

THE END OF HIS TIME.

By JAMES KNAPP BERRY.

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CHAPTER I.



He opened it and read.

Eighty Chalmers had just reached New Orleans and received the first mail that he had received for six months. It was a characteristic of his—a whim, it had been called in another man—to be bothered as little as possible by letters, papers or telegrams when traveling.

It was also characteristic that he often put himself wholly beyond the reach of wire or post—perhaps to make doubly sure against such interruption. He had been in Mexico this time, over on the west coast, as far from civilization as he could get, and one may get very far from it indeed there, as every one knows who has had the courage to leave the beaten routes of travel.

For, although a finished cosmopolitan, Chalmers could adapt himself to the manners of any people who lived close to the ways of nature, and hence was as much at home among the ignorant peons of Yucatan or Chiapas as upon the pavements and amid the more polished civilization of New York or San Francisco.

There was no apparent reason why eighty Chalmers—man of fortune and of leisure—should not wander as he pleased or hide himself from the world where and when he chose. He was almost wholly without ties—with the single exception of a half brother somewhat younger than himself wholly without—his money safely invested, rather so as to avoid care in its management than with a view toward securing the largest possible income, he was of course free to go and come as he would.

He had now come direct to New Orleans via steamer from Vera Cruz, and all the way across the Gulf had been wondering why he was coming, hither, and which way it would be best to turn next. It really mattered very little to him, he supposed he must come to a decision of some sort in the latter respect. It was winter, and so he did not care to go farther north. Chalmers was an old story. In Cuba the hotels were bad, he could find more comfort in an Indian hut than there. Then, again, he wondered why he had come this way at all; he might better have joined those new paper men he had met at San Antonio—Bolsheviks, but most thoroughly good fellows—and gone with them down to see the revolution in Venezuela.

Yes, after all, something was to be said in favor of New Orleans in motivation; it certainly was not the worst of places at that season; perhaps he might as well make up his mind to stay awhile and see what would turn up. Having come to which conclusion Chalmers placed his name upon the register of the St. Charles, and went into breakfast, taking with him his six months' accumulation of mail. There was not much of it, and he noticed the fact whimsically, as indicating how slight were the ties between himself and the world. There were but two letters and a single paper. One of the letters was from his brother, and bore various particulars showing how it had followed him about. He opened it and read:

Dear Will—I am in a devil of a fix about money. Will you help me out? If you can help me out at all, I shall send a five to you both times a month, but if you can't help me out, then I must go to bed. Your affectionate brother, GEORGE CHALMERS.

The letter was dated September 15th. It was now the fifteenth of January. Chalmers was so deeply engrossed by the contents of this one that he opened the second letter mechanically, without checking that the address was written in a woman's hand. Mechanically, too, his eye ran over the brief lines, until their import flashed suddenly upon his brain. This letter read:

Dear Mr. Chalmers, your brother has been quoted in an uncomplimentary way in the columns of one of the papers, and in the effort to keep the full meaning of this message that he gave the reporter, through some inadvertent accident, that he represented you by the name of "Lina Tennant." Can he not be the scoundrel of impudence, they wonder, who writes what new word of evil he should find Chalmers. Almost at once a hurried paragraph scolded on, as though it were printed in capitals. It read:

"George Chalmers, the unscrupulous scoundrel of the — National bank, was yesterday's unscrupulous scoundrel on such count of the institution and succeeded in ten years' hard work in the same position, says a Columbia."

The paper was a Columbia paper of January 15th. The message was complete in three words.

Chalmers went on with his breakfast, as he would write to some one, with anything in which he happened to be engaged. His attention was attracted, however, by the name of Lina Tennant, who he had again and again dropped a line in the name of the scoundrel who

had every detail of action systematically arranged.

"You may excuse my room," he said to the man at the desk as he returned to the hotel office. "I shall go on north by the first train. How soon can I leave?"

"There will be nothing now until night, sir. The first train is out at nine fifteen. Sorry you are going to leave us so soon," went on the clerk affably.

"Good time to see New Orleans, sir; French opera tonight and plenty of quadrum balls going, if you care for that sort of thing."

Chalmers stared hard at the man and waited until he had finished. Then he said quietly:

"Does that my baggage is sent down in time for that train, and have it checked for Cleveland, and get me a Pullman passage through as far as you can. Now please give me some telegraph blanks."

He pinned two telegrams. One was to Lina Tennant and was as follows:

"I have just heard; shall leave for Cleveland tonight."

The other was to Winston, Lanny and Company, Broad street, New York. It said:

"Turn everything you can into cash and have subject to sight draft within three days. Shall want at least one hundred thousand."

When he had sent them it was not quite eleven o'clock. Two hours of enforced idleness, of absolute inactivity, were before him just at the time when it was more important than it had ever yet been in his whole life that he should be doing something. He had not planned for this, and so chafed under the delay and sought for some means by which the time might be employed. Once he thought he would write to George; then he decided to wait and see Lina Tennant and the bank people and learn the whole story. He would make sure of what he could do before writing to George or going to Columbus. That he could do something with the money at his command he never doubted for a moment. As to what that something would be, what form it would take, his ideas as yet were indefinite. That would depend upon what he learned at Cleveland.

The long day dragged itself on and came to a close at last. It was raining when it was time for him to go to the train, and all through the night he could hear the storm beating in gusts against the windows of his berth. All the next day, as the train sped on northward through the boundless pine forests of Alabama, the rain kept pouring steadily down and adding discomfort to every dreary hour. It would have been enough had his servant and his thoughts been of the pleasure. But as it was, with his mind fixed so steadily upon the one wretched fact before him, the monotony was almost unbearable.

At Cincinnati, as he changed cars the next morning, the rain had given place to snow, and as he still went on northward through Ohio the white blankets grew deeper and deeper over the land. The monotony of it was awful, like a shroud spreading itself out over the earth, and thought Chalmers, winding ever closer and closer about himself. Would it wind him so close in its folds that he could do nothing in this matter upon which he had come all the way into this inhospitable winter land? Toward noon the snow had grown so deep that it began to impede the progress of the train; frequently it stopped, while the engine was driven ahead to clear the track. A snowplow was put on and it threw up great solid walls of snow, like quarried marble, on either side the line. It seemed as if the snow would never stop coming and as though they must be swallowed up in the white desolation.

A passenger in the seat opposite Chalmers asked the conductor if they should be able to get through.

"I don't know yet. The road is reported blocked a little way above here. They may get it open by the time we reach there. If not, the through passenger had better go around by Columbus."

Chalmers listened nervously. He knew that route. The track would along close beneath the great gray walls of the person. George was there; he could not go that way. It would be easier to lose a little time even after hurrying for a thousand miles as fast as steam could bring him.

At Springfield it was yet doubtful whether they should be able to get through, and some of the passengers changed their seats and went around by the Columbus branch. This would strike the main line again further up, and would probably save some delay. But Chalmers remained in his coach and the train kept on its way—slow and uncertain, but gradually making toward Cleveland. He took out his time card after a while and made some careful calculations. The snow was reported not to be farther north; they should get through, but would not reach Cleveland until long after dark. Chalmers felt that he could not endure another night of suspense and uncertainty, and at the next station he sent another telegram to Lina Tennant.

"I shall be in tonight, but train will be very late. Wait."

After this he settled down with what remained of his coffee, half full of sleep, and let the day and the train take their own course to the end.

CHAPTER II.

It was after six o'clock when the train finally rolled into the Great Station. In two minutes Chalmers was in a cab and had given his order to the driver.

"Number — Prospect street."

Out in the heart of all the western winter night he began to feel like the man in the story. The blowing of the train with its face toward to inquire the clock of death, and there that had no connection with the long and gloomy journey. He was again a man of affairs, and would bend down the lamp that stood before him, and became aware of the small motion of his feet, and saw that it was on runners in front of wheels, and all about him in the room, well lighted streets other lights were sparkling about, and the bells upon the harness were jingling merrily, and there were sounds of laughter and content.

As he passed through the square the harness was put out and the electric lights up in the tall tower above, there on a brilliant beam of light, and the driver turned. How George did love to be with such beautiful life and a part of it, and how well he had always been situated in it. And then the contrast and the weariness of the journey that brought him here this night were cast in his face as he again with renewed and

appalling force as he stopped at Lina Tennant's door.

He had not paused to think of himself until now. Half had been repressed and every thought and energy of the man bent solely to the one purpose of getting as speedily as he could to those who needed him. That Lina needed him no less than George did was a thing of which he felt assured instinctively, without any elaborate process of reasoning. Her faith in George had been so complete, her pride in him so great, and she would feel this disgrace so keenly, but would hide it all within her own breast. She would neither ask nor permit sympathy from any. Perhaps she would repeat him—deny that she needed him.

(To be continued.)

AN EXAMPLE OF IMPUDENCE.

In This Tale a Vice Is Carried to the Apex of the Sublime.

She was a very sweet, gracious old lady; her manners were full of dignity; when she conversed with a young man it was a distinction for him when she conversed with a girl it was an honor for that girl. When I first knew that old lady, she lived in a large house and kept a carriage; she gave rather stately dinner parties; she had rather formal receptions; she was the queen of the quarter where she lived. Everybody respected her, and all those who had the privilege of her friendship loved her. Suddenly she let her great house and gardens and removed into quite a small villa, with a little garden; also she gave up her carriage and limited her household to one servant. And she gave no more parties.

It was understood that this dear old lady had lost her fortune. But nobody knew the facts, nor could anybody ask. She retired to this little villa and continued to have receptions, at which tea and homemade cake were the only luxuries offered. Also, there arrived at this juncture a niece, of whose existence no one had previously been aware. She was not nice, this lady; it is no fault to be no longer young or good looking, but one ought at least to be well bred and good tempered. Now, after a year or two during which the bitter tongue and the bad temper of the niece caused continual misery to the old lady, there came a time of sickness. It was the plague of influenza. Many of us in the quarter had it very badly, among others the old lady's niece. For the old lady's sake, not from any love of our own, we were shocked to learn that the niece was dead.

A month or two afterward the old lady told me a story. She said: "You know that I lost all my money. It was lost for me. It was my man of business who stole it. He forged a power of attorney and sold my stocks; he gambled with the proceeds and lost the whole. When there was no more, he confessed the robbery. But, he said, to prove the truth in which he held me, he had brought his only child with him, and he would leave her with me until better days. So he kissed my hand and left me and that, she explained, 'is the reason why I had to leave my dear old home and to receive this poor creature whose unfortunate manner and bitter tongue made me miserable all day long. I have often thought—' Here she stopped, and thinking of that sublime and unequalled impudence I, too, have often thought.—New York Recorder.

The Cow-boy's Marvellous Memory.

"Of all men in the world not so accounted for, I think the cow-boy's memory and intuition are the most marvellous," said E. H. Connelley, an Indian Territory at the La Crosse. "I have witnessed feats of memory performed by cow-boys that appear preposterous when related. For instance, I was on a drive from the Texas Panhandle to the territory a few weeks ago with 7,000 cattle. Twelve men comprised my outfit. We had a couple of big stampedes, and after we got the frightened outfit rounded up, how do you suppose we were able to tell how many were missing? You naturally think we went through the laborious task of counting out and counting them, and that's where you are mistaken.

"Every one of my 12 men was so thoroughly acquainted with the head that either of them could, by getting on an elevation so as to get a clear sweep of the entire herd, tell exactly how many and the kind of stock we had missed in the roundup. Not only that, but he could pick out all the stray cattle that had got mixed in our bunch without using the brand. It is a marvellous accomplishment, and one that is retained only after long service in the bull-punching business."—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

Improving a Yonon.

"During my second year at the Jefferson Medical College, Philadelphia, I had a classmate whom it would not be unkind to recall a fellow. One of the professors was in the habit of taking the boys unawares and quizzing them. He said to this fellow one day:

"How much is a dose of —" giving the technical name of vesicant ointment.

"A teaspoonful," was the ready reply.

The professor made no comment, and the fellow soon realized that he had made a mistake. After a quarter of an hour he said:

"Professor, I want to change my answer to that question."

"Is that so, my —?" responded the professor, looking at his watch.

"Your patient's head aches five minutes."—Our New York World.

Setting Traps to Snags.

"I consider the Vanderbilt club a great success," said a man of society languidly. "because it fills a large, full want. What to do between 11 and 12 o'clock has been a question with me. I go to the house where I am dining up, or down, and I find

to look in at any ball or dance that is going about 1, but the intermediate space has always been difficult to fill up." "I should go to bed," said his country cousin simply.—New York Tribune.

If one watches the water falling over the rock at Niagara, he may see it of an emerald green near the upper part of the fall. Much the same effect is produced when billows are just curling into breakers on the beach directly in front of us.

It is said that a really indelible ink and a kind of vinegar can be produced from the juice contained in the banana peel. The fiber of the peel, it is said, can also be utilized in making cloth of great strength and remarkable beauty.

Nearly every man is managed by some woman, consciously or unconsciously on the part of the man. The men who are unconscious of such management and would resent the intimation are the most managed of all.

In the manufacture of Great Britain alone the power which steam exerts is estimated to be equal to the manual labor of 4,000,000 men, or several times more than the number of males supposed to inhabit the globe.

Solomon's temple was 107 feet long, 30 feet broad and 84 feet high. Though deemed a wonder of the world, it was not larger than many private houses of the present time.

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