

Between Two Fires

By ANTHONY HOPE

"A wise man will make more opportunities than he finds." —Francis Bacon.

CHAPTER VI.—(Continued.)
"Hello, Johnny! Why not at the House?" said I to him. "You'll want every vote to-night. Be off and help the ministry, and take Donna Antonia with you. They're eating up the minister of finance."

"All right! I'm going as soon as I've had another muffin," said Johnny. "But what's the row about?"

"Well, they want their money," I replied; "and Don Antonio won't give it them. Hence bad feeling."

"Tell you what it is," said Johnny: "he hasn't got a—"

Here Donna Antonia struck in, rather suddenly, I thought.

"Do stop the gentlemen talking politics, Madame Devarges. They'll spoil our tea party."

"Your word is law," I said; "but I should like to know what Don Antonio hasn't got."

"Now do be quiet," she rejoined; "isn't it quite enough that he has got—a charming daughter?"

"And a most valuable one," I replied with a bow, for I saw that for some reason or other Donna Antonia did not mean to let me pump Johnny Carr, and I wanted to pump him.

"Don't say another word, Mr. Carr," she said, with a laugh. "You know you don't know anything."

Meanwhile Madame Devarges was giving me a cup of tea. As she handed it to me, she said in a low voice:

"If I were his friend I should take care Johnny didn't know anything, Mr. Martin."

"If I were his friend I should take care he told me what he knew, Madame Devarges," I replied.

"Perhaps that's what the Colonel thinks," she said. "Johnny has just been telling us how very attentive he has become. And the Signorina, too, I hear."

"You don't mean that?" I exclaimed. "But, after all, pure kindness, no doubt!"

"You have received many attentions from those quarters," she said. "No doubt you are a good judge of the motives."

"Don't, now, don't be disagreeable," said I. "I came here for peace."

"Poor young man! Have you lost all your money? Is it possible that you, like Don Antonio, haven't got a—?"

"What is going to happen?" I asked, for Madame Devarges often had information.

"I don't know," she said. "But if I owned national bonds, I should sell."

"Pardon me, madame; you would offer to sell."

I did not see any need to enlighten her further. So I passed on to Donna Antonia, who had sat somewhat sulkily since her outburst. I sat down by her and said:

"Surely I haven't offended you?"

"You know you wouldn't care if you had," she said, with a reproachful, but not unkind glance. "You will not let your real friends save you, Mr. Martin. You know you want help. Why don't you consider the state of your affairs?"

"In that, at least, my friends in Whittingham are very ready to help me," I answered, with some annoyance.

"If you take it in that way," she replied sadly, "I can do nothing."

I was rather touched. Clearly she wished to be of some use to me, and for a moment I thought I might do better to tear myself free from my chains, and turn to the refuge opened to me. But I could not do this; and, thinking it would be rather mean to take advantage of her interest in me only to use it for my own purposes, I yielded to conscience and said:

"Donna Antonia, I will be straightforward with you. You can only help me if I accept your guidance? I can't do that. I am too deep in."

"Yes, you are deep in, and eager to be deeper," she said. "Well, so be it. If that is so I cannot help you."

"Thank you for your kind attempt," said I. "I shall very likely be sorry some day that I repulse it. I shall always be glad to remember that you made it."

She looked at me a moment, and said: "We have ruined you amongst us."

"Mind, body and estate?"

She made no reply, and I saw my return to flippancy wounded her. So I rose and took my leave. Johnny Carr went with me.

"Things look queer, eh, old man?" said he. "But the President will pull through in spite of the Colonel and his Signorina."

"Johnny," said I, "you hurt my feelings; but still I will give you a piece of advice. Marry Donna Antonia. She's a good girl and a clever girl."

"That's not a bad idea," said he. "Why don't you do it yourself?"

"Because I'm like you, Johnny—an idiot," I replied, and left him wondering why, if he was an idiot, and I was an idiot, one idiot should marry Donna Antonia, and not both or neither.

As I went along I bought the Gazette, the government organ, and read therein:

"At a Cabinet council this afternoon, presided over by his excellency, we understand that the arrangements connected with the national debt formed the subject of discussion. The resolutions arrived at are at present strictly confidential, but we have the best authority for stating that the measures to be adopted will have the effect of materially alleviating the present tension, and will afford unmixed satisfaction to the immense majority of the citizens of Aureataland. The President will once again be hailed as the savior of his country."

"I wonder if the immense majority will

include me?" said I. "I think I will go and see his excellency."

CHAPTER VII.

The next morning I took my way to the Golden House, where I learned that the President was at the ministry of finance. Arriving there, I sent in my card, writing thereon a humble request for a private interview. I was ushered into Don Antonio's room, where I found the minister himself, the President and Johnny Carr. As I entered and the servant, on a sign from his excellency, placed a chair for me, the latter said rather stiffly:

"As I presume this is a business visit, Mr. Martin, it is more regular that I should receive you in the presence of one of my constitutional advisers. Mr. Carr is acting as my secretary, and you can speak freely before him."

I was annoyed at failing in my attempt to see the President alone, but not wishing to show it, I merely bowed and said:

"I venture to intrude on your excellency, in consequence of a letter from my directors. They inform me that, to use their words, 'disquieting rumors' are afloat on the exchanges in regard to the Aureataland loan, and they direct me to submit to your excellency the expediency of giving some public notification relative to the payment of the interest falling due next month. It appears from their communication that it is apprehended that some difficulty may occur in the matter."

"Would not this application, if necessary at all, have been more properly made to the ministry of finance in the first instance?" said the President. "These details hardly fall within my province."

"I can only follow my instructions, your excellency," I replied.

"Have you any objection, Mr. Martin," said the President, "to allowing myself and my advisers to see this letter?"

"I am empowered to submit it only to your excellency's own eye."

"Oh, only to my eye," said he, with an amused expression. "That was why the interview was to be private?"

"Exactly, sir," I replied. "I intend no disrespect to the ministry of finance or to your secretary, sir, but I am bound by my orders."

"You are an exemplary servant, Mr. Martin. But I don't think I need trouble you about it further. Is it a question that he had unhappily become indebted to our chairman in the sum of \$10,000, the result of a deal between them, that he had seen the chairman, that the chairman was urgent for payment, that he used most violent language against our family in general, ending by declaring his intention of stopping my salary to pay the parental debt. 'If he doesn't like it he may go, and small loss.' This was a most unjustifiable proceeding, but I was hardly in a position to take up a high moral attitude toward the chairman, and in the result I saw myself confronted with the certainty of beggary and the probability of jail. But for this untoward reverse of fortune I might have taken courage and made a clean breast of my misdoings, relying on the chairman's obligations to my father to pull me through. But now, where was I? I was, as Donna Antonia put it, very deep in indeed. So overwhelmed was I by my position, and so occupied by my frantic efforts to improve it, that I did not even find time to go and see the Signorina, much as I needed comfort; and, as the days went on, I fell into such despair that I went nowhere, but sat dismally in my own rooms, looking at my portmanteau, and wondering how soon I must pack and fly, if not for life, at least for liberty."

"At last the crash came. I was sitting in my office one morning, engaged in the difficult task of trying to make ten into fifteen, when I heard the clatter of hoofs."

A moment later the door was opened, and Jones ushered in Colonel McGregor. I nodded to the Colonel, who came in with his usual leisurely step, sat himself down, and took off his gloves. I roused myself to say:

"What can I do for you, Colonel?"

He waited till the door closed behind Jones, and then said:

"I've got to the bottom of it at last, Martin. That old scamp's villainy," said he, jerking his thumb toward the Piazza and the statue of the Liberator. "He's very cute, but he's made a mistake at last."

"Do come to the point, Colonel. What's it all about?"

"Would you be surprised to hear," said the Colonel, adopting a famous mode of speech, "that the interest on the debt would not be paid on the 31st?"

"No, I shouldn't," said I, resignedly.

"Would you be surprised to hear that no more interest would ever be paid?"

"What do you mean, man?" I cried, leaping up.

"The President," said he, calmly, "will, on the 31st instant, repudiate the national debt!"

(To be continued.)

She Knew Her Business.

He had been sweet on her for some time and one evening he dropped in on his way home from the office.

"I hope you will excuse me for calling in my business suit," he said, "but—"

"Oh, that's all right," interrupted the fair maid, "that is, if you mean business."

And the next day a downtown jeweler separated him from a month's salary in exchange for the ring.

"Then I won't trouble to go through them."

"They're all there, sir, except, of course, the cable about the second loan, sir."

"Except what?" I said.

"The cable about the second loan," he repeated.

I was glad to be reminded of this, for of course I wished to remove that document before the bundle finally took its place among the archives. Indeed, I thought I had done so. But why had Jones removed it? Surely Jones was not as skeptical as that?

"Ah, and where have you put that?" "Why, sir, his excellency took that."

"What!" I cried.

"Yes, sir. Didn't I mention it? Why, the day after you and the President were here that night, his excellency came down in the afternoon, when you'd gone out to the Piazza, and said he wanted it. He said, sir, that you'd said it was to go to the ministry of finance. He was very affable, sir, and told me that it was necessary the original should be submitted to the minister for his inspection; and as he was passing by he'd take it up himself. Hasn't he given it back to you, sir? He said he would."

"Slipped his memory, no doubt. All right, Jones."

"May I go now, sir?" said Jones. "Mrs. Jones wanted me to go with her."

I saw all now. That old villain had stolen the cable. And his excellency's words came back to my memory, "I make the most of my opportunities."

CHAPTER VIII.

The next week was a busy one for me. I spent it in scraping together every bit of cash I could lay my hands on. If I could get together enough to pay the interest on the \$300,000 supposed to be invested in approved securities—really disposed of in a manner only known to his excellency—I should have six months to look about me. Now remaining out of my "bonus" was nil, out of my "reserve fund" \$10,000. This was enough. But, alas, how happened it that this sum was in my hands? Because I had borrowed \$5,000 from the bank! If they wouldn't let their own manager overdraw, whom would they? So I overdraw. But if this money wasn't back before the monthly balancing, Jones would know! And I dared not rely on being able to stop his mouth again. When I said Johnny Carr was the only honest man in Aureataland I forgot Jones. Jones also was honest, and Jones would consider it his duty to let the directors know of my overdraft. If once they knew, I was lost, for an overdraft effected privately from the safe by the manager is, I do not deny it, decidedly irregular. Unless I could add \$5,000 to my \$10,000 before the end of the month I should have to default!

This melancholy conclusion was re-enforced and rendered demonstrable by a letter which arrived, to crown my woes, from my respected father, informing me that he had unhappily become indebted to our chairman in the sum of \$10,000, the result of a deal between them, that he had seen the chairman, that the chairman was urgent for payment, that he used most violent language against our family in general, ending by declaring his intention of stopping my salary to pay the parental debt. "If he doesn't like it he may go, and small loss." This was a most unjustifiable proceeding, but I was hardly in a position to take up a high moral attitude toward the chairman, and in the result I saw myself confronted with the certainty of beggary and the probability of jail. But for this untoward reverse of fortune I might have taken courage and made a clean breast of my misdoings, relying on the chairman's obligations to my father to pull me through. But now, where was I? I was, as Donna Antonia put it, very deep in indeed. So overwhelmed was I by my position, and so occupied by my frantic efforts to improve it, that I did not even find time to go and see the Signorina, much as I needed comfort; and, as the days went on, I fell into such despair that I went nowhere, but sat dismally in my own rooms, looking at my portmanteau, and wondering how soon I must pack and fly, if not for life, at least for liberty."

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Liver and Bacon Pie.

Take an equal number of pieces of liver and of fat bacon, free the latter from rind, etc., and place the bacon in a clean pan. Fry till cooked. The dish on a hot plate and reserve. Add the slices of liver to the fat remaining in the pan. Fry till cooked and of a nice golden-brown hue. Take out and add to the bacon. Thicken the fat with a little flour and water and a tiny bit of butter mixed together, and stir till quite creamy and of a good brown color. Place the liver and bacon in a deep pie dish in layers. Add salt and pepper, if thought necessary. Fill up the chinks with forcemeat balls, pour the gravy over the whole. Cover with a plain crust. Brush the top with beaten egg, and bake in a moderately hot oven until the crust is done; then serve at once.

Steamed Chicken.

Rub the chicken on the inside with pepper and half a teaspoonful of salt; place in a steamer in a kettle that will keep it as near the water as possible, cover and steam an hour and a half; when done, keep hot while dressing is prepared; then cut up, arrange on the platter and serve with the dressing over them. The dressing is made as follows: Boil one pint of gravy from the kettle without the fat, add cayenne pepper and half a teaspoonful of salt; stir a tablespoonful of flour into a quarter of a pint of cream until smooth, and add to the gravy. Corn starch may be used instead of the flour, and some cooks add nutmeg or celery salt.

The Art of Baking.

The housekeeper who knows how to regulate the heat of her oven and also its peculiarities will save much discomfort to her family. If when baking a cake it browns too quickly on the top, wet a piece of strong brown paper with water and lay it over the cake. A quick oven will burn a gingerbread in a very short time and is sometimes the cause of heavy pastry, and will often cause a hollow in a very light cake. When baking any kind of food the best attention should be given to looking after the fire until the work is done. It does not pay to be careless in this matter.

Rice Pudding.

Wash a teaspoonful of rice and boil it in two teaspoonfuls of water; then add, while the rice is hot, three tablespoonfuls of butter, five tablespoonfuls sugar, 5 well-beaten eggs, one tablespoon of powdered nutmeg, a little salt, one-fourth pound of raisins (stoned and cut in halves), one-fourth pound of Zante currants, one-fourth pound of citron, cut in slips, and one quart of cream; mix well, pour into a buttered dish and bake an hour in a moderate oven.

Custards.

Steamed custards are delicious, but must be steamed slowly and carefully. Adding cold water will undoubtedly cause a steamed pudding to fall. A very hot oven will scorch any pudding in which whipped white of egg is spread on the top, while the inner part will be quite uncooked. When boiling a pudding such as rolypoly, or a suet dumpling, it often sticks at the bottom of the saucepan when dropped in. A plate in the pan will prevent this.

Mince Toast.

Mince any cold meat at hand (if there is a variety so much the better), season highly with pepper, salt and chutney or herbs, and moisten the meat with gravy or cream. Make all thoroughly hot in a stewpan, but do not let it reach boiling point. Have ready some squares of buttered toast, place the mince on these, and garnish with parsley. Serve very hot.

Apple Cream.

Boil twelve apples in water till soft, take off the peel and press the pulp through a hair sieve upon one-half pound sugar; whip the whites of two eggs, add them to the apples, and beat all together it becomes very stiff and quite white. Serve it heaped upon a glass dish.

Washington Pudding.

Beat one-third cup of butter and one cup of sugar together until light, and one and a half cups of flour, sifted with two and a half teaspoons of baking powder. Bake in two large jelly tins and spread while warm with lacy or jam and serve with a hot liquid pudding sauce.

Makes Nice Dessert.

A very nice dessert for this time of year is to scoop out cantaloupes, fill with ice cream, and over the top place slices of peaches. Or the melons may be filled with whipped cream in which pieces of peaches have been stirred, the cream flavored with bitter almond.

Does Your Heart Beat

Yes. 100,000 times each day. Does it send out good blood or bad blood? You know, for good blood is good health; bad blood, bad health. And you know precisely what to take for bad blood—Ayer's Sarsaparilla. Doctors have endorsed it for 60 years.

One frequent cause of bad blood is a sluggish liver. This produces constipation. Poisonous substances are then absorbed into the blood, instead of being removed from the body daily as nature intended. Keep the bowels open with Ayer's Pills, liver pills. All vegetable.

Made by J. C. Ayer Co., Lowell, Mass. Also manufacturers of
Ayer's
HAIR VIGOR,
AGUE CURE,
CHERRY PECTORAL.

Doubled the Number.

In criticizing some proposed changes in a bill before the Senate, changes in phrasing rather than in meaning, Senator Tillman told a story which the Milwaukee Sentinel reports, of a lady who was looking at a house for rent.

"The house suits me very well," she said to the landlord, "but there is one thing I object to."

"Well, madam, any reasonable alteration," the landlord murmured, suavely, "would, provided you took a three years' lease—"

"I'd take a three years' lease," she said. "If the house had more closets."

"The number of closets shall be doubled," said the landlord.

"Very well," said the woman, and she signed the lease.

After she had gone the landlord said to his clerk, "John, take a carpenter over to number thirty-seven and have him divide each of the closets in two."

A Cautious Sentinel.

It was the small brother of pretty Margaret who opened the front door in response to Mr. Goodyear's ring, and his face took on a singularly alert expression as he surveyed the caller.

"No, she isn't in," said Margaret's brother. "Are—are you Mr. Hamlin?"

"No," said the young man, "I am Mr. Goodyear. Does that make any difference about her being at home?" and he looked searchingly at the boy.

"Course not!" said Bobby, indignantly. "I don't tell stories, nor Margaret doesn't. But if you'd been Mr. Hamlin, I was to tell something about her coming home, and get ten cents if I did it right and didn't tell the wrong one. I need that money, and so, you see, I didn't want to make any mistake. Good-by!"

A Late Edition.

Julius Kahn, representative from San Francisco, was in Washington when the earthquake came and was nearly frantic, because his wife and children, including a baby a few days old, were directly in the path of the fire.

Kahn spent two days trying to telegraph and then took a train and went out, and finding his family safe, stayed a week or so in the ruined city.

On his return he found a letter from a constituent, written eight days after the shock, which began:

"Dear Julius: 'No doubt you will be surprised to learn from me that we have had a terrible earthquake out here.'—Saturday Evening Post.

Justified.

First Ranchman—What'd they do t' Bronco Bill f'r shootin' up thar tier tenderfoot?

Second Ranchman—The fudge let him go.

First Ranchman—How's that?

Second Ranchman—Ut seems th' tenderfoot says: 'Bill, what's th' difference between a cowpuncher an' a sail-or an' Bih sez: 'I d'no, an' th' tenderfoot sez: 'One ships th' steers an' th' other steers th' ships.' Fudge sez ut iz justyfyble, er sumpin' like that.'—Toledo Blade.

Just What He Wanted.

"These eggs aren't fresh, are they?" queried the stranger.

"Well," replied the grocer, cautiously, "these eggs will make a ham—"

"Oh, I don't want 'em for ham omelet or any kind of eating. I've been in at that show at the opera house, and what I want—"

"As I was saying, sir, these eggs will make a ham actor feel like a last year's bird's nest."—Philadelphia Press.

Nature's Endowment.

Caller—Miss Millicent plays wonderfully on the piano.

Grandfather Greevius—Yes; it sort o' runs in the family. By jucks, you'd ort to 'ave heerd me play "Ole Dan Tucker" an' "Ole Bob Ridley" on a jewsharp when I was a boy!

Giving It Away.

The Young Man—Dicky, you think a good deal of your sister, don't you? Dicky (entertaining him)—You bet! So does ma and pa. She's been in the family mighty near forty years.