all be forgotten in six months—public never remembered anything longer'n six months. By and by you can come right back here if you want to. It would get the old man out of a bad hole, you see, and you, too. If you're out of the state there's nothing to hold Andy Hatch on."

"No, Gus, I've thought it all over. I don't want to make trouble any more than you do. But I'm going to stick. I can't do anything else." An incorrigibly stubborn young man, doggedly bent on destruction. "You ain't doing right by your family," Gus accused, with the license of a friend.

Certainly, the family was not flourishing, but Donovan simply couldn't help it.

Gravely, Gus tried the last shot: "You know you're in the way, Gene. Handy Andy Hatch's got plenty of friends—some of 'em reckless enough, too. They know you're keeping him in jail, I'm afraid they'll bump you off one of these days if you ain't reasonable."

That sounded like no idle threat to Donovan. He knew in his bones that those three men had meant to do something to him—but somehow hadn't. It would be ill for the little family if he should be bumped off. And in thinking it all over he cherished no idealistic delusions. The waste and pillage of public funds, the thud of the footpad's billy, the crack of the murderer's pistol, the roar of a sawed-off shotgun, the criminal's facile escape from the law—all those murky and bloody things were individually bound up in a rotten regime which the sovereign public permitted at the ballot box. An obscure Eugene Donovan had no notion that he could make the slightest impression upon that.

But he had somehow found himself and was helplessly tied to his own integrity. With an apologetic little smile he answered:

"Well, I can't help it, Gus. I've got to stick."

Gene Gus regretfully gave the blockhead up.

The family had their Christmas at an outlay of \$2.50.

Every night as he left the warehouse—sometimes with big snowflakes lifting down through the field of light shed by an arc lamp, sometimes in a barrage of sleet, always in the dark, Donovan wondered whether the bumping off would happen then.

He had no illusion about that. Had he chosen to cast in his lot with Uncle Frank, the boss' powerful, informal government would have protected him against the formal law like a shield of brass; he would have been in no danger. But the formal law was only a shield of tissue paper against the vengeance of the invisible powers. He might be "bumped off" as snugly and safely as one tosses away an apple core.

At the spring elections the Martindale-Brophy-Cochran-Hanson machine won easily.

The following week Hatch was put on trial for murder; and Donovan rather wondered at the strange postponement of that bumping off. He gave his testimony as he had given it before. But Ollie Dunn now swore that he had been in the corner of the building when the second robber ran out of the paymaster's office and—positively—the man had a black mark upon his face, completely concealing it except the eyes. Hatch had an alibi also and was acquitted.

Commenting upon the acquittal, Gus Whelpley observed, "Well, Gene made a devil of a lot of trouble, first and last, and that's all he did do. He might 'a' known it. He's a good fellow at heart, but a fearful nucker—stubborn's no name for it."

Donovan did not regret that Hatch was acquitted. It was a relief rather, for now Andy's friends would have no motive for murdering an obscure, defenseless bill clerk who was supporting a wife and child on a slender wage.

The city went cheerfully on in its welter and crime—containing many thousands of obscure souls who, like Eugene Donovan, would face death itself for conscience sake, yet who never lifted a finger in order to bring their personal concepts of righteousness into power through the ballot.

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