

THE MAGIC BILLIARD BALL

BY EDMUND SMITH MIDDLETON.

In the lull of an August afternoon Shaman Tuloc sat within the shaded doorway of his little shop; contemplatively smoking. From time to time a thin brown hand slowly stroked his long gray beard while his dark, melancholy eyes looked far away into the distance.

Presently a shadow darkened the doorway, as a well-dressed stranger halted uncertainly and gazed curiously within. The old merchant rose courteously and with a wave of his hand extended a silent invitation to enter. Seeing that the stranger still hesitated, Shaman said in a tone devoid of eagerness, "Would the gentleman care to step in? It is not necessary to buy."

An air of distinction in the old man's bearing, scarcely expected in such surroundings, excited the stranger's interest, and with an appreciative "Thank you, if you don't mind," he entered.

The merchant noted the young man's eyes as they swept over his wares with half-observant gaze, and saw that his face wore the unsatisfied expression of one who seeks something greatly desired.

"It is not merchandise the gentleman seeks to-day," said Shaman with kindly interest, continuing to search the other's face with his far-seeing eyes.

"Are you a fortune-teller?" asked the stranger eagerly.

"Not in the ordinary sense, my son," answered the aged merchant solemnly, "but much of the wisdom of the East is mine, and I have known the hearts of many men."

"If you help me," burst impulsively from the other's lips, "you may name your own price."

"I am listening, my son," responded Shaman with dignity, apparently unmoved by these glittering promises.

"My name is Philip Arden," began the young man in quick, excited tones, "and I am what people call rich. My lot had been different, with my own way to make, I should doubtless have become a gambler, as the gam-

ing instinct is strong within me. At times I am consumed with a perfect fever; to excel at games involving chance and skill."

"Why do you tell this to me?" demanded the old man.

"You shall see," answered Arden, meeting his glance fairly. "Being wealthy, the gambler's love of gain does not appeal to me. Instead, I have devoted myself to games of skill, playing as an amateur with men of my own class. After making a fad of one game after another, I have settled upon billiards, to which I have devoted myself, heart and soul, for two years."

Just then a soft rustle of silk in the back of the shop, a sudden trembling of awning curtains, and a quickly caught breath bespoke a listener in those regions. Shaman Tuloc never turned his head, although he heard Arden was too absorbed in his story to notice. One look at those curtains would have disclosed a pair of peering eyes that shone like midnight.

"Go on," said the merchant, calmly stroking his beard. "There is yet something to tell."

"No lover could have been more devoted to his mistress than I to my favorite game. I wooed her early and late, playing my way up through the ranks at the club, until last spring I defeated the strongest men and was hailed club champion. But alas! my joy was short-lived."

"Your hand lost its cunning?" suggested Shaman Tuloc.

"No, not so. A more subtle hand than mine entered the lists," explained Arden with a touch of bitterness in his tone. "While my laurels were yet fresh, a stranger joined the club, a tall, slender man, with sallow skin and coal-black hair, which parted over a narrow, contracted forehead. His black, beady eyes were set close together over a long hooked nose, and his thin lips were shaded by a scanty black mustache. They say that those ratty weasel-like eyes could look into the shining depths of any jewel and rightly prize its worth. Enough for me that he could play billiards like a fiend. His long slender hands controlled the balls like a magician. He defeated me once, twice, thrice—each time worse than before—in a word, ignominiously. Let me vanquish him! Help me to defeat him!" cried Arden, moved to the depth of his being, "and I will give you what you like."

Shaman Tuloc smoked a while in silence, then rose from his seat and drew a small casket from a secret recess in the rear of the shop. The box was of fragrant sandalwood, wrapped with cords and sealed in many places. Carefully removing these, he disclosed a small bundle of numerous layers of fine silk, concealing some object within. Very reverently the old man unwrapped the silken folds until there lay uncovered in his palm a small cylinder of ivory of wondrous quality, and without spot or blemish.

"My son, you behold a portion of the tusk of the Sacred Elephant of Siam, the most sacred of the holy herd. He went into the silence at the age of two hundred years and this relic possesses a mighty power. Listen to the words on the scroll. I will interpret." As Shaman Tuloc spoke he lifted from the casket an oriental scroll and reverently held it toward the light.

"To the pure and single of heart," he read in a low voice, "I will grant his wish."

"I will give any price, fulfill any conditions," exclaimed Arden in a choking voice, his whole form trembling.

"Look! What do you see?" the old man suddenly demanded, holding the ivory above his head.

"Only the ivory, nothing more," the young man answered.

"Look again!" cried Shaman Tuloc eagerly. "Look at the centre! What do you see now?"

"I see a delicate pink light shining through the ivory," answered Arden excitedly. "It seems to move and tremble like a rose swaying in the breeze."

"It is the soul of the sacred tusk," cried Tuloc triumphantly, "the spirit, the life. Therein lies the power!"

"What am I to do? Tell me!" demanded the young man.

"Bring from your club the finest ball you have. My hands shall fashion its mate in size and appearance from the sacred tusk. I will intrust the task to no other. In a week's time you shall have a ball endowed with the living spirit of victory."

That same evening Arden brought from the club the desired model, and the next day Shaman Tuloc began his self-imposed task. As he wrought, his labor of love patiently, silently, with reverential skill the slender, graceful form of his only daughter glided often through the parted curtains and hung over her father's shoulder with moist eyes and heaving bosom. More than once a rosy blush suffused her modest cheek as she recalled the young stranger's face and trembling voice. Then she murmured a silent prayer for her father's task and for the young man's victory.

On the eighth day the ball was finished, and to the instructed eye seemed to throbb visibly with sentient life, as it lay, white and glistening, in the magical casket.

"Take it, my son," said Shaman Tuloc, committing the box to him. "Let no other hand than thine use this sacred ball. Let no other interest divide your heart. Then victory will attend your quest."

The report that Arden was to play his conqueror again filled the club house. An indefinable feeling was in the air that this game would possess unusual features—that it was a strife for mastery to an unusual degree.

The two men presented a remarkable contrast as they stood in evening dress at the end of the table ready to

NURSES

The Toronto Hospital for Incurables, in affiliation with Bellevue and Allied Hospitals, New York City, offers a three years' course of training to young women having the requisite education and desirous of becoming nurses. This hospital has adopted the eight-hour system. The pupils receive uniforms of the school, monthly allowance and travelling expenses to and from New York. For further information apply to the Superintendent.

begin. One was the picture of cold, nervy cunning and calculation; the other, the best type of a gentleman player, brave, generous, skilled, eager for the fray. It was like night matched against the day—the powers of darkness arrayed against the powers of light.

To the surprise of his ferret-eyed opponent, Arden, playing with the sacred ball, won the bank. The balls were spotted and the game began. The style of play was fourteen-inch ball line, one shot in. Without effort, by graceful, easy play, Arden rolled off run after run. His ball was absolutely under control and the audience was with him to a man, following his game with frequent applause. But do, what he would, Arden could not shake off his opponent. He answered run with run and invariably finished a point or two in the lead.

Arden, however, never lost confidence for a moment in his ball or the outcome of the game. As the players approached the goal, the 300 mark, almost a break, but the dark man still in the lead, the excitement grew intense. With only eight to go, the latter ran six and missed on his 299th shot. A hateful scowl showed on his face, but changed instantly to a triumphant smile, as he saw that Arden, who stood at 295, was left an impossible shot.

Arden's ball lay tight against the cushions in one corner, the red ball in the same position in the far corner on the same side, and his opponent's ball against the cushion along the rail half way between the other two balls.

It, indeed, looks to be an impossible shot, but Arden, with unruffled confidence played a masse whose like had never been seen on that or any other table. His ball, with a beautiful curve, spun to the ball half way down the rail, continued its journey in the same marvelously accurate fashion to the red ball, and counted, of course. The house fairly thundered its applause. The result of the shot was to leave the three balls lined up along the centre of the table. A second brilliant masse counted 297, and the remaining three shots were clicked off in rapid succession.

As Arden made the last shot, which meant victory for him, he felt his eyes drawn irresistibly across the table to the tier of seats opposite. His gaze rested on a pair of eyes shining with a radiance he had never seen before. As he felt himself yielding to their power and stared toward them, a strange thing happened. With a sud-

den click the wonderful ball, with which he had played and won, snapped asunder and parted into two pieces. As it fell apart, Arden saw an appearance like a delicate pink flame toward the wonderful eyes, then over the head of Shaman Tuloc's beautiful daughter and away.

A minute later Arden was holding her by the hands and gazing at close range into those wondrous orbs. Tuloc hastened to the table and clasped the precious fragments of ivory to his breast.

Later that night, as he stood beside the beautiful Esther in her father's shop, Arden asked, "Why did the ivory ball snap and the pink soul flee away?"

"Because, my son, another love had come into your heart,"—and then, as Shaman Tuloc looked on the young people, he raised his hands and said, solemnly, "The God of heaven bless you, my children!"

(The End.)

New Serial Next Week

A young Canadian author, whose remarkable facility with the pen promises her a brilliant future in the realm of fiction, is Miss Pearl Foley of Toronto, whose story, "The Gift of the Gods," will begin in our next issue. This tale of exciting adventure and romance opens in China and is told in a delicate and masterly fashion. Watch for the opening chapter next week.

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Bovril Limited Reports Good Business in 1922

The report submitted at the 26th Annual General Meeting of Shareholders of Bovril, Limited, in London, England, last month, was most satisfactory.

A net profit was shown of £305,709—out of which after payment of regular dividends or preferred stocks a dividend of 9% on the Deferred Shares—free of Income Tax—was voted.

Sir George Lawson-Johnston, Vice-Chairman, The Earl of Erroll, Vice-Chairman, and Mr. Douglas Walker, Managing Director, Sir Cornthwaite Rason, a former premier of Western Australia, has recently accepted the position of Secretary.

Bovril exports in 1922 exceeded those of 1921 by 22%, and 1922 shows every indication of still further growth.

The increasing amount devoted to various forms of advertising was one of the noteworthy features of the statement—and one to which perhaps much of the increased success of operations was due.

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ESCALOPED MEAT

Three-fourths cup rice, one and half cup tomato juice, 1 cup bread crumbs, 3 tablespoons fat, 3 tablespoons flour, 1½ cup meat chopped or ground, salt and pepper. Cook rice until tender in plenty of boiling salted water. Prepare tomato sauce of the tomato juice, flour, fat, salt and pepper in the same manner as white sauce. (The stock could be used in place of the tomato.) Fill a baking dish with alternate layers of rice (or macaroni) and chopped or ground meat. Pour tomato sauce (or gravy) over each layer. Cover with buttered crumbs and bake until crumbs are brown.

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FOR THE CHILDREN

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Little Mary came into the house being dragged and weeping. "My goodness," cried her mother, "what a sight you are! How did it happen?" "I'm sorry, mamma, but I fell into a puddle." "What! with your new dress on?" "Yes, yes; I didn't have time to change it."

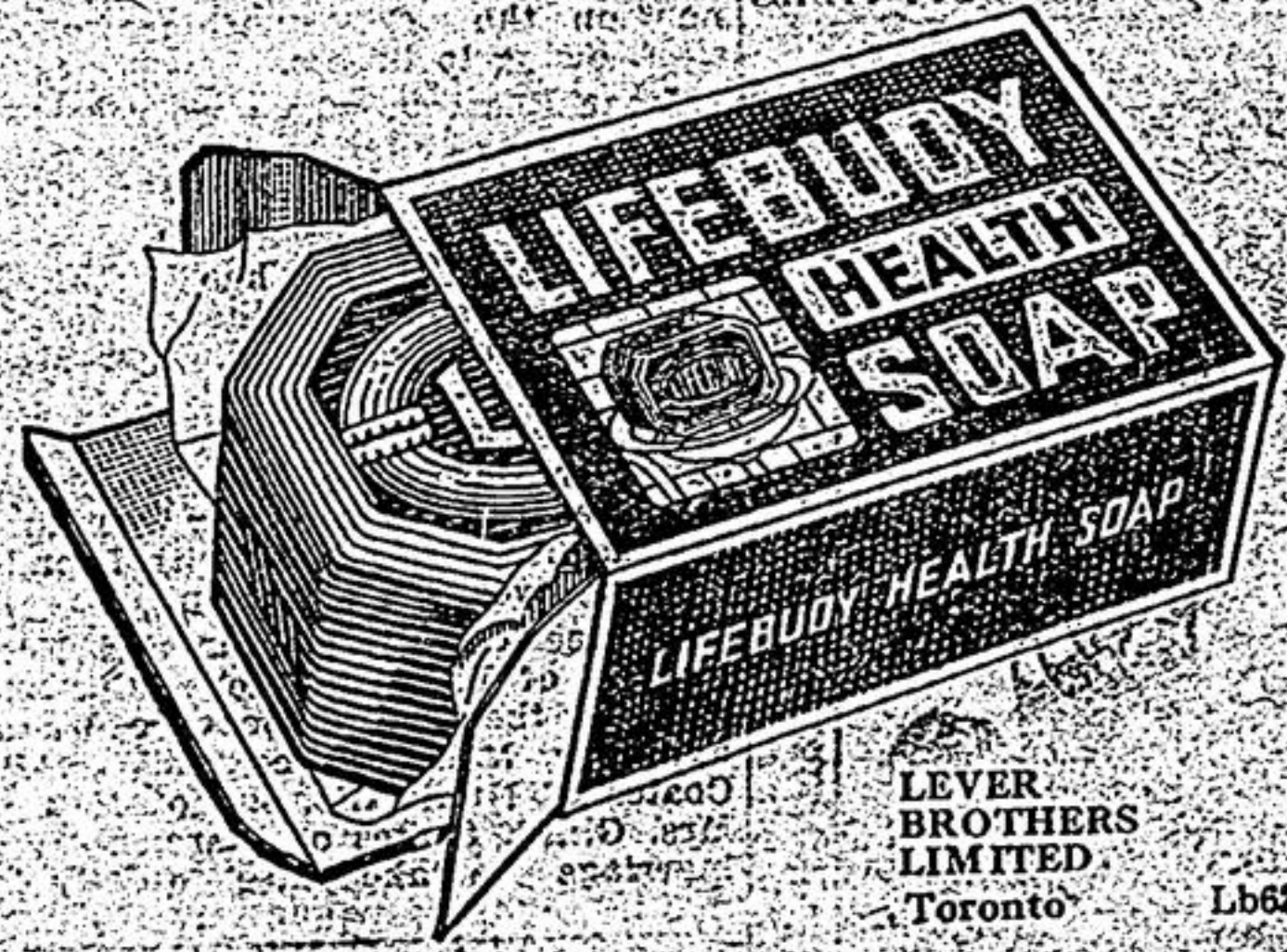
The darkest shadows of life are those a man makes when he stands in his own light.



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Woman's Interests

DIAMONDS AND ROSES.

Diamonds and houses do not reach the acme of perfection until in the proper setting. We cannot all have diamonds, but there are very few of us but can have the proper setting for our homes. In fact, a house is not a home complete until it has the proper setting. Be it perennial or annual flower gardens, shrubbery or roses, or a combination of all these, it matters not, if only there be the setting.

If it were generally known the ease with which roses could be produced, we would become a nation of rose growers. There are types of hardy roses adaptable to the most rigorous climate, that will give a wealth of beautiful bloom throughout the warm months.

Many are deterred from growing this wonderful flower because of the supposed exacting conditions required. True, roses reach perfection in clay soil, require a sunny spot protected from strong winds, and there are numerous bugs that like them so well they cannot resist eating them. But on the other hand, by using care in the selection of varieties adapted to needs of your particular locality, creating soil conditions and furnishing wind breaks, anyone can grow roses.

Here we grow the hybrid ever-blooming teas and hybrid perpetuals, grown on their own roots, not budded, and are very seldom troubled with disease. Our soil is a light clay loam, just ordinary good garden soil, and we have a succession of bloom from June until killing frosts. Our circular beds of teas are on the north side of the house, far enough away from the buildings to get the morning sun, but shaded from the heat of mid-day.

We built a lattice work fence to the north and west of these beds in the form of the letter L, planting alternately White, Spirea and Crimson Rambler climbing roses. The wall of vines and the thick growth of the spirea have been sufficient protection in spite of the fact that the position is a very exposed one away from the protection of adjoining buildings.

The hybrid perpetuals or bush roses are to the south of the house, in rows without any protection, excepting that of the house, yet they thrive and bloom every season. Unfortunately, our front yard is too shady to permit of growing any flowers.

Now to get back to soil conditions. If your soil be heavy, clay or light

sand, it will produce an abundance of roses if properly handled. If you have heavy clay that hardens and packs during the drier months, in the early spring, spade in well rotted manure, the deeper the better, and mix thoroughly. If fine sand devoid of humus, use the same method, with the addition of plenty of fresh cow dung.

When the work is done, cover bed an inch thick with hydrated lime, raking it well into the soil. If soil is in the least dry at planting time, puddle the young plants, that is, add water and soil alternately until the consistency of thick mud, finishing the operation by hilling the young plant with dry dirt. Later, if any of your charges have a tendency to stand still or some are inclined to make poor growth, a tablespoon of bone meal worked in around the plant will give them a new lease of life and promote growth. Repeat this about once a month.

For all chewing and sucking insects, we spray with a solution composed of a heaping tablespoon of arsenate of lead and one-third of a teaspoon of black leaf No. 40, to a quart of water. If mildew appears we sprinkle dry sulphur on the bushes while the dew is on in the early morning. If black spot bothers we spray with potassium sulphide, one ounce to three gallons of water. We use an ordinary quart sprayer, the first spray being applied

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