

Eccentric Mr. Sangster

By GERALD PRIME

Rudolf Sangster was eccentric to the verge of something far more serious than mere unorthodox behavior. Fortunately for him, he had been eccentric so long that it had come to be understood among men that he was to be left unmolested. Absolutely normal in matters of business and the ordinary affairs of life, he was known to be subject to the most extraordinary and even extravagant variations from the natural and expected. He was a man with a positive genius for perverseness.

Among all his eccentricities there was nothing so indicative of his perversion as his uncompromising refusal to permit his daughter, motherless and an only child, to marry John Williston. Both young persons seemed fashioned for such a union. John Williston was the worthy repository of several generations of transmitted wealth and the woman he had loved from early girlhood was the heiress of a man whose touch had been that of Midas freed from the sordid lust for gold.

This was maddening. John Williston was a marvel of patient tact, but this illogical beating about the bush was almost more than he could endure.

"About the only thing left for me to believe is that you don't consider your daughter good enough for me," he said, bitterly.

At this unfamiliar outburst Sangster smiled rather sardonically. "There

"The most extraordinary claim made by this person is the power to exchange personalities—to appear, for instance, under two or more distant forms within a very brief period—possibly in less than an hour," he said.

"Rot—deadly rot!" declared Sangster, contemptuously. "More buffoonery. The petty device of the trickster."

"Possibly," the other admitted, with the air of a man unconvinced. "I've not yet seen this exchange of personalities effected. I have been promised an opportunity to witness it on Saturday evening."

"Where is this precious piece of jugglery to be worked?"

"No particular place has been designated—yet."

"Then why can't it be pulled off here?"

"I know of nothing to conflict—unless it should be the odor of tobacco. I have heard the alleged miracle worker express a decided distaste for that."

"Then let it be done in one of the parlors or in the library."

"No," Williston said, decidedly. "After all it would be better to have it here. It's quieter and more remote."

"As you prefer. The hangings and furnishings can be removed if necessary. Any apparatus required?"

"None whatever."

"Want the lights turned low? I can flood the place with electricity at the first symptom of treachery."

"In this manifestation there should be as much illumination as possible. It's entirely visual, you know."

"Good! Saturday evening—at what hour?"

"About eight."

"Isn't that rather early for the supernatural to show itself?"

"This manifestation does not demand the hour of midnight as one of its conditions."

"What are its conditions?"

"As I understand the matter there is only one—that we are to seat ourselves comfortably in a well-lighted room and see what we shall see."

"Yes—we'll see what we see," echoed Sangster.

At eight o'clock on the following evening the two men were again in the smoking room. Enveloped in a constantly deepening cloud of his own creation, John Williston emitted smoke in puffs that suggested a miniature volcano. He had not spoken a word for ten minutes.

"If your fakir doesn't like tobacco," he observed finally, "he won't be at his best in this atmosphere. Don't you think we'd do well to move into the library?"

"Oh, no; let us stick to the original arrangement," John said, hastily, rousing himself and consulting his watch. "Eight o'clock," he added, as if he had been asked the hour.

"Your fakir may be all that a fakir should be, but he isn't Johnny on the spot," grumbled Sangster.

"Somebody's coming," Williston whispered.

The door was opened softly and there floated into the mist a figure so good to look upon that both men abandoned themselves straightway to the luxury of looking.

It was the vision who spoke first. "What a perfectly dreadful atmosphere!" It exclaimed, with a little choke which was not at all unbecoming.

"John is the Vesuvius who is responsible for it," said the vision's father. "I haven't been smoking. Wherefore all this magnificence? Are you going out?"

"Oh, no. My new gown came home and I just got into it and came up here to exhibit myself."

"In its present setting it certainly is," the old man agreed gallantly.

"Well," she hesitated and began to move slowly toward the door, "I want you to see me in it."

She stepped forward quickly, threw her arms about her father's neck, kissed him on the forehead and over and over again, sobbed audibly half a dozen times and fled precipitately from the room.

"What the—?" began Sangster.

"Tobacco. What a brute I was not to have opened the window!" John broke in, rather excitedly. "I'll see if I can do anything for her."

When he had gone the old man lighted his cigar and fixed himself comfortably in his armchair. "Now for the next chapter in the exchange," he chuckled, grimly.

He had not long to wait. Before he had come to the end of his cigar the door was opened again and Molly, still wearing the wonderful gown, its fleecy whiteness made still more ethereal by a veil of filmy lace and a crown of orange blossoms, entered the room.

"Same girl, same gown, same everything—except the headgear. No transformation, no exchange of personalities—just the original Molly Sangster," the old man maintained stoutly.

"Not so," denied John Williston, showing himself in the doorway. "The dean is still in the house."

"Then I'll ask you to excuse me while I go down and thank him for the great service he has rendered me!" said Sangster, making off with unwonted alacrity.

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ALMOST BLEW HIM UP.

Everything was quiet in the little cigar store when the old farmer rushed in and brought his umbrella down on the showcase with a whack that almost broke the glass.

"You weasel-eyed shrip!" he shouted. "What do you mean by selling me a loaded cigar? I lit it and blamed if a puff of flame didn't leap out and set my hair afire."

The clerk arose and rubbed his eyes.

"A loaded cigar?" he echoed in astonishment. "Why, my dear sir, we don't sell loaded cigars."

"Well, you sold me this one, because here are the pieces."

And then the clerk had to laugh.

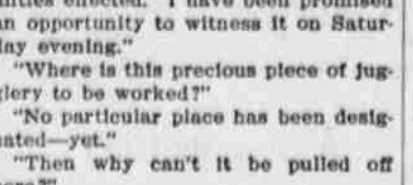
"You insisted upon paying 50 cents for a good cigar, didn't you?"

"I did, young man."

"Well, the 50-cent cigars always come in an air-proof celluloid tube and you must have lit the cigar without removing the tube. Here's another one without the tube. Smoke it on me, sir."

WASHINGTON GOSSIP

Uncle Sam Probes Third Degree System



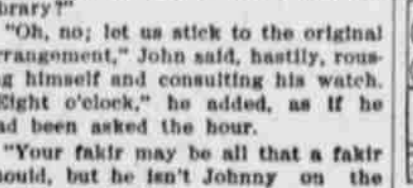
WASHINGTON.—One of the investigating committees set in motion at the late session of congress that is expected to yield some interesting results in the subcommittee of five senators, members of the judiciary committee, who have been directed to investigate and report on the workings of the "third degree," as exemplified by federal officers in criminal prosecutions.

The investigation will take a wide range. One member of the committee will be sent to Oklahoma to learn what basis there is for the charge made by Gov. Haskell and his friends, that the prosecutions started against him under the Roosevelt administration were inspired by personal malice, and that the methods resorted to by the special agents of the government in their efforts to convict Haskell, were discreditable.

Another branch of the investigation will relate to some of the western prosecutions, especially those conducted by Robert Kay Devlin, as United States attorney for the Northern district of California. Devlin's nomination was hung up in the judiciary committee of the senate for a long time, on a complaint that he had persecuted Dr. Perrin, one of the defendants in certain land-fraud cases, who, after being indicted, was finally discharged for want of evidence.

A special agent of the department of justice sent out to investigate the charge made a written report that Dr. Perrin should never have been indicted; that improper methods were employed to bring about his indictment, and even after the government officers were aware that they could not make a case against Dr. Perrin.

"Corpse" Aroused by Noise, Runs Away



"No," another man declared, "I reckon it is a case of heat prostration."

"I think he's just dreamin' about Jack Johnson's victory," said a third.

In the meantime the Emergency hospital ambulance with clanging gong arrived on the scene, and a policeman with perspiration streaming down his face rushed up to the mouth of the alley and was forcing his way through the crowd to get at the supposed dead man.

The noise aroused the "corpse." The prostrate figure slowly arose, disclosing the stalwart form of a negro. He gazed in astonishment at the crowd that blocked up the entrance to the alley and saw the policeman and white-coated Emergency surgeon elbowing their way toward him. With a yawn and a stretch of his arms, the negro darted into the side door of a printing office, slamming the door behind him.

Investigation disclosed the fact that the negro has been employed at the printing establishment a number of years. He said he was tired and went out into the quiet, cool alleyway to take a nap during the lull hour. That was all.

Sold MacVeagh Spoiled Vinegar; Fined

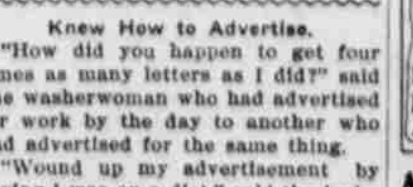


The man pleaded guilty and was fined \$25. He promised to be good.

A Buffalo milling concern has been fined for mixing ground corn cobs with four middlings. The same concern was also found guilty of putting ground corn cobs in a "gluten" preparation. A lot of "salins," shipped from California to Texas, was discovered to be in part a decomposed vegetable substance. A Chicago firm selling a "quick-rising" buckwheat flour has been fined for fraud in having sold in reality a mixture of wheat flour and buckwheat without any quick-rising properties.

Another Buffalo dealer was caught selling to Michigan folk a wonderful "hair tonic" which was advertised to cure headache and loss of hair and all sorts of ills. Analysis showed it contained 85.5 per cent. of alcohol and nothing to cure anything. The dealer was let off with a fine. A Michigan man was detected selling in large quantities a "hay fever cure" composed of 99.95 per cent. cocaine hydrochloride. He was fined \$100. Several lemon extracts and vanilla extract fakers have been recently caught and punished.

Government's O. K. on the Lowly Toad



age of at least ten or fifteen years. They also believe it possible for the toad to live for a limited time without food, but doubt stories about toads being found in rocks and trees.

"The toad," says the pamphlet, "is a nocturnal animal, and ventures out during the day only when tempted by an abundance of food or when the air and moving insects, centipedes, etc. are full of moisture. It eats only living insect, soon after sundown, or even before on cool evenings. It emerges from its shelter and slowly hops about in search of food. Almost a regular beat is covered. In the country this includes forays along roadsides, into gardens and cultivated fields and wherever insect food is abundant and grass or other thick herbage does not prevent locomotion. In cities and suburban villages the larva, walker and par-ticularly the spots beneath electric lamps are favorite hunting grounds."

"As a rule the toad feeds continuously throughout the night, consuming in 24 hours an amount of food equal in bulk about four times the stomach capacity. A careful examination of the contents of the stomachs of a large number of toads shows that 98 per cent. of its food was animal matter—worms, insects, etc.,

HIS SUBSTITUTE STENOGRAPHER

By STACY E. BAKER

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Dalton was a diffident man. This diffidence, however, did not protect him from the subtle machinations of one Greek god, Eros.

Miss Holly, Dalton's substitute stenographer, was, in the eyes of the infatuated young insurance man, the prettiest girl in all the world. Her dark, wavy hair, black eyes and her slight graceful form were indeed all that was to be desired, and the fresh daintiness of the maid subjected her employer's heart to excited pit-a-pats each time she entered the office.

Miss Moore, Dalton's regular typist, and an antique that had been handed down to the successive owners of the business since its establishment, was a vinegar-faced person, and her mere presence in the Dalton sanctum had been a keener incentive for him to plunge recklessly into the complexities of business. Miss Sophia Moore was conspicuously homely.

Miss Moore was not demonstrative. She either answered yes or no to her employer's rare questions, and she knew his business better than he did himself. In all his five years at the head of the local branch of the business his stenographer had been faithfully at her desk each day. Nor had she availed herself of proposed vacations.

Therefore, Dalton, arriving one morning, was most agreeably surprised to find the office ancient substituted by a most pleasing creation in femininity.

She raised her eyes in a comprehensive inventory of Dalton and then dropped them demurely.

"I am Miss Holly," a well-bred little voice explained. "Miss Moore's substitute stenographer."

It was like Miss Moore, in her superior eagerness to put some one in her place without first consulting the wishes of her employer.

"Is—Miss Moore still?" Dalton was bashful in the presence of women—especially when they were pretty women. He would have liked to give a frigid touch to the question, but to his

fingered an effusion positively bristling with errors.

"By the way, Miss Holly," casually asked the real estate man. "What business school did you graduate from, and where were you employed previous to your coming here?"

An eloquent silence caused him to turn and stare at the white faced girl. There was a terrified, hunted look in her eyes hard to define.

"Never mind," added the man, hastily. "Mere idle curiosity, you know, he ended weakly. "I—er—just wondered."

Miss Holly gave a relieved gasp.

"One would have thought I had sentenced her to be shot," grumbled Dalton to himself. His thoughts reverted to the absent Miss Moore and her sublime nerve in leaving this most incapable slip of a girl in her place. And still—

He was glad!

Dalton, although uncomfortable in the presence of, pretty girl, was a most appreciative admirer—at a distance. The other sex, in a whole-some, honest way, appealed to him. But a hard struggle with fate had given more frivolous youths with dotting fathers and unlimited bank accounts the advantage. When Dave Dalton was financially able to rest from the labors of his early years and take his pleasure with the sugar-and-cream youth of the land he found the inexplicable fear in his heart that would have been weaned away had he had the time to mingle with the fair sex in early youth.

He watched them from a distance. Despite the work turned out by this girl substitute she was unusually fair to look upon. Dalton reveled in her presence, even though he writhed at her spelling, her punctuation, her proneness to error.

A month passed. Dalton, now blindly accustomed to an extremely bad stenographer, wondered at the prolonged absence of Miss Moore.

"By the way, Miss Holly," He approached the subject without a symptom of the bashful preamble that would have weakened the phrase some months before. He and the slim maid at the typewriter were on a firm footing of friendship. "When is Miss Moore to return?"

Results were surprising. Miss Holly turned a painfully red face to her employer, and her eyes were deep with the old appeal.

"Am I—am I not doing the work all right?" The question quivered on the sensitive lips of the girl. Dalton strove his best to hide the telltale light in his eyes, as they rested upon the becoming stain covering her cheeks.

"Why, certainly," he hastened to assure her. "Only it seems to me that she is taking an unusually long vacation. Probably she is making up for lost time," he hastened to add. "Anyhow, I don't care. She has never been away before, and—er—I rather like it. She can stay as long as she likes."

To Dalton's amazement, the girl flung her pretty arms recklessly down on the protesting keys, and burst into convulsive sobs.

In an instant the youth was out of his chair, and bashfulness and the ethics of a well regulated business office forgotten, was on his knees beside the girl, one firm arm about her.

"Do—don't," gasped the weeping maid. "You don't know what I have done."

"But I don't care," protested Dalton, the victim of conflicting emotions. "Only for heaven's sake stop crying. You don't need to worry. You— you can have Miss Moore's job. I'll discharge her when she returns. Listen, girl, I love you; I want you near me always." He sounded wildly. "Can't you see how it is? I—I want you to marry me."

Through tear-misted eyes, the substitute stenographer looked up at him, suddenly calm.

"I must confess," she began tragically, and resolutely thrust his arm aside. "There—there is no Miss Moore."

"Is no Miss Moore?" reiterated her employer, inanely.

"No!" gasped the girl. "Nor—nor no Miss Holly."

"Never mind," soothed Dalton. "Tell me some other time. You are hysterical and shut."

The girl flushed. "Miss Moore was my aunt," she said, "and—she did, and so there is no Miss Moore. She told me to deceive you until I learned to do the work better. I am sorry—ah, I really am—I am awfully sorry. Then, half reminiscence; "I didn't know that any one could be as nice as you."

"I love you, girl," Dalton's voice was husky with emotion. "Isn't that reason enough for being good to you?"

"Yes," faltered the voice of the maid. "But—but my name isn't Miss Holly. It is Holly Moore."

Runs in the Family.

Mr. Agile (to Mr. Stoutman, running for a car)—Hullo, old boy! I thought you were too lazy to run like that.

Mr. Stoutman (languidly)—Easily explained, my dear boy; laziness runs in our family—Lippincott's.

Alaska's Forest Area.

It is estimated that the total forest and woodland area of Alaska is approximately 100,000,000 acres, or about 27 per cent. of the land area of the territory. Of these about 20,000,000 acres may possibly bear timber of sufficient size and density to be used as saw timber, while the other 80,000,000 acres is mostly woodland which bears some saw timber, but mostly only firewood.

A Leaf From Her Past.

"What a remarkably penetrating voice Mrs. De Plunker has."

"Yes, that's an inheritance from her father."

"Oh?"

"He used to call carriages at the theater."

Wouldn't Work.

Yes—What story did you give your wife for not writing?

Crimsonbeak—"That my fountain pen wouldn't work."

And wouldn't it work?

"The story? No!"—Yonkers Statesman.

The Tourist's Method.

"Brown is like the rest of the tourists."

"Why so?"

"He spent three weeks in Europe and three years boasting about it afterward."—Detroit Free Press.

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