

## MYSTERIOUS MR. MACK

The men on the chess-board stood at mate, and, with one hand shading his eyes from the lamplight, Mr. Mack stared at them gloomily and tried to trace the movements back to the point where he had erred and enabled Burton to bring forward his all-important knight.

The younger man sat with one elbow on the table, nervously stroking the back of his head and turning his eyes restlessly at the different objects in the cosy little parlor.

"I am glad I spoke to you first," he said, thoughtfully, after a long silence.

"Yes," Mr. Mack pushed the board away, and turning round in his chair crossed his legs. The movement was vigorous and suggested he was out of patience with something. "I am glad, too, George, for if she had said 'yes,' as she might have done, and I had had to say 'no' to both of you, I should have liked it even less than I like having to say it to you alone." He paused, and threw at Burton one of his nervous side-looks. I like you and she likes you, and I don't know a single thing against you. We'd both be very sorry if you withdrew your friendship, and I won't say it is utterly impossible you should ever marry her. But"—he looked at the nail of his little finger and bit it absently—"there are reasons, cogent, solid reasons, why she shouldn't wed while I am above-ground. You may put it down to my selfishness if you like, so much the better if you do, my boy. But, no, I don't want you to think that. I couldn't bear to lose her; my life wouldn't be worth breath without her. But it isn't that, for I love her above selfishness, and her happiness has been my single aim since her mother died fifteen years ago."

"Oh, I'm quite sure that in refusing me you appreciate that—that well, it's a bit of a blow to me," said Burton, nervously filling his pipe from the tobacco-jar on the table. "I mean, loving her as you do, you can understand it is a bit degrading to lose her; for I have become pretty confident that she cares for me; and you—Oh, Mr. Mack, come! What is there to keep us apart if she loves me? Money? I am a fairly prosperous farmer with many a pound put by. Reputation? You won't hear a word against me, I'm glad to say."

"Oh, you're all right," answered Mack, with a deprecating look. "It's like this—like—well, perhaps the boot is on the other foot! Sometimes the villagers about here refer to me as 'mysterious Mr. Mack'; they got the idea by thinking it was queer a man of comfortable means, with a pretty daughter, should settle down here without friends, business, or ill-health to influence him; and the fact that we didn't exactly fall weeping on the neck of the first person who called aggravated their suspicions. And though we've lived down all that nonsense, I am still regarded with a sort of suspicion, because my name's un-English, my appearance somewhat Teutonic, and because I don't publish particulars as to how I made my fortune, what it amounts to, what takes me away at times, and whether Rosalie's mother brushed her hair back or wore a fringe." He paused, and when he resumed he spoke in a lower voice. "I tell you what I tell you because I feel sure, since you love Rosalie, you will repeat nothing, and because I don't want you to think I said 'no' from selfish motives. They say I am a bit of a mystery! I am."

He mixed a drink for himself from the bottle and the siphon and sipped it.

"Well, George, the truth is—well, the truth is I am so situated that I cannot let Rosalie marry before I am dead and—respectably buried, or her life might be ruined, for something—something might come out which would turn her husband against her and break her dear heart. Perhaps it is just as likely to come out while she is single, but that wouldn't be so bad as the other way. If she had a lover he would be free to leave her or to marry her, knowing everything she knew; he wouldn't marry her in the dark, to recoil later."

He glanced up and saw a suspicious look of inquiry in Burton's eyes, which was not unnatural or inexcusable on the young man's part, but which convinced Mack he had said enough.

"Well, I can't say more without saying too much. Rosalie doesn't dream I have a secret, and you must never let her think you do. I—I have been everything in the world to her, and she is more to me! She is sensitive—highly sensitive. If she were married and the truth came out, even if her husband stood by her, she would always feel that he did so against his inclinations; and the thought would be poison to her."

He stopped and rose abruptly, and moving to the mantelpiece stared down into the fire.

"I think I understand your motives Mr. Mack," said Burton, rising too, and speaking in a dull tone. "Of course, you are the best judge—the only judge of the situation; but I cannot conceive what can be the nature of your secret that it can keep Rosalie and me apart, and yet you

can ask me to hide it from her, if ever I should know."

"Well, there it is, George, and you must take my word for it. My judgment may be wrong, but it is the only thing I can rely on. Don't ever refer to the subject again—please don't. Come here as often as you can; you will always be heartily welcome. And if you can remain faithful to an undeclared love until I and my secret are buried my bones will lie easy, for my girl will have a worthy husband."

Burton did not reply, but simply held out his hand. Mack took it, and looked covertly at his half-averted face.

"George," he said, gently, "if—Quick, if you are going now. I hear her on the stairs, and she will notice the change in you."

He hurried his visitor into the little hall, where the light was bad, and they met Rosalie.

"Not going?" she said.

"Yes, I must go now, Miss Mack; it is later than you think."

Mack relieved the farmer's embarrassment by pressing him to come again the following day.

"Father, what have you been saying to him?" said Rosalie, as Mack, having shut the front door, put his arm around her and led her back to the parlor.

"Nothing, my child—nothing." She sat down and looked into the fire, while he filled his pipe.

"I don't expect you to tell me even white fibs, daddy," she said, tenderly, going to him as he sank into his chair and kneeling by him. "His manner and his voice changed utterly while I was upstairs."

"You attach too much importance to trifles."

"They are not trifles, daddy," she said, very gently. "Or, if they are, life is made up of trifles. Tell me truly, did he ask you for me, and did you say 'no'?"

"What makes you think such strange things, Rosalie, darling?" he asked, glancing at her keenly.

"You must not say 'no,' daddy," she said, waving his question away and pursuing her own ideas. "If he hasn't asked you yet, he will one day; and you must say 'yes,' daddy—you must say 'yes.'"

"Tut, tut, Rosalie! You are only a child; there is plenty of time for you to think of marriage."

"The only time for me to think of it is when he asks me—only then."

"And since he hasn't asked you, the time has not arrived," he said, rather gruffly.

"But has he asked for your consent?" she inquired, not to be evaded. "Daddy, don't try to deceive me, for I love him and I feel that he loves me!"

"Can you think why I should withhold my consent—what objections I could raise to him?" he said, reaching out for the matches. "Of course not! I like him, and I know him to be straight. When the time comes for me to consent, I shall not refuse. Now, go to bed, Rosalie, for it is getting late."

She rose from her knees slowly with a thoughtful air, and, kissing him, went away.

Mack finished his whisky and soda at a gulp, and, rising, began to walk round the room.

Rosalie's words had gone right to the core of his heart. He had known that she liked Burton, but never suspected that she loved him so deeply as she had implied. It hurt him to have deceived her in her love; it distressed him to realize that he stood between her and her life's happiness, and might stand there so long as to divide her from it for ever; and it terrified him to think that any day a blow might fall to crush her, to drive the man she loved out of her life, and—

The next day Mack went on one of his frequent journeys to London, and as usual, he returned the day following. No one knew why he took such journeys, but they were quite a regular feature of his life, occurring about twice a month. Burton, however, had noticed that Mack was subject to periods of nervousness, extending sometimes over days together and always ending in a journey to London, from which Mack almost invariably returned within forty-eight hours quite himself again. He always brought Rosalie a present, and latterly he had generally had a box of cigars or a case of good wine for Burton.

He returned from this particular journey with a beautiful set of furs for Rosalie and a handsome case of cutlery for Burton.

"It's awfully good of you, Mr. Mack," said Burton, in accepting the gift, "but what'll I do with two dozen knives and forks, when my table is never laid for more than one person? Do you mean it—you don't mean it ironically?"

"No, George, I don't," answered Mack, slowly.

"It would make a capital wedding-present," suggested Burton. "I can't hope to use 'em all myself."

"Well," said Mack, thoughtfully, "Rosalie and I will come across tomorrow night and christen two cheese-knives for you."

"Do!" cried the farmer. "Do!"

It was Rosalie's first visit to Burton's farm, and she straightway fell in love with the old homestead, which so delighted Burton that he became quite eloquent in extolling the comforts of the house.

Mack sat in an arm-chair with a cigar between his teeth, while Rosalie played the piano and accompanied Burton in a couple of songs. He was passionately fond of music, but somehow it jarred on him that evening, though Rosalie played better and Burton sang better than he re-

membered. A feeling of loneliness stole over him—a sub-consciousness that he was a very small contributor, if a contributor at all, to their evident happiness. When they spoke to him, what they said was so flagrantly "by the way" as to suggest a sense of guilt of having forgotten him in the pleasure of remembering only each other.

It dawned slowly on Mack's mind that he was no longer necessary—his love-task was done and another man was ready to step into his place—to oust him into the limbo of byways, and himself lead Rosalie along the broad, sunny highway of life.

That night he sat up late at home concocting a letter. He re-wrote it again and again, weighing each word and when he had addressed it he gathered all the other copies together and, with the blotting-paper he had used, burnt them, raking the ashes into dust afterwards.

The next day he went to London and posted the letter at the General Post Office. He returned in the evening with a handsome silver coffee-set for Rosalie and a smoker's cabinet for Burton.

He took the cabinet over to Burton's farm the following morning, receiving with astonishing dullness Rosalie's many hints that she would like to accompany him.

"You can call it a wedding-present in advance, if you like, George," he said, as the farmer led the way into the house. "And if you've got a minute or two to spare I'd like to speak to you."

Burton thanked him heartily, but failed to fully appreciate his significant words in striving to guess the meaning of his strange manner.

"You have told me that your family has been here, in this very house, for five generations?" said Mack, leaning on the table between them.

"Yes, five generations."

"And the Burtons have always been above suspicion?"

"That is always said about here, and I've done my best to live up to it."

"Do you love Rosalie better than your honor?"

The farmer started.

That's a difficult question, Mr. Mack," he said, gravely.

"I hoped you would say 'yes,'" said Mack, after a brief pause, "but I am glad you have said 'no'; it's the answer of an honest man—the sort of man I'd like my Rosalie to marry."

He spoke as if a great weight had been lifted off his mind, and held out his hand.

"Will you take that—it has another man's blood on it!"

"Good heavens, you are mad!" cried Burton, starting up.

"You don't believe it?" Mack smiled, faintly.

"No!" Burton laughed. It was a harsh laugh, for he had not recovered from the shock of Mack's strange words.

"Would you still love Rosalie and cleave to her if you did believe it?"

"Why, yes! Would the stain be on her innocent hand?" Burton answered instantly, a touch of tenderness in his tone.

"I'm satisfied," said Mack, squaring his shoulders and the eager look fading from his face. "Don't ask any questions now; I'll tell you in my own time." He made a move as if to leave, but stopped, and a peculiar smile crept over his face as he said: "If you can come over this evening and make Rosalie say 'yes,' I won't say 'no' again."

"Daddy!"

Mack looked up slowly at the opening door. He knew whom he would see; he knew what they would say.

They came and stood before him, Burton flushed and nervous, Rosalie rather pale, her wonderful eyes shining down at him.

He looked up at them dully.

"Daddy, whispered Rosalie, 'he is going now.'"

Still Mack neither spoke nor showed he understood. He was fighting a battle against enormous odds, and it was not for the lovers, fresh from their first vows, to see the carnage.

"Daddy, dear daddy, George has asked me to marry him. May I?"

Mack nodded, "And may Heaven bless you both," he murmured.

Burton saw something in the father's face, Rosalie heard it in his voice; and they slipped out together, closing the door behind them.

A little later Rosalie peeped into the room and saw her father sitting at the table, with his face buried in his arms. She stole up to him and fell on her knees beside him.

"Dear daddy, I shall be very sorry to leave you," she said, in a sweet soft voice, "but I do love him so."

He turned to her quickly and kissed her, but still he did not speak.

"No, George, I don't," answered Mack, slowly.

It was noon the following Tuesday Mack went to London, where he did as he had always done on such occasions—drive to a Continental newsagent's and consulted a file of Antwerp papers, turning straight to the issue of the previous Saturday. He found what he sought. It was something he had searched for in vain a score of times and more, and the vainness of his searches had engendered in him a fierce sensation of gratitude. But now that he found it he experienced only a dull feeling of resignation.

By daybreak next morning he was in Antwerp, whence he telegraphed to Burton to come secretly to him at once, at a small hotel.

Burton could have lost no time, for he arrived in the evening.

"We won't talk here, George," said

Mack, as they met. "Let us go into the street. You did not tell Rosalie? That's right. Well, when you go back to her, you will break it to her gently that I have met with an accident—I am dead. For her life's sake you must lie to her. I surrender her to you, and rely on you to protect her from all knowledge of what I tell you. I must be brief, for I have allowed myself too little time, and I have an appointment in a quarter of an hour."

"George!" Mack's lips were white and dry, his voice hollow and cold. "I am going to take the blow at my own time, so that it will fall only on me, and so that the loss of me shall be minimized to Rosalie by the gain of yourself. Be good to her as all I ask, and never let a hint of what I tell you reach her! It won't be difficult for I have carefully arranged everything. No! don't speak! Time is pressing."

"I was in business in this city, years ago, with a man named Hartz. When my wife fell ill I sent her and Rosalie to the South of France. Rosalie was about five then. I used to go to see them from time to time. My wife died, and I left Rosalie with some good people for a time, and returned to Antwerp to find that very day Hartz had robbed me of every penny I possessed and had absconded. He had not gone far, however. I found him three days later, and tracked him to a wood which lies a mile or two to the south of this city. He had buried my money, there, and had gone to draw on it. I told you I had a man's blood on my hands. I have never attempted to deceive myself that I killed him without murderous intent. I don't deceive myself now, nor you. And I buried him in the spot where he had buried my hard-earned fortune. Then I fled with Rosalie, living quietly in remote villages under the name of Mack—my name's Mackinon."

"A few years back somebody bought the wood and, felling the trees, began building there. You understand! The disappearance of Hartz and Mackinon had excited comment, but no suspicion; but there were things on Hartz—imperishable things—which must have brought about identification. And—and there was Rosalie. Twice a month I went to London simply to see if the Antwerp papers recorded the finding of the body, for I knew I should be wanted at once."

"I am taking the blow now, George and Rosalie must never know. I wrote to the police here a few days back saying where the body would be found, and making an appointment with the police for eight o'clock tonight. They have found the body. Time flies. Don't speak! It is justice—justice tempered with mercy, since Rosalie need never know! I have ten minutes to get to the rendezvous, and I don't want you to be seen with me. I know what the end will be—I am prepared for it; and I go forward firmly. Be good to my little girl, and if it seems difficult to you to keep the truth from her, remember that it is not easy for me, but I go forward confident you'll do it. Take my watch back to her—it will seem quite natural." He held his watch and chain out separately, and dropped the chain as Burton blindly made to take them.

Burton stooped unsteadily, and groped about the wet pavement for the chain, with unseeing eyes. When he found the chain and looked up he was alone.—London Tit-Bits.

### WELL INSTRUCTED.

Her head rested on his shoulder and her little hand lay confidently in his. "Tell me, Alfred," said the happy maiden, "how you ever came to pick me out as the girl you wanted to marry."

"Well, Dora," replied the ecstatic young man, in a gush of confidence, "it was mother that put me up to it."

### DEAR TO HIS HEART.

"Will you have another helping?" asked the neighbor. "You seem very fond of our chicken."

"And why shouldn't I be?" responded Suburban, who had been invited to dinner, "when I can detect the flavor of our flowers in every morsel?"

### THE OPERATOR'S REBUFF.

"Have you a telegram for me?" asked a pompous railway official, stepping from his private car and accosting the agent at a small station.

"I'm blessed if I know," said the operator, eyeing him critically. "Would your photograph be on it?"

"Pretty? No, I won't say baby is pretty," declared a young mother, "for I can speak of him impartially, even though he is my own, and that's more than most mothers can do. He has lovely blue eyes, perfect in shape, hair like the morning sunshine; mouth—well, no rosebud could be sweeter; complexion divinely fair; nose just too charming for anything; in fact, he's faultless; but I won't say he's pretty."

Brannigan—"Come home and take supper wid me, Flannigan." Flannigan—"Shure, it's past yer supper-time now; yer wife'll be as mad as a hatter." Brannigan—"That's jist it; but she can't lick the two of us."

The immigration authorities at New York estimate that 1,000,000 aliens will land in the United States during this year. Last year the country received 812,870 immigrants.

## APPENDICITIS PROBLEM

IS IT OVER WHEN THE APPENDIX IS REMOVED?

A French Surgeon's Views—Even Sir Frederick Treves Has Doubts.

Consul-General Guenther reports to the U. S. State Department, from statements contained in German papers, that appendicitis, or inflammation of the vermiform appendix, has assumed the character of becoming more and more a fashionable disease. Surgery has achieved great triumphs in this sphere, and has cured innumerable cases of the disease. The French surgeon, Roux, however, has asked the question, "Is appendicitis over if one carries his appendix in his pocket?" and his answer was not entirely affirmative.

From the statements of Sir Frederick Treves, one of the foremost authorities and physician of King Edward, similar doubts appear. According to the experience of this great expert,

### FAILURES MAY OCCUR,

which he treats in two groups. On the one hand, the operation may result only in relief or an incomplete cure; on the other hand, complications are to be feared which do not depend upon the surgical intervention. Only the surgeon is concerned to study the details of the deductions of Sir Frederick in order to more fully learn of the eventual dangers which may follow an operation. For the patients, it must be stated that an operation remains the pre-eminent remedy, if not the only one, from which a complete cure is to be expected.

Dr. Pond of Liverpool has advanced a new theory with reference to the origin of appendicitis and other disturbance of the digestive organs, in *The Lancet*. He calls attention to the fact that such ailments can often be attributed to antimonial poisoning, and the source of the antimony taken up by man is said to be the rubber rings which are frequently used to close

### ALL SORTS OF BOTTLES.

Dr. Pond has established the fact that such rings consist of almost one-third their weight of antimony. The antimony is not only dissolved by the mineral waters, containing alkalies and organic acids, but these rubber rings, as daily observation shows, soon become brittle, and some of the compound falls into the contents of the vessels.

Dr. Pond claims to have found that a frequently repeated introduction of antimony can become the source of a series of disturbances of the nutritive and digestive system, especially through continued weakening of the muscles of the stomach and intestines. In case his statement as to the contents of antimony in rubber rings is correct, his deductions seem plausible, but with reference to appendicitis a confirmation of such connection must be awaited.

### A SLIDING BOAT.

Skims Along Surface of the Water at a Good Speed.

The fact that a stone can skim the water if its flat surface strikes squarely has recently been put in practice in the construction of a sliding boat by a French inventor, M. de Lambert. The friction which is present when the de Lambert boat slides over the water is very slight, and the power which is necessary in order to make the boat glide is not high. When the boat is at rest it is supported by floats.

The boat constructed by M. de Lambert has a total length of 20 feet, with a width of 10 feet between the inclined planes upon which it slides. The boat has parallel floats resembling certain Asiatic canoes. The two floats are very narrow and are united by cross-pieces, partly of wood and partly of aluminum, a metal which has been used to a large extent in the construction of the boat because of its slight weight.

The motor used is a 12 horsepower, but the essential parts of the boat are fixed sliding planes, adjusted under the boat at carefully regulated distances from each other. These planes, which are made of wood, are immersed to a depth of several centimeters when the boat is at rest, and they are inclined at an angle which has been decided upon after wide experimentation. The total weight of the boat is about 1,200 pounds, but in order to move this weight it requires a motor of only 12 horse power, while in the case of automobile boats the motors required are 60, 80, and even 100 horse power.

M. Bellet says that M. de Lambert's boat has been timed by official chronometers, and that the results have been surprising. When the motor is started the boat commences to move with the planes still submerged, cutting the water horizontally. But this lasts only a short time; the planes show an instantaneous tendency to rise, and they are practically on the water at the end of a few meters. Then the speed quickly increases because of the immense diminution in resistance, and soon the boat is sliding on the water, or, more exactly, on a layer of air resting between the planes and the water, at a speed of fourteen, fifteen or twenty-five miles an hour.