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# THE SECRET OF PAUL FARLEY

— BY — JOHN MARCH (AUTHOR OF "A CHILD OF MANY PRAYERS," ETC.)  
Supplied Exclusively in Canada by The British & Colonial Press Service, Limited.

## CHAPTER IX. A Turning Point

With a choking cry in his throat Paul staggered back against the friendly trunk of a tree, his face cold, his forehead damp, his mind full of horror at what he had seen. Stifled by the thick atmosphere of dread he was afraid to inquire, almost to imagine, how the fearful catastrophe had come to pass.

"I told him I hated him. I said he had been a plague and a nuisance to me all my life, and I wished he were dead!"

Judith's passionate careless words came seething and surging around in wild chaotic tumult until the awful truth had penetrated every corner and cranny of his brain. Paul, despised, rejected, miserable, god-damn'd past endurance, had chosen what seemed to him in his agony the only way of laying aside a burden too heavy for his young shoulders.

"You mustn't take this too much to heart," Felix said, with a kindly sympathetic pressure on his arm. "Tell me," he gasped, "is it—?" His voice failed him, only his quivering lips framed the word "suicide."

"Hush!" Felix whispered, looking around about through the glimmering indistinctness, and raising his hand to impress caution. "It was an accident, he is still alive, and please God he will live to be a hale old man. I want help, I want medical aid, I want you to warn Agnes. He must be taken to the Manor—the nearest place. I can carry him; have you a nerve to run on ahead and tell Agnes? Get a doctor from somewhere, and, remember, Farley, it's an accident, one of those unfortunate, deplorable, unforeseen, accidents which will happen at times in spite of all precautions."

City-bred and bred, custom and habit gripped him fast. He hesitated, looked through the gloom, and savoured. The thought, however, that life might be slowly ebbing from that long, slim figure on the ground acted like a potent cordial and sent him rushing along the zigzag, spongy foot-path till he reached the clump of scrubby, dwarfed trees and the welcome yellow gorse. Once across the open field and the high road he was within the radius of light from the parlor window, and he was able to see Agnes pour out a cup of coffee and rearrange a little tasty dish Rose had placed on the table.

"Agnes," he said, going over to the decanter and mixing himself half a glass of brandy and water, "there has been an accident in the plantation, and—"

"To whom—not Felix?" she asked, growing white.

"No; to Anthony. It was an accident, Agnes, you understand, an accident Felix is bringing him here. Who and where is the nearest medical man?"

His lips were tightly compressed, his great eyes glittered in the lamp-light. He was holding himself superbly in check, and spoke with preternatural calmness.

"We have no doctor nearer than East Weyberne; you can't go that distance to-night. You are too upset; you are not fit. I shall send Rose down to Deham's cottage to tell him to go."

"No, Agnes," he said, decisively; "I'll go myself. Pelham's life may depend upon opportunistic surgical aid. An empty-headed, drinking do-it-like-Deham is as likely as not to visit the 'Goose and Gridiron,' and forget all about the doctor. Besides, I must bestir myself; I couldn't bear to be inert when so much hangs on the passing of each moment. Tell me the man's name and I'll bring him back with me if he's above ground."

"Hunter—Dr. Hunter," she said; "but should he be called out there's a Mr. Snell, who—"

He gulped down the spirit, and disappeared before she had finished speaking.

After twenty minutes of alternate running and walking, he heard the sound of wheels behind him, and, looking back, distinguished the outline of a man driving a thorough-bred, which even at that distance appeared to possess a great deal of action. It was a dogcart he perceived, a high, solid, useful vehicle, carrying a second man lolling with folded arms at the back of it, and in a few seconds they had overtaken and slowed down beside him.

"Hello, there!" the driver exclaimed. "Are you Anthony Pelham?"

"No," he answered, twisting around and peering intently into the man's face; "do you know him? Are you a friend of his?"

"Yes to both questions," the man said, laughing. "I've just been to Weyberne Lodge, and found him out. When I saw you in the distance I thought I had spotted my man."

"Will you tell me your name?" Paul asked.

"My name? Why, John Hunter." "Are you Dr. Hunter, of East Weyberne?"

"Certainly; I thought everyone for miles around here knew Jack Hunter."

"Then, for Heaven's sake, turn back to the Manor House and drive like the devil," he said, springing onto the step and scrambling into the vehicle. "I suppose you were on your way for me?" the doctor remarked, backing into the hedge to turn around, and hooking the leather apron over Paul's knees.

with a gun accident." "How long back?" "I don't know—an hour, a year, perhaps ten; I haven't been able to keep count of time."

"Pelham is a friend of yours?" "Yes. For goodness' sake drive a little faster."

Dr. Hunter cracked his whip, curling the lash around the shoulders of his powerful, energetic steed, and they sped along the turnpike at a reckless rate.

"Anthony came around to me the other morning to ask for a pick-me-up, and said he had a fit of the blues," the doctor remarked, wishing he had given the matter more consideration at the time. "I didn't like the look of him—he's been losing flesh much too rapidly; neither did I like the expression in the boy's eyes, so I thought as I was passing the Lodge to-night I'd look in and see what I could make of him. How long have you known our mutual friend?"

"Some few weeks now," he returned, shortly. "Oh, well, come, you can't be such tremendous allies! I've known Anthony all his life. Five and twenty years ago I was present on an interesting occasion, that is to say when he first opened his blue eyes on the comical old world. Twenty-five years ago! Good gracious! I lay abed this morning in a comfortable half-drowse, making business plans for to-day, philosophizing and speculating on the probability of the next twenty-five years. 'Jack,' I said to myself, 'you came to East Weyberne as assistant to old Bayles at the age of twenty-five, and you've plodded steadily and soberly along through fair weather and foul for another good five and twenty years. Therefore, two-thirds of a quiet happy busy life have slipped past, the years bringing with them the need for which we have toiled. Now, Jack, my laddie, another twenty-five will carry you beyond the span allotted to man, and in spite of your robust health, your firm, fresh face, and your agile limbs, there's not a portion of the last third you can stake a small bank note on—not on what you may fairly call your own. To me, you know, I can't account for the insane feeling, it may be sheer vanity, but to me there is infinite grimness and pathos in having lived half a century. Age begins then to steal like a sad twilight over one's figure, and writes unwelcome legible records of sorrow, worldly selfishness, and hypocrisy, as the case may be, no less volens, across one's countenance. I expect you are inwardly cursing the hippish moralizings of a garrulous old toady—eh, young man?"

"I beg your pardon, I didn't hear what you were saying."

"I'll be bound you didn't. I've seen folk in trouble before. Now, if you'll excuse me, I'll tell you something. I am afraid, with those eyes and that mouth of yours, you have the capacity for suffering abnormally developed. If I am not greatly mistaken, you are the kind of individual to deliberately cut and lash yourself, rub the wound with salt, grind your teeth with the smart of it, and continue to repeat the operation at intervals. You are stubborn of purpose, too, young man. You are the sort to take a whim, a quixotic idea, and go through life in headlong fashion with it, suffering untold agonies, until your heart breaks at last beneath its own weight of penitence."

"I hope and trust you are wrong, doctor," he said with a little shiver. "I should be unhappy and ill at ease if I thought I was predestined to break my neck in riding a hobby too near the edge of a social precipice."

"Ah, no doubt, we hope to do well. We trust we intend to be virtuous. But then hell is paved with good intentions. Still, I'm not exactly a seer, and forewarned, you know, is forearmed. What's that on the road?" he added, as they neared the Manor; "your eyes are younger than mine."

"It's Mr. Fleming; I know by his extraordinary height."

"Ah, Felix Fleming!" Dr. Hunter repeated, "the prince of good fellows; if ever you and I meet again, my lad, I'll tell you a story worth hearing of this same Felix Fleming."

He threw the reins to Paul, looked over his shoulder and said "Dick," jumped down and walked quickly through the garden with Felix. The necessity for further exertion, the need to curb his strong emotional nature, having all at once subsided, Paul's mood changed.

He entered the parlor by the glass doors with a lagging step, looked around the empty room with a sinking heart, and shivered from head to foot. The rambling old house was unaccountably quiet, no sound of life broke the stillness in the low, winding passages, nor in the room above him. He paced the dingy carpet for what seemed to him an eternity, until the slamming of a door somewhere overhead set every nerve in his body tingling.

He went out to the steps to listen, and turned his dark, anxious face to the grey mass of drifting clouds hovering above the house like a great brooding human trouble. Little soft gusts of homeless night winds cooled his forehead and the fever in his veins, and in a measure calmed the tumult of doubt and confusion in his busy brain.

Hark! There were low voices and delayed footsteps in the stone passages. Felix was speaking, and the doctor as punctuating his sentences with little running comments. "I'll come with you to the gate," he heard Felix say, and they passed on and were out of earshot before Dr. Hunter

spoke again. "I say, Fleming," he said, as if the thought had just darted into his mind, "who's the young fellow I picked up on the road all nerve and fire and fine feeling?"

"His name is Farley, Sir Thomas Hargrave's secretary. He was with me when I found Anthony. Why?" "Because—well, it seems a strange thing for a man of my years to say, but that boy just beginning life is perfectly familiar to me. Blame it!" he muttered, taking off his hat, and wiping his head with a yellow bandana. "I can't for the life of me understand, unless—Look here, Fleming, when I was a young fellow walking the hospitals I lodged at Notting Hill for six months, and shared the sitting room with this boy's double and I can assure you never until to-night have my salad days been so vividly recalled. There are those same wonderful eyes—I used to fancy the fellow's soul was sitting behind those great dark windows patiently waiting for something the world could not and would not give—there's the same oval clean-shaven face and mobile mouth, now weak, now obstinately tenacious, the same temperament, too, artistic and sensitive. My friend—he would be about my age now—was a musician, he was great on the violin, he had a valuable instrument, a Guarnerius or a Cremona, a genuine thing whatever it was; he used just to cuddle the thing under his chin, lay his cheek on it, and the old masterpiece quivered and thrilled with melody."

"Jervois earned a goodish bit in those days by playing in the orchestra of various London theatres. I lost sight of him when he went to America, although I believe he visited Europe once or twice afterwards as a celebrated violinist."

"What was his name? I didn't catch it."

"Jervois," he said, "Miles Jervois. Whether he is dead or alive, whether he ever married or lived a bachelor, like myself, I can't remember; all I know is that this young Farley is a reverberation of him, an echo of thirty years ago or more."

"Assuming that this Miles Jervois had a son in existence, in all probability he is no more like his father than the man in the moon. Faithful family likenesses more often skip a generation or two, and perhaps once in a lifetime you'll meet with a queer, unaccountable riddle like this one."

"Where does he come from?" the doctor asked. "New York."

"Ah! I wonder if he has heard the name of Jervois?"

"I'll ask him," Felix said, wringing the doctor's hand; "good-night."

He lingered a moment at the gate, and looked down the road in the direction of the Hall, an absent, far-away expression in his eyes.

"By Jove!" he muttered, awakening from his short reverie and striding towards the house. "Farley's on tenterhooks in the parlor, of course."

He found him standing in the entry paler than usual, listless and depressed.

"Come in here," he said, putting a hand on his shoulder and guiding him back to the parlor.

They stood upon the hearthrug, Paul with one foot on the steel fender, an elbow on the chimney-piece, and Felix with his hands under his coat tails.

"He's not dead," Paul said, "or you wouldn't look as you do."

"Dead!" he repeated. "No, nor yet, I trust, likely to die."

Paul's lips quivered, his forehead contracted, tracing a vertical line between his black eyebrows.

"I wish I had come to you before," Felix said, "I might have guessed you were brooding alone, and dwelling on the ugliest aspect of the case. By the way, what business have you with an upright line at the top of your nose?" he added, trying to smooth out the offending crease with his broad thumb.

Paul smiled, took off his eyeglasses, and fingered the spot.

"How is Anthony?" "Capital!" Felix answered with energetic warmth. "That is to say, we've got the bullet and he stood the operation well. It's a clean flesh wound, and so far as one can judge, there is small danger of complications. If all goes well he will be able to be moved in a week or ten days."

"I suppose Miss Fleming is with him?" "Yes, and Mrs. Pilgrim. Rose has gone to Weyberne Lodge for his valet; he may be of use in the night."

"Won't you have a trained nurse?" Paul asked.

"To-morrow, perhaps. I shall do whatever Lady Hargrave wishes. She has advised and superintended Anthony's domestic arrangements ever since he was a motherless little chap of seven. I hope to goodness they won't get wind of this at the Hall to-night. Lady Hargrave may just as well have her night's rest undisturbed. I shall go for her the first thing after breakfast."

"And Miss Hargrave?" Paul suggested. Felix Fleming's face hardened. "That young person's caprices do not concern me," he returned harshly. "What can Judith have said or done to have taken the hope, the zest, the desire to live from a promising, prosperous young life like Anthony's?"

Paul looked at his varnished boot on the fender.

"Is she so much to blame?" he asked. "What of myself?"

Felix looked him over from head to foot, at the great earnest eyes awaiting his verdict, and wondered whether after all there were not extenuating circumstances to be advanced on Judith's behalf.

"I'm not going to censure you, Farley," he said, smiling. "I've heard enough to be convinced that it was enough to plain, fair sailing on your part. Anyway, as it is, you've had a bad quarter of an hour, and probably suffered more than Judith would in a year."

"I am not so sure of that," Paul said slowly. "It was Miss Judith's intention to treat the past as a bad dream. I am satisfied she fully meant to ask Pelham's forgiveness and engage herself to him, if he were still willing. Just think of it, Mr. Fleming, as she

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remarked, it was not a pleasant thing to do."

"She told you this herself?"

"She came to me in the library after dinner this evening to—"

"To see if you were in the mood to propose," Felix supplied sarcastically. "No, to discuss the unpleasant position of affairs. We reasoned the thing out together, and eventually she saw the folly, the uselessness, the cruelty of her attitude towards Pelham. She was anxious to rectify the wrong and be back again on the old familiar footing."

"You persuaded her to this?" "Hardly; perhaps something of what I said helped to influence her decision. At all events, I am confident that had Pelham's patience held out a few hours or a day longer, had he faced the situation with more resolution and not reached the cross-roads so soon, there would have been an end to the estrangement between them. Everything was in his favor had he known it. To-morrow would have brought him health, hope and happiness, and brought it exactly in the way he craved."

Felix Fleming's hand descended heavily on Paul's shoulder.

"You're a good fellow, Farley!" he exclaimed, his grey eyes sparkling "a downright good fellow, I like you," he said, impulsively. "I like you—body, soul and character."

They both laughed, and shook hands with a long, hearty, lingering clasp.

"We'll have a wedding up yonder as soon as old Anthony is well enough," Felix remarked, an anticipatory festive smile lifting the ends of his moustache, as he hunted about for his pipe.

"I hope so," Paul rejoined fervently. Felix looked at him sideways, and suppressed a chuckle.

"Why such fervor?" he asked; "are you afraid Judith will have a relapse?" "I don't fear that," he said, watching Felix light his pipe. "If I read Miss Judith aright, I think this shock will steady her self-balancing power, but really I think I shall feel a certain relief when she is safely married. I would so much rather be domiciled where there were no unmarried daughters; there would be less strain on both employer and employed."

"Don't smoke that rubbish," Felix said, watching him open his cigarette-case to make another selection; "have a pipe, a nice, clean, wholesome pipe. I've a drawer full of perfectly new ones; you are welcome to all or any—its not a case of Hobson's choice."

He took a bunch of keys from his coat pocket and unlocked a narrow walnut cabinet.

"Which will you have?" he asked, "meerschaum, cherry wood, briar, or churchwarden clay?"

"That little cherry wood, with the silver band," he said, taking the pipe in his hand, and examining it critically.

"Somehow, it's rather a wonder to me, Farley, you didn't reciprocate Miss Hargrave's feelings," Felix said, relocking the drawer, and tossing his tobacco pouch to his friend. "She's considered a remarkably pretty girl, and she's really a nice girl, too!"

"Yes, she's pretty, very, in a way, but if she wants unalloyed admiration she must not remain in the same room with Miss Fleming, or, indeed, anywhere in her vicinity."

"You think my sister the prettier?" Continued on page 7.

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n esteemed subscriber at Stenan, Sask., Jan. 12, says: "We are having a cold wave at present, it being sixty-two below this morning, being one degree colder than any day last winter.—But of course you don't feel it. There is quite a lot of threshing still to be done."—Flesherton Advance.

You will miss one of the treats of the season if you fail to attend the box social in the Hall, Holstein on February 5th.