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VOLUME 52. MILTON, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 1911. No. 24

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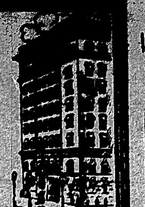
Reserve and Undivided Profits. 3,250,000
Total Assets 40,000,000



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COUNTY OF HALTON
LOCAL COURTS CALENDAR
FOR 1911

Place of Sitting	Day of Sitting	Hours of Opening	Jan.	Mar.	May	July	Sept.	Nov.	1912 Jan.	Mar.
Milton	Tuesday	10.30 a.m.	10	10	12	14	12	10	12	8
Oakville	Tuesday	12.30 p.m.	10	7	9	11	12	7	9	6
Georgetown	Wednesday	10.00 a.m.	11	8	10	12	13	8	10	6
Acton	Thursday	10.15 a.m.	12	9	11	13	14	9	11	7
Milton	Saturday	10.00 a.m.	14	11	13	15	16	11	13	9
Milton	Monday	11.00 a.m.	9	6	8	1	11	6	8	4

CLERKS—1. Wm. Fenton, Milton; 2. Arthur Hilliner, Oakville; 3. [illegible] R. J. McNabb, Acton; 5. Wm. Frazer, Campbellville; [illegible] Burlington.

[illegible] of the Peace and County Court Sittings, with or without Jury, 13th [illegible] commencing days at 1 p.m.

[illegible] Sittings without Jury, 4th April and 3rd October, and so often at other [illegible] required for the despatch of business.

[illegible] formerly Terms—9th January, 3rd April, 3rd July and 2nd October.

[illegible] Accounts, 5th January, 4th April, 4th July and 3rd October.

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Sunday Services: 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.
Sunday School and Bible Class: 2.30 p.m.
Epworth League: Monday, at 8 p.m.
Prayer Meeting: Wednesday, at 8 p.m.
Pastor's Class: Friday, at 7.30 p.m.
W. M. S.: First Monday of the month at 3 p.m.
Ladies' Aid: Last Monday of the month at 3 p. m.

KNOX CHURCH
REV. W. M. MCKAY, Minister.
Sunday Services: 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.
Sunday School: 2.30 p.m. Judge Gorham's Bible Class in Church at 2.45 p.m.
Prayer Meeting: Wednesday, at 7.30. p.m.
W.F.M.S. meets on the second Wednesday of every month at 3 p.m.
The Mission Band meets on the second Wednesday of every month at 4.30 p.m.

GRACE CHURCH
REV. G. MCQUILLIN, Rector.
Sunday Services: 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.
Sunday School: 4.30 p.m.
Holy Communion: 1st Sunday of each month at mid-day and 3rd Sunday at 8 a.m.

ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
REV. FATHER SAVAGE.
MILTON AND TRAFALGAR—2nd Sunday, 8.30 and 11.00 alternately; commencing 2nd Sunday of January with Mass in Milton at 8.30.

Travellers' Guide.

CANADIAL PACIFIC RAILWAY

GOING EAST.
6.57 a.m. (flag). 7.23 a.m. 10.26 a.m.
2.55 p.m. 5.30 p.m. 8.15 p.m.

GOING WEST.
8.43 a.m. 9.04 a.m. 3.33 p.m. 7.07 p.m.
8.25 p. m.

—SUNDAY—
West 9.04 a.m., 8.25 p.m. East 6.57 a.m., 8.15 p.m.

GRAND TRUNK RAILWAY
(H. & N. W. Division.)

GOING NORTH.	GOING SOUTH.
7.45 a.m.	4.45 p.m.
10.25 a.m.	8.35 p.m.

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THE

Paternoster Ruby

BY CHARLES EDWOND WALK

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At once the eyes were again the same blank windows whose scrutiny was so indeterminate. Burke let down the trap-door in the closet floor, and I paused awhile to admire how cunningly it had been designed. Although knowing it to be there, I could discern no trace of the aperture. We then re-entered the bedroom.

I observed a door in the wall nearest the front of the house, and seized with a sudden fancy to ascertain upon what it opened, went and laid my hand upon the handle. Burke's steady progress toward the hall door seemed to be aimed at diverting my purpose; realizing that he had failed, he turned and called aloud, staying my hand while it was in the very act of turning the knob.

"That's only the conservatory," his voice rang out; "it's empty—save for dust and cobwebs; there's nothing in it."

"Nevertheless, I have a fancy to explore it," returned I; and I opened the door.

A narrow passage was disclosed, across which was another door. Both swung open noiselessly, a circumstance which struck me, in view o' the fact that the conservatory was empty and unused, as being rather odd; and as I closed the second door behind me, I turned round as if to make sure the latch had caught.

The hinges had been freshly oiled.

A bay of glass, semi-opaque with dirt, occupied the space of the outer wall, and the glare from the dazzling snow outside brought out the whole interior with a sort of brutal vividness. A number of water-stained shelves; a few shallow boxes disintegrating and distributing their contents of earth over the floor; one or two crisp, brown, desiccated plant stalks; such was the interior of this apartment set aside and dedicated to flowers and bright growing things.

And it had been used infrequently as a passage-way, too. In the dust on the floor were footprints; some of them old, where later dust had settled, without quite obliterating them; some fresh, as if made but an hour ago.

As I came up to the next door I observed that its hinges had also been freshly lubricated, and was not surprised when it opened without a sound. When I stepped through it, I was in the curtained alcove off the library. Truly, there had been some secret, surreptitious flittings in this old mansion.

At that moment, in my abstraction, I was humming a little tune. I heard Stodger jovially speeding the departing reporters; and after the outside door closed behind the last of them, I shouted for him to enter the library. Our eyes met, and I indicated the secretary by the faintest of signs.

"Mr. Burke," said I, quietly, "will you please wait with Mr. Stodger while I have a few words with Mr. Maillot?"

The blank, pale face was turned briefly toward me—or Maillot—then the man bowed without a word, and followed Stodger. He paused an instant at the door, and looked across his shoulder at Maillot; enigma that he was, I nevertheless again caught a triumphant gleam in the tawny eyes. Then he passed on.

The fire on the wide hearth had been replenished during our round of the rooms; it was now blazing cheerily and doing its best to drive out the chill and the damp from the library; and it was a relief to get back to the easy chairs once more. I rested my forearms upon the back of one; but the instant the door closed on Stodger and Burke, young Maillot sank with a groan into a chair by the table.

"The devil! I'm glad you got rid of that fellow," he muttered. "He wears on one like the very deuce."

Now, during the last hour I had been sensible of a growing change in this young man; of a gradually increasing nervousness and apprehension,—as if I had all the time been pointing out little details, which he had previously overlooked and which were forming together, link by link, into a chain that would connect him with the tragedy. Up to the present he had concealed his thoughts only with an effort; but now his expression was become frankly worried and anxious; and as I stood silently regarding him, his agitation measurably increased. At last—

"For Heaven's sake, Swift, don't look at me in that way!" came in a sudden outburst from his tightened lips. "I know—I can see—now that I've had time to think it over—that the facts are damning. If I close my lips and refuse to make any statement at all, it will be equivalent to a confession. On the other hand—"

I waited, silent, motionless, without removing my eyes from his face. Some moments elapsed before he went on, during which he was patently exerting an effort at self-control.

"Swift," he at last continued, more calmly, "I'm well aware what your conclusions must be; the responsibility for that old man's death lies between—between that secretary fellow and me, any fool can see that. It's downright devilish to be one of two such alternatives; but if I tell you what brought me here last night—Swift, I just simply can't contemplate doing it!"

Again he paused.

"Take time, Maillot," I admonished, "but choose wisely."

"He lifted his head with a little jerk. "Give me a moment to think. I must decide, and decide irrevocably, whether to become as dumb as a graven image, or else take you into my confidence."

At this unfortunate instant there came a loud rap upon the door, which immediately opened to disclose the rotund form of Stodger, and behind him two slight figures in furs and veils, bearing into this desolate and gloomy old mansion a delicious flavor of young, dainty, pretty femininity.

"Miss Belle Fluette and Miss Genevieve Cooper—to see Mr. Maillot," announced Stodger, with all the absurd importance of a conscientious flunkey.

One, a tall girl in brown furs and with truly wonderful hazel eyes, came rapidly, gracefully, into the room, her companion following more sedately, and then stopped suddenly, as if petrified. She stood a moment—this haughty, handsome maid—a lovely picture of bewildered astonishment.

"Royal Maillot" she cried, "what ever in the world has happened to your eye?"

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CHAPTER VI.
An Extraordinary Errand

I fancy that in ordinary circumstances Mr. Maillot would have betrayed discomposure at the unintentional ridicule of this remarkably pretty girl's naiveté, and furthermore, that the fact of his not having done so at once perplexed and alarmed her. For a moment she contemplated his worried countenance in round-eyed bewilderment, and then glanced inquiringly at me.

Maillot, in a sober manner, presented me. The handsome brown-eyed girl was Miss Belle Fluette; the other was her cousin, Miss Genevieve Cooper. She, too, was strikingly pretty, but instead of brown, her eyes were a deep and wonderful blue. Her hair was wavy and had many of the bronze lights and shadows that lurked in her cousin's reddish tresses, although it approached nearer a chestnut shade than auburn. She was not so tall as Miss Belle, and was more reserved in her demeanor.

Yet, in her sidewise regard of Maillot, there was a humerous, shrewd appreciation of his damaged appearance, connoting worldly knowledge sufficient to ascribe it to causes not precisely complimentary to his sobriety. Both, however, were very lovely, and very jaunty in their turbans and veils and long fur coats, while their cheeks glowed and their eyes sparkled from the crisp wintry air.

Miss Fluette acknowledged the mention of my name a little distantly. She made me feel that she had already surmised trouble, and that she was disposed to hold me accountable for it.

Miss Cooper was more cordial. She was very gracious, in a quiet, reserved way, and the expression of her blue eyes was so congenial that I caught myself more than once attempting to steal a glimpse of her countenance without her observing me, only to be disconcerted by a candid and not at all shy regard.

"Can we not go at once, Royal?" queried Miss Fluette, doubtfully. "It is dreadfully warm and stuffy in here. Jepson is waiting with the carriage."

I understood clearly, of course, that my presence accounted for her constraint. More than likely she would have given much to have got Maillot away immediately; but he replied with a gravity that did not ease her mind:

"I'm afraid not, Belle—not for some minutes. Mr. Swift and I have to—to discuss Mr. Page's death."

Instantly her countenance reflected a deep concern.

"It is true, then, is it, that your uncle is dead?" she asked in a hushed voice.

His uncle! For the second time that morning I was staggered. Felix Page's nephew and Alfred Fluette's daughter sweethearts! One lying cold in death—murdered! Is it any wonder that I was stricken speechless?

"Don't look so astonished, Swift," Maillot was saying. "That is only a part of what I have to tell."

"But—Felix Page your uncle!" I marvelled, as soon as I recovered my breath. "Look here, Maillot, it's not often that I'm so thunderstruck; why haven't you told me this?"

"It's true," he said slowly; "he was my mother's brother. Neither of us was particularly proud of the connection—not enough to brag of it. I was meaning to tell you, though, Swift; it is an essential part of my story."

He wheeled a chair up to one side of the table for Miss Fluette and I made haste to perform a like service for Miss Genevieve Cooper; an act which she recognized with a slight smile and one of her friendly looks.

"Perhaps you and Genevieve had better get out of your wraps," the young man suggested to Miss Fluette; "because I want you to hear all I have to say to Mr Swift; it will take some time."

She was now genuinely alarmed, and the handsome hazel eyes searched his face with an apprehension and dread that made her love for him only too apparent. Most young fellows, I hazard, would court any peril for such a look from a girl as beautiful as Miss Belle Fluette.

And the blue eyes, too, mirrored anxiety; they turned to me in a quick, questioning glance. I tried to disregard them—to ignore the presence of these two pretty girls—and compose myself strictly to what Maillot had to relate. It was not easy to do, since Miss Fluette's attitude toward her lover left quite enough to be desired, but under the circumstances, I felt, it was the best I could do. Maillot, I guessed, understood that I was doing my utmost for him, and I proceed, somewhat, to my task.

First of all, though, both young ladies were anxious for an account of the tragedy—a task of which I relieved Maillot by running briefly the details as I understood them, but, of course, adding no comment that might be construed as an expression of my opinion as to who might be responsible. They listened attentively, but when I had finished, Miss Fluette turned to Maillot as if I were no longer in the room. I noticed that Miss Cooper's brow was gathered in a little frown—whether of perplexity or disapprobation I could not determine—and that she was looking fixedly at her cousin.

"Royal," said Miss Fluette the instant I was through, "is that—is Mr. Burke here?" Unless I was very much mistaken, the abrupt lowering of her voice which accompanied this question, the sudden narrowing of her eyes, betokened a strong dislike for the secretary. So, then, Miss Fluette was acquainted with him, was she?

"Yes, he's here," Maillot absently replied. Then a swift look—a flash of understanding—passed between the two girls.

Both pairs of eyes, the brown and the blue, avoided mine—in a studied effort, I fancied—when I glanced from one to the other to read further.

After all, I concluded, I was glad these two young ladies happened to be present.

"The object of my coming here last night," the young man at length began, "was known only to myself and Mr. Fluette, although I told Miss Fluette the bare circumstance of my intention. My mission would seem so absurd to any sane man, so utterly hopeless; it would be so impossible to bring any one else to look at the matter from my point of view, that my fear of ridicule stayed me from taking even her into my confidence. It was this:"

His voice dropped, and he had every appearance of one who speaks with the utmost reluctance.

"I came to ask my uncle for the Paternoster ruby," he announced.

I merely waited, neither stirring nor speaking; not so the two girls, however, who made no pretence of concealing their amazement.

"You asked him to give it to you" gasped Miss Fluette.

Maillot laughed bitterly, looking straight at me.

"I did," said he, as one convinced that he would not be believed in any event. "I not only asked him to give it to me—after having stated my reasons—but he promised to do so—this morning."

He seemed to measure our incredulity; to determine if its degree would warrant him in proceeding. My own countenance, I know, told him nothing; but it was obvious that the girls were assimilating his startling affirmations only with the greatest difficulty. I watched them curiously. They knew this young man perhaps better than any one else, and their fresh youthful faces were a clear index to their thoughts. Both were deeply troubled.

And now Miss Cooper, after a quick side glance at me, spoke. Her voice was remarkably sweet and soft, her whole attitude inexpressibly gentle.

"Royal," said she, "you are greatly wrought up; I think I know why; but take your time, and keep nothing back. The truth is not going to hurt you; lack of candor may be extremely harmful."

He responded to this appeal with a certain hopelessness.

"Swift," he bluntly asked me, "have you ever heard of that confounded ruby?"

I told him that I was pretty well acquainted with its history; but did not tell him that I was cognizant of Alfred Fluette's association with it. Neither did I say anything about my knowledge of the long-standing enmity between the two men. I had already received more than one hint that the causes of the tragedy were deep and powerful, whatever their nature—I would have to find this out for myself—and I was extremely curious to hear his story.

"Then you know of the contest several years ago in London for its possession," Maillot pursued; "how Mr. Fluette coveted it for his collection, and how my uncle thwarted his efforts to obtain it. Mr. Fluette is very determined, and when his purpose is once set, it is not an easy matter to change or sway it. He was bitterly disappointed, though he never ceased hoping that some day he should acquire the jewel; but knowing Mr. Page as he did, I believe he was in a measure reconciled to a conviction that he would have to wait until the owner died.

"As I have said, his failure to get the stone was a great blow—perhaps more so than you can imagine; and, besides, my uncle stepping in in the way he did and outbidding him seemed so like a bit of petty spite-work—dog-in-the-manger, you know—that he couldn't get over it. The stone cost my uncle a cool five hundred thousand; a pretty big price to pay for the indulgence of a personal grudge, isn't it?

"And now, Swift, knowing all this as I did—the strong aversion which each felt for the other—if I should come to you and tell you that I intended asking my uncle to give me his precious ruby for the purpose of passing it on to Mr. Fluette, wouldn't you think I had become a fit subject for a lunatic asylum?"

"Yes," returned I, calmly, "you say that you did this, and that your uncle assured you he would give you the stone this morning—promised after he had heard your reasons. I must admit that your present declarations are very extraordinary; perhaps they will not seem so after you've recounted all the circumstances." And I added a bit grimly, "I'm growing impatient to hear what moved you to come here last night at all."

Once more the friendly blue eyes met mine, and I felt better for the encouragement. But Maillot's look became momentarily apprehensive.

"You already know what my most cherished hope and ambition is," he went on, with a glance at Miss Fluette. Their frequent frank exchange of ardent looks would have made that ambition plain, had I not already been apprised of it. "I'm fairly well off by reason of a small inheritance from my father, and I'm just beginning to make certain my foothold in my profession; prospects as good as most young men can boast of, I don't hesitate to say.

"Our engagement, though, has never met the approval of Belle's father. But that fails to express it: he has been actively opposed to me from the very start. We had the support of Mrs. Fluette, however, and so remained hopeful—until one week ago to-night."

He paused, staring gloomily at the table; and both the young ladies now sat with downcast eyes and sober expressions clouding their pretty faces, fairly enveloping the young fellow in their silent sympathy. Lucky chap! Maillot should have stood a good deal, uncomplainingly, too, for their deep interest in his welfare.

He looked up in a moment and proceeded.

"At that time matters reached a crisis. Last Wednesday evening I called, as I had been in the habit of doing whenever I found an opportunity; and just as I was departing Mr. Fluette sent word to me to come to his study before I left. For a bit we thought he had relented, but on reflection I couldn't entertain the idea; so, much dispirited, I went at once to see him.

"He was walking up and down before the fire, and, further than to nod his head toward a chair in a curt invitation for me to be seated, he said nothing for several minutes, but continued to pace thoughtfully back and forth between me and the hearth, as if pondering the best means of opening his mind to me.

"At last he wheeled about midway in his promenade, and bluntly fired his first question.

"'Why do you continue coming here?' said he.

"The question stung me—of course it did; but I determined to keep my temper at any cost, and before I left, to find out at least one specific, definite reason why he didn't want me. I did, all right.

"Well, I laid my claims before him, pointing out that I was neither a pauper nor a criminal; I told him that Belle and I sincerely loved each other, and concluded by asking him whether he utterly disregarded his daughter's preferences in her choice of friends.

"'Far from it,' he replied. 'But I certainly interfere who nl think she is exercising bad judgment in such a choice.'

"All at once he leaned forward and rapped sharply with his knuckles upon the table-desk, before which I was sitting.

"'One thing you fail to take into consideration,' whether wilfully or not, I don't know, of course; but—to me—it is the most important factor of all.'

"And now, for the first time, I could see that he was not only possessed by a deep-stirring anger, but that he had been in a white-lipped fury during the whole of our conference. He went on:

"'You are Felix Page's nephew. I would rather see my daughter in her coffin—yes, a thousand times rather—than allied with a man who has a drop of that hound's blood in his veins. That, Mr. Maillot, is my final word.'

"These amazing words, spoken in a voice which trembled with passion, left me speechless. But presently I rose and bowed stiffly, utterly dumfounded by the intensity of his hate for my uncle, but nevertheless keenly incensed and mortified at the injustice he was doing me.

"What had I in common with Felix Page that I should meekly bow my head before the wrath of his enemies? Nothing whatever but that bond of kinship, to which neither of the persons most interested attached the slightest importance. Mr. Page had ignored my very existence—not that I had ever looked to him for anything, because I hadn't; but during all my struggles—through school, college, my efforts at establishing a practice—he never by so much as a word or sign acknowledged that he was aware that there lived anywhere on the face of the earth such a person as Royal Maillot. He had quarrelled with my mother shortly after my father's death—when I was only a kid—because she would not take charge of his household on conditions which would have been intolerable, and then he washed his hands of his sister and her child, I fancy.

"'Mr. Fluette, said I at last, since your objections are not worthy of a man of your intelligence and ideals, I choose to think, therefore, that you don't sincerely entertain them; they are grossly unjust to Belle and me alike.' But he wouldn't let me go on.

"'Young man, said he, in another wrathful outburst, 'I certainly admire your cheek—advising me—in my own house, too—as to my treatment of my own family!'

"For a second or two I returned his interrupted look, and then, resolved not to stand there handying words nor to be led into a quarrel with him, I said:

"'I'm sorry, Mr. Fluette—more than I can express—that you feel towards me as you do. Nobody could be more ignorant than I am concerning the matters of your feud with Felix Page—unless it is that you are visiting upon me the consequences of his opposition to you in the Board of Trade.'

"He turned this supposition with a scornful gesture. So I continued:

"'I am glad to know it is not that; I couldn't conceive of you doing anything so outrageously unjust. Could anything be more unfair,' I asked him, 'than to make me share all the animosities that Felix Page has engendered? Why, he is scarcely better than a stranger to me; my profound ignorance of his affairs is the best testimony that I can offer in my behalf.'

He paused a moment and tried to drive the distressed look from Miss Belle's face with a cheering smile. He failed to do so, however, and immediately proceeded with his recital.

"'Well, I failed utterly to move him; but you will be more than merely interested in what presently followed. Said he;

"'Admitting all that you say, you have brought forward nothing that is to the point; the one overshadowing unalterable fact remains that you are Felix Page's nephew. Prove the contrary to be true—satisfy me that you are free of that detestable blood taint—and you remove the last of my objections to you as a son-in-law.'

"He fell to pacing the floor again, and then presently he stopped and eyed me with a curious expression; I knew that he was turning something over in his mind. When he spoke, his words surprised and puzzled me not a little.

"'If you are so bent upon having Belle, he said, 'there's just one way you may go about getting her.'

"Considering what he had already said, it is no wonder that I did n't know what to say to this. I waited, and his next words betrayed the real cause—at least, I took it to be the real cause—of his bitterness and ill will. There was a sneer in every word.

"'Bring me the Paternoster ruby,' he said, 'and if, in the meantime, she has n't acquired some of the intelligence with which I have always credited her, why, you may take Belle.'

"After I got over being stupefied at the amazing effrontery of the thing—if accepted seriously—I began to do some pretty tall thinking, and I thought rapidly, too.

"'Is that a bargain?' I said at length.

"I spoke quite calmly and seriously, and he favored me with a surprised stare.' But he snapped out a curt reply.

"'It is,' he said. 'And I don't give a rap how you get it, either. I wish you success.'

"Was I cast-down and disheartened? Swift—good Lord!—words can't define my feelings. My disposition is sanguine, but when the blue devils once do get hold of me—well, I'm all in. I believe I suffer more in the dumps than any other living mortal.

"But somehow or other, that mad proposal stuck by me; it followed me persistently into the depths of my misery and colored all my hopeless cogitations—if only I could get my hands upon that bit of crimson glass! Great Scott, Swift! I believe, had I known where it was and could have gotten at it, I would have stolen it. Yes, sir, sardonically as it was advanced, the proposal to obtain the Paternoster ruby was not to be banished from my mind, and in a day or two I found myself weighing the chances of success.

"Well, the results in favor of accomplishing an undertaking so foolhardy were, even when contemplated in the most favorable light, exactly nil. And then there flashed into my mind a number of questions which—and I trust you'll believe me when I assert it—had never come to me before: Who was my uncle's heir? To whom, when he died, would the ruby go? Who, or what, was to benefit by all that vast wealth he was so laboriously piling up?

"Now I had—and still have, for that matter—good reasons for believing that I was the only living relative, and of course knew that if he were to die intestate the whole of his property would pass to me simply by operation of law.

"But suppose he had made a will—was it likely that I had been entirely ignored? The drawing of a will is a solemn matter to the party most concerned, and at such a time the tie of blood is apt to urge its claims in a still small voice—a mere whisper, maybe, but astonishingly pertinacious. Therefore, was Mr. Page so indifferent to his only living kin—all the common feelings of humanity so far evaporated from his heart—that he would remain deaf to that feeble plea?

"The end of this line of thought was a resolution to call upon my uncle, bare my heart to him, and then appeal to him on the strength of our relationship and his loneliness, to aid me. Without presuming that I entertained any expectations from him, still, if he meant to remember me at all, I intended to urge my present necessities as outweighing every desire and hope of the future.

"Hopeless? Crazy? Of course it was! But I never would have been satisfied until I made the effort. . . Belle, I want to smoke."

He paused, and producing a cigarette, lighted it. But as it was plain that he had not finished, his hearers were far too absorbed in his surprising recital to break in upon the silence. Miss Fluette had followed his every word with a light of love and sympathy shining in her hazel eyes, which was undoubtedly exerting an encouraging influence over the narrator; but Miss Cooper, I observed—covertly watching me, as if she would fathom my thoughts and read the effect which the story was producing there.

And right here let me say that at the moment I would have been hard put to it if suddenly called upon to define that effect.

First of all, Maillot had shown that he was keenly sensible of the serious nature of his position, and in looking forward to the incredible story he would have to tell, had realized that its entire trend would mean self-incrimination. As he himself might have phrased it, he was supplying me not only with a motive for the crime, but, from the time of his conversation with Mr. Fluette forward, with evidence which cumulatively inculpated himself.

So far, I had felt like one listening to a confession; as if all that I had already harkened to was but a preamble to the tragedy which was yet to follow. I may go still further: the thought occurred to me that he might be paying the way for justification of a deed of blood. Convinced that the responsibility for Page's death lay between himself and Burke, it would appear that he was adopting the only means of getting out of a bad hole.

Still I knew in my heart that the denouement of his recital had at best been only hinted at. Had he been under arrest, it would have been my duty to warn him that whatever he might say could be used against him as evidence. Yet I was bound to listen, to encourage him to talk, if he would; but I could not help considering the effect this story would produce upon the minds of a jury. I caught a wistful look in the blue eyes; and then I told Maillot something of what was in my own mind.

"I know it, Swift," he at once returned. "But I believe my only hope lies in placing myself unreservedly in your hands. I'm going to trust myself to your—'

A queer little sound from Miss Fluette—between a gasp and a sob—checked him. She got abruptly to her feet, and fixed such a look of aversion upon me, that I hope I may never again be the object of its like. It is decidedly unpleasant not to be in the good graces of so handsome a girl. The color ebbed quickly from her cheeks, her eyes widened and her lips trembled.

"Royal," she said brokenly, but with an effort at self-control, "does this—this man mean that you are suspected of—of your uncle's murder?" And all her feelings were compressed into the emphasis of that last word.

"Belle!" came in gentle chiding from Miss Cooper. "Don't! Can't you see that Royal is trusting to Mr. Swift?" Then she too rose; she passed round to her cousin's side of the table, drew a chair close up to her and sat down. She took Miss Fluette's hand into her own, and sought to draw her back into her seat, just as Maillot spoke up with a confidence and assurance for which I could not help but admire him.

"Suspect me!" he cried amazedly, dashing the remnant of his cigarette into the fire. 'Oh, figs! Of course he doesn't, Belle; but—look here: there are plenty who will. I want to make it plain that, in a way wholly unintentional on my part, I have got myself mixed up in a pretty bad mess, and then I want to make sure of Mr. Swift's cooperation in my efforts to extricate myself.

"My dear Belle,"—a gentle note crept into his voice,—"please consider the circumstances under which I came here last night; think of the tragedy which followed so swiftly; consider the story I have to tell, and then ask yourself, Who is going to believe it? God help us both, dear girl, but this thing has got to be brought out and aired in public!"

The fine brown eyes searched my face.

"Do you believe that Royal Maillot is guilty of this monstrous crime?" she asked me point-blank.

Before I had time to frame a reply, she once more sprang impetuously from her chair, her face flushed and her eyes sparkling with anger.

"Answer me, sir, do you believe that?"

I replied, then, calmly, if non-committally:

"As Mr. aMillot has said, I am of a disposition to help him out of a tight place, and I trust that his friends will not put unnecessary obstacles in the way of working to that end."

She said no more. Poor Belle Fluette! She was to have my sympathy more than once during the days that were to follow. Miss Cooper looked at me a little apprehensively, but I read confidence in her eyes.

"Let sir, Maillot proceed." I now said, "it is not fair to him to fell at this stage to hear all that he has to say, providing he really desires to continue. I want to ask one question, though, before you proceed."

"Well?"

I glanced meaningly at Miss Fluette. "Considering all the circumstances, can you confide in me with propriety—just now?"

To be continued.

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C. C. James told the Ontario beekeepers to work in co-operation with the consumer.