

The Free Press Short Story

A HALF GALLON OF OLIVE OIL

HARRIET LUMMIS SMITH

How did Senator Howard stand in regard to the Marlitt case? That was the question everybody in the state was asking.

At his town house no information could be gathered, other than the fact that Senator Howard was away for a few days.

The telegram from his uncle, unimportant as it seemed, set Curtis to thinking.

"Send me at once parcel post half gallon of best olive oil hurry check follows. James Hammond," the message read.

Curtis' uncle and his wife never used olive oil, this the nephew knew. Mrs. Hammond made a delicious salad dressing, half whipped cream and the other half eggs and vinegar with the proper seasoning.

The farm was five miles from the little railway station, but Curtis chose to walk. The day was warm and the can of olive oil became uncomfortably heavy before the first mile was covered.

The farmhouse looked peaceful enough to be inviting to a straggling station-farmer. Near the house a man in faded overalls was hoeing corn. The boy went on to the back door, and entered. His uncle and aunt were both in the kitchen and the faces they turned upon him hardly indicated welcome.

"Do you mean there's not room for me?" The nephew allowed a hint of reproach to creep into his voice. His aunt spoke up hastily. "Oh, James, Curtis is a trustworthy boy. You'd better tell him just how matters are."

"Suspected!" Mr. Hammond spoke testily. "How could you suspect such a thing?" "Well, your telegraphing for olive oil for one thing. There never has been any olive oil in the house when I've been here."

"You don't understand, Miss Mary. If he's got an opinion, it ought to be known, and it won't take much time for him to

tell it. To get it would be the making of me." Some time elapsed before Curtis was able to bring his relatives to his point of view concerning an interview.

"The interview between Senator Howard and Mr. Hammond was protracted. This showed at least that the senator had not vetoed the plan and when at last the latter reappeared, he brought good news.

At a matter of fact, it was nearly supper time before Curtis saw him. Then he took down in shorthand the senator's terse expression of his opinion, and received from him a signed statement that he had given Curtis Dane an interview regarding the Marlitt affair.

The accommodation was not crowded and Dane had a seat to himself. He began to work on the story of his interview, but the roadbed was rough and after writing a few introductory sentences, he gave up the effort and returned his papers to his pocket.

"Just as you like, but I think you'll save time by going with me. You know there's often quite a delay at the tunnel." The train was stopping and there was no time for further consideration. Curtis sprang to his feet and followed his traveling companion out upon the platform.

"Just a minute," the stranger said, and left him to himself for perhaps double the time he had asked for. Then the two climbed into a rather shabby taxi, and started off at a rapid rate.

"Why, what are we stopping for?" "The other turned toward him. 'I want you to help me carry something out,' he whispered. 'It's all ready, but I don't like to trust him.' He nodded significantly toward the chauffeur.

"That's all right. We'll do a little talking first." "I've no time to do any talking." "Then do some listening. You've had an interview with Senator Howard today. You needn't deny it for I looked over your shoulder when you were writing on the train, and saw your start-off."

"How much will the Herald pay you?" Your expenses, most likely. Have you any objection to selling down a few hundred dollars for yourself?" "I tell you, you're wasting time—you and mine." "Listen! I'm not going to hurt you, but I'm going to have that interview."

mouth when he was seized and spun around like a top. He shouted for help, as the big fellow caught him by the arm, and relieved him of his coat so neatly that he hardly realized what was happening.

Curtis hit the opposite wall with considerable force. Then he climbed to his feet, feeling sick and shaken. The man had come across the senator's signed statement and with a little grant of satisfaction, he appropriated it.

"I'm not going to hurt you, sonny, but I'm going to tie you up until that interview appears. If we don't get it into the morning paper, we'll have it ready for the evening edition. After it has come out, I'll call for you."

The stranger did a businesslike job. In an astonishingly short time Curtis lay upon a bed in the back room, his feet tied together, and his arms plied behind his back. A pillowcase torn in strips was wound tightly over his mouth and knotted.

The bandage prevented Curtis from replying, but his eyes were eloquent as he glared into the mocking face. Then testing the ropes by a pull that made them cut deep into the wincing flesh, the man turned and went downstairs.

To attempt to loosen the ropes as he had loosened the bandage seemed useless. There was just one ray of hope in the situation. Downstairs Curtis had noticed a telephone on a small stand. To be sure there was the length of a hall and a flight of stairs between himself and the telephone, but the boy refused to regard this obstacle as settling the question.

He fully intended to go very slowly, but unluckily on the way he lost control of himself, and tobogganed to the bottom with uncomfortable speed. He allowed himself a minute or two for groaning, and then he sprang over to where he thought he had noticed the telephone stand.

"Hello, Operator, I'm shut into an empty house and tied. I don't know where it is, but you can tell from the telephone." Call up the Herald office and ask for Mr. Meade and say it's Curtis Dane. Tell him to save some front page space for the biggest beat of the year.

"The prisoner lost his self-possession and began to scream. When a master key was inserted in the lock, and the door swung open, half a dozen men entered, carrying flash lights and guns. Then some one turned on the electric lights and disclosed Curtis, bound hand and foot with his face close to the telephone.

One of the six men was Mr. Meade of the Herald force. 'It's young Dane, all right enough,' he exclaimed after one sharp look. Out those ropes before you question him."

Curtis did not wait for questions. "Mr. Meade," he cried, "I have the biggest beat of the year. I've had an interview with Senator Howard."

"Even then his victim's struggles were not quite over. A little time elapsed before he could convince Mr. Meade that he was not delirious, because of the rough handling he had received. The interview with the senator appeared in the morning edition, however, and ever since, as the young reporter hoped, that day's work has helped him in the realization of his ambition.

As no other paper contained the interview, Curtis considered it probable that the deciphering of his shorthand had proved too much for the thief. It is certain that the Herald's interview had put him on his guard, for he never came back to look after his captive, nor did Curtis ever see him again.

The Undermanned has received instructions from WALTER LAMBERT Lot 3, First Line, Erin, 1 mile north of Crossons Corners, 2 miles west of Acton, just off No. 7 Highway, to sell by Public Auction on

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 1930 at one o'clock sharp, the following: HORSES—1 Choice Pilly, heavy, 3 years; 1 Pilly, 3 years, roan, bred by Danot, a real one. COWS—1 Part Jersey Cow, 6 years, fresh; 1 Herford Cow, 7 years, bred last of August; 1 Grey Cow, 5 years, milking, bred four months; 1 Spotted Cow, 6 years, milking, bred three months; 1 Roan Cow, 3 years, milking, bred three months; 1 White Heifer, milking, bred two months; 1 Grey Heifer, milking, bred 8 weeks; 1 Red Cow, milking, bred 1 month; 1 Red Cow, milking, bred 1 Red Cow, due to freshen in January. YOUNG CATTLE—1 Pure Bred Short-horn Bull, 3 years, bred by D. Waldo; 2 Red Steers, 1,500 lbs.; 2 Red Steers, 700 lbs.; Steers and Heifer, 2 years old; 2 Holstein Heifers, well bred; Sleur and Heifer, rising 2 years; 4 Spring Calves; 4 Butcher Calves; Young Calf, Calf three months old. There are all well bred and in good condition. YORK HOGS—Young York Sow, with litter, bred by J. P. Robertson, and a prize winner; Young Sow, bred October 15; Young Sow, bred October 17; Young Sow, bred October 18; 2 Young Sows, bred October 20; 1 Young Sow, second litter, bred November 3; 7 Chunks, 80 lbs. These are a choice lot of Hogs and all J. P. Robertson's breed. Don't Fail to Attend This Sale if You Want Good Stock, and it will positively be Sold Without Reserve. If the Weather is Stormy the Sale can be Held Under Cover. Remember the Date, Time and Place. Tuesday, December 16, at One O'clock. TERMS—\$10.00 and under, cash; over that amount 10 months' credit will be given on furnishing approved joint notes, acceptable at the Bank of Montreal, Acton. 8% per annum off for cash. R. J. KERR, Auctioneer, Phone 36, Acton. C. O. PLANK, Clerk.

CLEARING AUCTION SALE IN ERIN TOWNSHIP CHOICE DAIRY HERD OF JERSEY AND HOLSTEIN COWS, HORSES, HOGS, YOUNG CATTLE

The Undermanned has received instructions from PETER HILTZ Lot 3, Third Line, Erin, 2 miles North of Acton, just off No. 7 Highway, to sell by Public Auction on

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12, 1930 at 1:30 o'clock sharp, the following: HORSES—Bay Mare, 8 years, 1,300 lbs.; 1 Mare, 4 years, 1,200 lbs. This is a real blocky team, and right every way. 1 Brown Mare, 13 years, bred every way, weight 1,400 lbs.; 1 Roanster Pilly, rising 8 years, bred by Danot, a real one; 1 Percheron Colt, 6 months old. COWS—Fawn Jersey, 6 years, milking well, and bred in June; Black Jersey, 5 years, due December 14; Fawn Jersey, 5 years, milking, bred May 20; Fawn Jersey, 4 years, registered, due December 18; Jersey, 6 years, fresh, with calf at foot; Holstein, 6 years, due December 20; Holstein, 5 years, due time of sale; Holstein, 6 years, milking, due January 20; Holstein, 6 years, fresh; Holstein, 7 years, fresh, with calf at foot; Part Jersey, 4 years, due January 15; Jersey Cow, due December 15; Durham Heifer, 9 years, fresh, calf at foot; Durham Heifer, due about January 20; Spotted Heifer, 3 years, due in April; 1 Roan Heifer, supposed to be in calf; 1 Red Heifer, supposed to be in calf. YOUNG CATTLE—3 Black Steers, 2 years old; 2 Red Heifers, 2 years old; 3 Durham Heifers, 1 year old; 6 Durham Calves, 6 months old. HOGS—10 Hogs, around 100 lbs.; 1 Sow, with ten pigs at foot; 8 Pigs, about 70 lbs. Don't Fail to Attend This Sale if You Need a Choice Dairy Cow. They are Right Every Way. Remember the Date, Time and Place, Friday, December 12. Positively No Reserve as the Proprietor is Short of Help. TERMS—\$10.00 and under, cash; over that amount 10 months' credit will be given on furnishing approved joint notes, acceptable by the Acton Bank. 8% per annum off for cash. R. J. KERR, Auctioneer, Phone 36, Acton. C. O. PLANK, Clerk.

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THE FREE PRESS Drive for new subscribers and extension of its service was completed last Saturday. It was but another step in the plan to give Acton and the district a newspaper service of the best possible kind. We felt we owed it to our advertisers to have THE FREE PRESS read in every home in the district and the necessary effort was put forth to make the accomplishment.

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THE FREE PRESS, Acton's home and community newspaper, is the best means of getting that message to the readers you want to interest. We lay no claim to being the best or greatest, but we will gladly invite comparisons. The improvements and growth have been steady accomplishments with the one thought of service to the community in mind.

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