

Bovril sets you up

Every Man For Himself

By HOPKINS MOORHOUSE

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CHAPTER V. The Tan Satchel.

Ordinarily Hugh Podmore, secretary to the President of the Canadian Lake Shores Railway, took a keen interest in his work. If anything, he applied himself more industriously during the many absences of his chief than when President Wade was there to observe and commend, a zeal which might or might not have been a tribute to his conscientiousness. But to-day Mr. Podmore, although dressed with that care which habitually imparted to his well proportioned figure something of the beau brummel,—to-day he was not quite his customary polite self. Things irritated him which ordinarily he would not have noticed, and the morning had dragged for him in quite an unusual way. He had spent much time gazing absently out of the office window at the traffic in the street below, with many futile glances at his watch.

The first shop whistle that led the noonday medley found him pulling down the lid of his roll-top desk and he was reaching for his raincoat when his stenographer entered to inform him that there was a gentleman outside who would not take "No" for an answer. In no very gracious mood he snatched the card from the girl's hand; but the name meant nothing to him and he flung aside his gloves in resentment of the interruption.

"Show'm in," he growled, unlocking the desk and shoving back the lid with a bang.

The big young man who entered in answer to the summons enquired for the President. Everybody who came into that anteroom began the same way and Podmore tilted back his chair and appraised the other coldly, noting two things particularly—the young man's athletic build and the very marked discoloration of his left eye. Another job-hunter!

"State your business, please," "You will excuse me," said Kendrick, "but the matter is entirely personal between Mr. Wade and myself. Is he in?"

It was a little thing to arouse Podmore's ire. Ordinarily Hugh Podmore was an excellent secretary; but the caller's refusal to state his business or produce his credentials for inspection angered him. He was used to this extreme anxiety of visitors to see the Chief in person; it was a characteristic of the job-hunting crowd.

"The President's out of town," he said irritably. "Besides, he wouldn't see you until you had told me your business anyway. What do you think he keeps a secretary for?"

"To be civil to the public," said Kendrick evenly. "When do you expect him back?" and there was a directness in his look which Podmore found unexpectedly disconcerting.

"Hard to say. He's on the go continually. If your business is important—"

"It is important." "Then, if you'll give me particulars—," suggested Podmore, reaching for his memorandum pad.

"Be good enough to answer my question, please. When will Mr. Wade be in his office?"

"Sorry, but it's impossible to say, Mr.—he glanced at the card deliberately—Kendrick. If you are looking for a job—"

"I want to see Mr. Wade personally and as soon as possible," repeated Kendrick, keeping his temper with difficulty. "When will he be available?"

"He's gone on a trip—to the Hot Springs," snapped Podmore. "Come

back in a month or six weeks and perhaps you can see him then. Good day, sir."

For a few minutes after the big young man had bowed himself out with mock humility, Mr. Podmore stood fingering the card and frowning at the window. It was an engraved card, his fingers told him. He did not like feeling that he had made a mistake in any way; but that is precisely how he did feel. Yet he was sure he had never met this young man before, in spite of a certain familiarity of face that haunted him. Not being a regular reader of the sporting pages, he was at a loss to account for this, as he priced himself on his memory for faces.

With a shrug in dismissal of the inconsequential, Mr. Podmore went to lunch. He had comfortable quarters at the Queen's Hotel, just a block from the Union Station, and after a light lunch in the big dining-room he idled about the rambling old rotunda for an hour or more, smoking many cigarettes and attempting to read a magazine. The solicitous anxiety of his waiter during luncheon had earned that surprised individual a rebuke and cost him the usual tip; the friendly advances of a hotel guest, which ordinarily would have been met by equal geniality, finally sent Podmore up in the old-fashioned elevator to his room, where he locked the door and began pacing restlessly back and forth. Not until a sixth glance at his watch indicated the approach of 2 o'clock did his unusual fidgetiness begin to disappear; but when at last he walked briskly out of the hotel Mr. Podmore, to all intents, had regained his normal self-possession.

He went straight to the down-town offices of the Alderson Construction Company, arriving punctual to the minute of his appointment. Both Nickleby and Alderson were already there.

"Well, we're all here, Alderson. Are you waiting for somebody to open with prayer?" complained J. Cuthbert Nickleby with an impatient glance at his watch after the greetings were over. "I don't see why the devil you needed me here at all, Pod. Why all the ceremony?" The President of the Interprovincial Loan & Savings Company was a thin, sallow man with a thin, tight line of a mouth. The cynicism of his expression was chronic.

"Because you'd be the first to holler if anything went wrong," retorted Podmore, eyeing him pointedly, as he tilted his hat to the back of his head and proceeded calmly to skin the glove from his left hand. "We're all in this together, J. C., and that's why I insisted on your being here—to see that everything is according to Hoyle."

"Ain't getting cold feet already are you?"

An easy laugh was his. Podmore's only rejoinder to this insult. They both watched Alderson, who had swung open the door of the safe and was reaching into its depths. The contractor was stout and rosy, and his face was flushed as he rose, jerkingly from his knee and tossed a package of crisp bank notes to the table.

"Well, there 'tis, just as it come from the Interprovincial this mornin'," he remarked, and picked up his cigar from the edge of the safe.

"Look at the way he tosses it around, would you!" chuckled Podmore. "You could buy a bunch of peanuts with that package, Frank—a million bags at a nickel a bag." This was a hit at Alderson's fondness for munching peanuts, and Alderson's tenor laugh led the trio. Podmore picked up the package and riffled the bills carelessly. "Counted it, J. C.?" "Fifty thousand," nodded Nickleby. "That satchel come, Alderson? Thanks." Podmore held it up—an ordinary cheap satchel of medium size, tan in color, imitation leather and imitation brass catches. "I bought this, J. C., so that we'd have one that hadn't been tampered with and that couldn't be identified as belonging to any of us, you understand. All right, Frank, seal her up."

Alderson placed the package of bills in a large, strong blue linen envelope which he had ready to hand, and carefully gummed down the flap. Under the amused eye of Nickleby he proceeded to hold a stick of gray sealing-wax in the flame of a match and to daub this additional precaution upon the flap. The envelope was then placed in the new tan satchel, the catches snapped and the satchel locked over by Podmore, who thereupon walked over to the President of the Inter-

provincial Loan & Savings Company and handed him the key.

"That stays in your pocket till you get to Blatch Ferguson's office, Nickleby. You hand it to Ferguson personally," and again Podmore eyed the banker keenly. "Let him do the opening himself. All you're there for is to see that he actually gets this money, and that ends the transaction so far as we're concerned." He winked, and both the gentlemen laughed as if much humor underlay the remark.

"I will now proceed to put on our little private identification mark," continued Podmore with an air of having thought of everything, and he made a triangular scratch on one end of the satchel with his pocket-knife. "Good Lord, Pod!" exclaimed the financier with a laugh. "Is it necessary to have all this fuss over this thing?"

"Take all the chances you like when you're by the onesome, old man; but don't do it when I'm with you," said Mr. Hugh Podmore, smilingly unperturbed by ridicule. "It's the fellow who overlooks these very things that sometimes gets stung. It isn't at all likely, I'll admit, that the simple delivery of this money a distance of a few blocks requires all this 'fuss,' as you call it; but why take chances just to save a little trouble? Pays to play safe every time, J. C. What about that detective, Alderson?"

"Oh, that feller's on the job. Here, you can see'm standin' out there on the corner, waitin' fer our man to show up." Podmore followed Alderson to the window. "Naw, over there to the right—beside the post. Must be a good half hour since his office phoned he was leavin'." Say, he's lookin' up here. I'll give 'm the high sign now."

"Well, I guess everything's O.K., then. Call in your messenger and get a move on. I'm due at the depot soon to meet the Chief." Podmore dropped into a chair and lighted a cigarette with a look of satisfaction on his face.

Alderson leaned over and pressed a button. The young man who responded was James Stiles, bookkeeper and general office clerk. As he stood in the doorway, respectful enquiry in his whole attitude, pen in hand, linen office jacket sagging at the pockets, forearms encased in black sateen sleeve-protectors and a dab of ink on his fingers, there was little to distinguish him from hundreds of his type to be seen in modern offices. He had rather a pleasant face, Podmore thought, a little dull perhaps in its ingenuousness. He was not much more than a boy.

"Jimmy," instructed Alderson briskly, "drop whatever you're at and take this satchel over to Mr. Ferguson's office in the Brokers' Bank Building. It's got some mighty important legal papers inside an' I want you to be sure an' hand it personally to Mr. Ferguson himself. I told him I'd send 'em over right after lunch; so you

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don't need to say nothin'—just hand it to Mr. Ferguson, y'understand. Blatchford Ferguson, the lawyer,—you know where his office is."

"Yes, sir. Want me to ask for a receipt?"

"Uh? No, never mind a receipt. It'll be all right." The young bookkeeper picked up the satchel, nodding respectfully to the President of the Interprovincial Loan & Savings Company as he quietly closed the door behind him. He had been formerly employed at the Interprovincial; in fact, it was to Nickleby's personal recommendation that he owed his present position with the construction company.

The departure of Stiles with the satchel, of whose precious contents he had been kept in ignorance, was a signal for the separation of the trio in Alderson's office. With a wave of the hand Podmore hurried off towards the Union Station, and presently J. Cuthbert Nickleby made his way more leisurely to his waiting automobile.

On the corner opposite the building in which the Alderson Construction Company had its down-town offices the man from the Brady Detective Agency was lighting a fresh cigar. He sauntered around the corner, then quickened his pace to get closer to the briskly walking young man with the tan satchel. He continued to follow the bookkeeper at a convenient distance.

It was the season when those who have the misfortune to be confined to indoor tasks chafe most in the leash—a beautiful May day of blue sky and sunshine and balmy air that called insistently to open places of green grass and the luxury of idleness and vagrant dreaming. Young Jimmy Stiles felt the call and he skipped along with carefree enjoyment of his brief respite. He laughed gaily at a pair of dogs who seemed inclined to question each other's veracity and sent them scampering with a whoop, swinging the satchel around his head. He pulled down his vest, felt his tie and winked boldly as he passed a pretty girl. He broke into a whistle presently, practicing the latest rag-time air with an earnestness which

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found no ennu in repetition of tune, and it was while thus absorbed that he went by the Jessup Grill. He was well beyond the entrance before he realized that his name was being called and that somebody had darted out from the doorway to overtake him.

(To be continued.)

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