



Author of "Tiger Standish," "The Evil Chateau," Etc.

Published by Special Arrangement

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SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

PAUL MARVE, an eccentric inventor and genius, perfects an implement of war so terrible that he imagines he has the world at his mercy. But, being a fanatical lover of peace, he offers this instrument of wholesale slaughter to the League of Nations. The various delegates consider him a madman, and no attention is paid to the letters which he sends to the representatives of the Great Powers gathered in conclave at Geneva.

But SIR HARKER BELLAMY, head of the important branch of the British Intelligence, "Q-1," persuades the British Cabinet to have Marve over from Paris so that he may discuss his invention with various experts. Previous to this, the hero of the story, PETER RENTON, establishes contact with Marve and thereby meets the inventor's niece the heroine of the story—ELSIE NORRIS.

Another great power, Ronstadt, has had his eye on Marve, and it commissions a well known figure in the international underworld, PIERRE LAROCHE, to capture Marve at Dover and take him back across the water to Ronstadt, where he will be forced to deliver up his secret.

Laroche succeeds in his purpose by uncoupling the last coach of the train in which the inventor and his niece are being taken by Peter Renton to London, and they are imprisoned in a secret room underneath a houseboat.

Their plight, however, has been observed by Renton's sister, SUSAN, also in the Secret Service, who has been tracking them unofficially by plane. She discovers the secret room and taps a message in Morse to the prisoners.

On the way back to the plane to fetch help she is captured and carried off in a car.

Meanwhile the prisoners are interviewed by MAJOR OSCAR VON STALTHEIM, military attaché to the Ronstadtian Embassy, whose orders are to fly with them to Pe, capital of Ronstadt, there to interview Kuhnreich, the dictator.

There are papers to be signed, and the little fountain pen which the apparent "von Staltheim" takes from his pocket proves to be a tiny gas revolver which he uses on Laroche. The next moment pand-monium reigns.

(Now Read On) CHAPTER X THE ESCAPE

From the moment that Peter Renton, watching the man closely, had seen the supposed military attaché give him a wink, he had been on the alert. Consequently, he was not altogether surprised at the dramatic turn of events. His experience as a Secret Service agent told him that it was generally the totally unexpected that happened. And here, with sensation piling itself upon sensation, was yet another vivid verification of the fact.

Being on the alert, he had prepared himself for any emergency, with this result: When Kuhn, his hideous face distorted by rage and astonishment, rushed forward with the obvious intention of avenging the insult that had been paid to his employer, Peter had thrust himself in the way of the gigantic negro and, in the absence of any other means of offence, had rammed his right knee violently into the coloured man's stomach. Then, swerving aside, he had avoided the murderous knife thrust that the negro had made.

Kuhn overbalanced and, before he could recover his footing, the bogus von Staltheim had discharged another shot of deadly ammonia gas into his face. With a moan, the negro collapsed.

"Handy little thing this—people think it's a fountain pen," commented the man who had laid him low; "and now I have to give you my best thanks, Monsieur Renton."

The speaker had changed not only vocally but mentally and physically as he said the words. Here was a master-masquerader. From a hard-boiled, typical Ronstadtian, he had turned himself into a Parisian of the boulevards.

"You must permit me now to introduce myself," he went on. "I am Rene Jasquard of the French counter-espionage. You look surprised! I do not wonder—but there is no time to tell my story now. Later . . ."

Then Jasquard turned to address the other two.

"There is still much danger, I am afraid—so we must be cautious," he said in a low tone. "I do not know what is awaiting us above—but you must all, if you please, look as dejected as possible. Remember, you are supposed to be my prisoners; I am taking you back to Ronstadt, where you are to receive very rough treatment. Is it understood?"

"Oh, monsieur!" breathed the girl.

M. Jasquard frowned.

"You are looking like a saint who has been saved from damnation—no, it will not do; put on a look of complete dejection, please!"

"I will try."

"And now—" He pointed to the door. Moving cautiously, they found themselves at the bottom of the steps leading to the deck of the houseboat. The door of their former prison had been locked behind them. At the last moment a hand had reached—it seemed from Heaven itself—to rescue them from their peril. Was it to be wondered at that the hearts of the three captives were thudding as they started to cross the last barrier that lay between them and freedom.

As the supposed von Staltheim—going first—reached the deck of the houseboat, a voice rang out:

"Who is that?"

"Silence, you fool!" thundered the masquerading military attaché. "Hasn't your master told you who I am?"

The other hesitated.

"Those three are not supposed to leave the boat," he expostulated.

"Since you appear to have some doubt on the subject, go and ask Herr Laroche—he is down there."

As the man turned to go, the speaker put up his hand and seized the fellow's throat. A few seconds later the man collapsed on the deck.

"I was taught that trick by a Japanese Communist," remarked Jasquard. "But now we must hurry."

With the Frenchman guarding the rear, the little party safely reached the bank. Evidently Laroche had had so much confidence in his ability to deal with the situation single-handed that he had contented himself with taking only Kuhn into the prison room. The rest of his gang—with the exception of the man on watch—had been allowed to enjoy their sleep.

"What about your car?" inquired Peter, remembering what Laroche had said.

"I brought two cars—the first to act as a 'blind' for the second, and the chucking reply, Jasquard smiled more expansively: "You see, monsieur, there will be no waiting."

As he spoke a huge car drove out of the darkness and the driver got down from his seat.

"It all worked out very well, Monsieur Jasquard," he stated. "Directly the canaille from the houseboat showed up, Pierre in the first car drove off—as though the devil himself were behind. I myself waited as was arranged."

"Behold, the admirable Boncet," exclaimed Jasquard, introducing the speaker to his three companion. "But now—"

A minute later the high-powered car was eating up the miles between that lonely stretch of Hampshire and the Metropolis.

During the first part of the journey Peter listened in an absurd manner to the story that the French counter-espionage agent had to tell him. Apparently, Jasquard and the British agent Q-23 were not only close personal friends, but had been working together on the Marve case. Acting on the instructions of his superiors, Jasquard had been keeping an eye on the inventor and, disguised, had actually accompanied Marve to England. When news of the amazing incident at Headford Cutting had drifted through to the rest of the passengers on the train, Jasquard had instantly realized what had happened.

At this most interesting point, the Frenchman had broken off with a chuckle.

"Go on," encouraged Renton, but the other shook his head.

"I cannot tell you all my secrets, mon vieux," he returned; and so Renton was left to conjecture exactly what had happened between the time that Jasquard had arrived in London and—so marvelously disguised as the Ronstadtian military attaché—had turned up in the nick of time at that lonely houseboat on the River Hamble.

Disappointed at not having all his questions answered, Renton nevertheless derived some satisfaction from another source. This came from Elsie Norris. The girl had been sitting by his side during the talk between the French secret agent and himself, and before Jasquard had concluded his tale, Peter had felt a soft, warm hand slipping into his. He turned to look at her; she had the innocent expression of a child.

"How can I ever thank you?" were the words that he heard.

The touch of the girl's fingers on his evoked a medley of confused emotions. He knew now what he had been endeavouring to shut out of his mind for some time; he stood in considerable danger of falling in love with this girl whose presence in England had complicated so annoyingly the already complex situation.

This was sheer madness—a fellow working in his job had no right to allow his thoughts to dwell on any girl—and, moreover, he foresaw that in the days ahead he would have need of all his faculties. He did not want these clouded by any extraneous worries.

No sooner had he come to this de-

cision, than the car commenced to pass through the outskirts of a small market town.

"I must stop for a minute or two," he told Jasquard.

The Frenchman smiled.

"You wish to telephone your headquarters, of course?" He nodded. "I was going to suggest the same thing myself."

It took Peter several minutes to establish connection with Sir Harker Bellamy's private office at Q.1, but directly he had done so, he was rewarded for his patience.

"Yes?" growled the voice that he knew so well.

"Chief," he cried, "this is Renton. I have had a hell of a time—but everything is all right now."

"Thank God for that. Where is Marve?"

"He's with me—I'm bringing him to London. There's a Frenchman with us too—Jasquard."

He half expected Bellamy to snap at him, but no expression of criticism came to him over the wire.

Instead:

"Don't care a damn who you've got with you—as long as you get here as quickly as possible. I've had half the Cabinet turning handsprings to-night

and I shan't be sorry to get a little of my own back."

It was then that Peter asked the question which had been trembling on his lips for some time.

"Have you heard anything from Susan, sir?"

"Susan? No! Why should I have heard anything from your sister?"

Renton's heart sank. No sooner was one terrible danger averted, than another awful possibility loomed ahead. If Bellamy had not heard from Sue then it meant that something had happened to his sister. Good God, what? Had she been captured between the houseboat and her plane?

"I'll get back into the car, sir, and come as quickly as possible," he told his chief.

By the time the car reached Whitehall, there was not a more bewildered young man than Peter Renton in the whole of London. For one thing, he was still tortured by the thought that his kid sister had come an awful purlier somewhere or other. Then again, Elsie Norris was regarding him by this time as a sort of Sir Galahad, and the experience was very embarrassing.

But quickly action took the place of thought; directly the party had been ushered into the private room of Sir Harker Bellamy, the chief of Q.1 locked the door. Then, after nodding to the Frenchman, and saying "I am glad to see you, Jasquard—your people have been telephoning me about you—thank you very much for what you have done," he looked at Renton.

"Tell me as briefly as possible," he said, "exactly what happened."

When Renton had concluded his story, Bellamy shrugged his shoulders. "Well, it all turned out pretty well. It seemed," and turning to Paul Marve, went on: "I am instructed to offer you the sincere apology of the British Cabinet, Monsieur Marve, for the unfortunate occurrences of to-day. I hope that you will not bear us any ill-will . . . Good Lord!" he went on to exclaim, "What's the matter with the man?"

For the inventor, instead of replying, had slumped forward in his chair. Elsie Norris rushed forward, sank to her knees, and took one of her uncle's hands.

"Darling," she cried, "what's the matter? Are you ill?" Then she shrank back, for the inventor was looking at her as though she were a stranger.

"Keep away! Get away from me! I won't have you near me!" he shouted.

"Everyone is wanting to steal my invention—but no one will have it! I tell you no one will have it! It is buried here!" and he struck his forehead a violent blow with his clenched hand.

As was perhaps only natural, Bellamy looked inquiringly at Jasquard and his own agent.

"Is he normally like this?" he asked the latter.

Renton shook his head.

"No, he was perfectly sensible on the houseboat."

"Was he tortured there?"

"No. But perhaps the strain—"

"Yes—that must be it," summarized Elsie Norris. "It's the strain that has done this terrible thing to him. Oh! What shall I do?" she went on, turning to Renton with a look of appeal.

But it was not the young British agent but Paul Marve who continued to hold the stage.

He had now jumped from his car and was waving his arms wildly at Bellamy.

"You, too, are an enemy," he declared; "but I will beat you all—yes, I will beat you all!"

As though the recent outburst had been too much for his physical strength, the speaker now glared wildly around him and then tottered across the floor. Before anyone could help him, he had slithered to the carpet.

The three men stood looking at each other. Then Bellamy delivered his verdict.

"The poor devil's lost his reason," he said. "Now what shall we do?"

The Frenchman behaved with the characteristic courtesy of his race.

"I feel that I should not be here," he said. "Too long have I stayed already. I appreciate the courtesy you have shown me, Monsieur Bellamy, but now I must go. Perhaps you will be good enough to keep me informed of this poor man's condition."

"Certainly."

When the Frenchman had left them together, Renton turned to Bellamy.

"It's a case for medical attention, isn't it, sir?" Without waiting for an answer, he crossed to Elsie Norris and patted her on the shoulder. The girl's body was shaken with sobs.

"Don't worry—he'll be all right," he said, although he felt himself that the

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words were almost empty of meaning. "Yes—I'll ring up Sir Robert Perceval," replied Bellamy. It was an hour later. The stricken inventor had been taken to a West End nursing home and Elsie Norris had been accommodated at an hotel near-by. The night's work, so far as Peter was concerned, was practically over. Yet he still stayed with his chief. "It must have been Susan sending me that Morse message," he stated; "and where the deuce is she now?" Bellamy opened a drawer and pulled out a sheet of paper.

"I told you over the phone that half the Cabinet had been worrying my life out," he stated. "Here is a message which was delivered at 10 Downing street for the Prime Minister whilst the meeting was in progress."

He held it out to the young man, who read:—

My dear Prime Minister: This is just a line to let you know that a certain person by the name of Paul Marve is now in my hands. You can inform Sir Harker Bellamy that I shall take good care that he remains in such safe keeping—I am, your obedient servant, Pierre Laroche.

Renton knew why Bellamy had given him this note. It was the easiest way of telling him that he believed that, whilst one captive in the person of Paul Marve had escaped, the ex-priest had secured another.

And, merciful God, that other one was Sue, his sister!

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Literary Digest:—A young negro of Louisville, Kentucky, who went to the city dump to salvage junk to buy himself a bicycle, returned \$450 richer. The roll fell out of an old coat.

New H. S. Teachers at South Porcupine
W. S. Blake to be Supervising Principal of Both the Schumacher and South Porcupine High Schools.

New appointments have been made to the South Porcupine High School, it was announced last week. W. S. Blake, principal of the Schumacher High School, is to be principal of the South Porcupine school as well, and will teach English subjects in both places.

Miss Myrtle Lucas continues in charge of Lower School work at South Porcupine and will teach girls' physical training. Ralph Ellis, who comes here from Brooklin Continuation School, will teach mathematics and science. M. Mulcahy, formerly of Penetanguishene High School, is to teach English and will have charge of boys' physical training. Miss Dorothy Wilkins, who has had considerable teaching experience in England and France, will be in charge of French and art.

Schubert Choral Society to Meet This Evening

The Schubert Choral Society will hold its opening meeting on Monday evening, August 31st, and not on Tuesday evening as mentioned in last Monday's Advance. All members, and those who would like to become members, are urged to be present at this most important meeting to make plans for a bigger and better season than ever. Don't forget—Monday night, August 31st, in the United Church!

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