

Sir Peter of the Hail

SOME FURTHER ADVENTURES OF PROFESSOR SHORTY Mc CABE

BY SEWELL FORD

SAY, I'm thinkin' of hikin' a husky boy with a club to do the turkey act for me. Or maybe I could get out an injunction against myself to keep me from leavin' home. What I need is a life sentence to stay in little old New York. It's the only place where things happen regular and sensible. If you see rocks flyin' round in the air, or a new building down the honchee-honchee an' shakin' its corners, or manhole covers poppin' off, you know just what's a-foolishin' but a little extra dynamite hand-dredges, or some hot-water gas touched off by a plumber.

But the minute I let some one lead me across a ferry, or beyond the Bronx, the event card is on the blink, and I'm a husky-doodle boy. Long's I don't get more'n a mile from Forty-second street in Professor McCabe, and the cops pass me the time of day. Outside of that I'm a stray, and any one that gets the fit like a cat to me.

Now, I run me studio here on the sidewalk, no fortune-tellin' on the side, no vibration frills, no electric stimulators. I can give 'em all the vibration that's good for their health with a pair of hat-stuffed mitts. But for all that I've been gettin' my name up as a belt-brasher, a hat-brasher.

You couldn't guess who it was that started me up against this last one. No, it wasn't John D. nor Uncle Russell; but you're warm, it was Pyramid Gordon. Sure! He's on my list. I'd had him as a regular for about a month—Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays, from 5 to 6—and he was just gettin' to be known as 'Lead Head' was when somethin' breaks loose down on the street that makes him forget everything but the figures on the tape. So he quits trainin'. About ten days later he drops in here one afternoon, with fur on his tongue, and his eyes lookin' like a couple of cold fried eggs.

Are you countin' or goin', Mr. Gordon, says I.

"Where, Shorty?" says he.

"Hospital," says I.

He grinned a little, the kind of grin a feller wears when he's been helped to his corner, after the count.

"I know," says he, "but when you've been sittin' for two weeks on a cot, and Shorty, who's been in the hospital, it would blow you up or open and let you fall in, you're apt to forget your lead."

"It ain't apt to forget you, though," says I. "Shall we have a little session right now?"

And then he springs his proposition. He'd got to go to Washington, and back inside of the next two breakfasts, and he wanted me to go along; some account of his liver, but mostly so he could forget that he was still on the lid. His private car was hitched to the tail of the Flyer, and he had just forty-five minutes to get aboard. Would I come?

"I'm wiped out by the time we get back," says he, "I'll make you a preferred creditor."

"I'll take chances on that," says I.

They did do the trick to Pyramid once, you know, but they'd never got him right since. They had him worried some this time, though. You could tell that by the way he smiled at the wrong time, and combed his deacons with his fingers. They're the only deacon whippers I ever had in the studio. Used to make me nervous when I hit 'em, for fear I'd drive 'em in. But he's dead game, Pyramid is, whether he's stoppin' mitts or buckin' the Upsight Oil push. So I grabs a few things off the wall, turns the joint over to Swifty Jones, and we takes for the ferry.

"Where's the other part?" says I, when I'd stood up the inside of the Adeline. There was room enough for a minstrel troupe.

"We're to have it all to ourselves, professor," says he. "And it's almost time for us to pull out; there's the last Cortland-street boat in."

Abraham was hearin' Mr. Rufus Rastus, the Congo Brunette that's master of ceremonies on the car, havin' an argument out in the vestibule.

"He was tryin' to shunt somebody. They didn't shunt, though, and in comes a long-legged old gent, wearin' one of those belted gilets that they make out of horse blankets for English tourists. He had a dinky cloth cap on the same pattern, and the lightest face I ever saw on a man. It wasn't a cheerful face, either; looked like he was huntin' for his own lambastes, and didn't care how soon he found it. Rufus Rastus was hangin' to one of his arms, splutterin' things about this bein' a private car, and gettin' no more notice taken of himself than as if he'd been an escape valve. Behind 'em, totin' a lot of leather bags of all shapes, was a peaked-nosed chap, who looked like he was doin' all the frettin' for a Don't Worry Club.

"It's honis Sir Peter," says the worried chap. "It's myde a mitykka, y' know, I'll get 'em out, sir."

"Danvers, shut up!" says Sir Peter.

"Yes, sir, directly, sir, but—" says he.

"Shut up now, and sit down!" Sir Peter wasn't scrappy about it. He just laid it as though he was tired. But Danvers uttered.

"Shall I give 'em the run?" says I.

"No," says Mr. Gordon; "there's the bell. We can get rid of them at the next stop."

Then he goes over to Sir Peter, tells him all about the Adeline's bein' a private wrap, and how he can change to a parlor car attention.

The old fellow seems to take it all in, lookin' him straight in the eye, without turnin' a hair, and then he says, just as if they'd been talkin' about it for a month: "You'd better wear a bucket, say I do. It looks a little odd, you know; but the deacons can't get through a bucket. Danvers!" he sings out.

"He's you don't understand," says Pyramid. "I said this was a private car—private car."

"Don't shout!" says Sir Peter. "I'm not deaf. I'd find you a bucket if I had an extra one; but I haven't Danvers."

This time Danvers edged in with one of those sole-leather cases that an Englishman carries his plug hat in.

"Doesn't you think Sir Peter—" says he.

"Yes; but you don't," says Sir Peter. "Hurry on, now!"

And I'll be welch'd if Danvers didn't

dig a wooden pail out of that hat case and hand it over. Sir Peter chuckles the cap, puts on the pail, drops the handle under his chin, and stretches out on a corner sofa as peaceful as a bunch-steer in the park.

"Looks like he's got his wheels all under cover," says I.

"Who is he?" says Mr. Gordon to Danvers.

"Lord, sir, you don't mean to say you don't know Sir Peter, sir?" says Danvers. "Why, see Sir Peter—the the Sir Peter. It's a bit hibernic at times, sir."

Well, we let it go at that. Sir Peter seemed to be enjoying himself; so we ples all the wicker chairs around him, opens the ventilators, and peels down for business.

Ever try handball in a car that's being cracked over switches at fifty miles an hour? So far as looks went, we were just as happy as Sir Peter with his wooden hat. We caromed around like a couple of six-spots in a dice box, and some of the footwork we did would have had a buck-and-wing artist cryin'. We was using a tennis ball, and when we'd get in three strokes without missin' we'd stop and shake hands. There wasn't any more sense to it than to a musical comedy; but it was makin' Mr. Gordon forget his troubles, and it was doin' his liver good. Danvers watched us from behind some chairs. He looked disgusted.

By the time we'd got half way across Jersey we was ready for the bathtub. And say, that's the way to travel and stay at home, all at once. A private car for mine. While we was puttin' on a polish with the Turkish towels, Rufus Rastus was busy with the dinner.

"Now, we'll have another talk with Sir Peter of the Fall," says Mr. Gordon. We took the barricade down, and found him just as we'd left him. Then he an' Pyramid gets together; but it was the wisest brand of conversation I ever heard. You'd have thought they was talkin' over the phone to the wrong numbers. Sir Peter would listen to all Gordon had to say, just as if he was gettin' next to every word, but his come-backs didn't hit by a mile.

"Sorry to disturb you," says Mr. Gordon; "but I'll have to ask you to change to a forward car next stop."

Sir Peter blinked his lamps at him a minute, and then he says: "Yes, it keeps the deacons out, and he taps the bucket, knowin' like, 'My own invention, sir. I'd advise you to try it if they ever bother you.'"

"Yes, I'll take your word for that," says Mr. Gordon; "but I'm afraid you'd have to be getting ready to move. This is my private car, you see."

"They always come point first," says Sir Peter; "that's how they get in, it's only the bucket that makes 'em shy off."

"Oh, the deacon," says Pyramid. "Here, Shorty, you try your luck with him."

"Sure," says I. "I've talked sense through thicker things than a wooden pail. First I raps on his apoia with me knuckles, just to ring him up. Then, when I gets his eye, I says, kind of coaxin': 'Pete, it's about seventeen after six. That's twenty-three for you. Are you next?'"

Now, say, you'd thought most any one would have dropped for a hint like that, dippy or not. But Sir Peter stuns me up without battin' an eye. He had a kind of dignified, solemn way of lookin', too, with eyes wide open, same's a judge chargin' a jury.

"You'll never need a bucket," says he. "Just then I heard something that sounded like pourin' water from a jug, and I looks around to see Mr. Gordon tartin' plum color and holdin' himself by the short ribs. I knew what had happened then. The nutty one had handed me the lemon."

"Scratch me off," says I. "I'm in the wrong class. If there's to be any more Bloomin'ville repairs, just count me out."

"Now, I wasn't sure of nothin' like that. If any one can get free ruddyville from me I'll write 'em an annual pass; but I couldn't see the use of monkeyin' with that hushouse boarder. Say, if you was payin' for five rooms and bath when you went on the road, like Mr. Gordon was, would you stand for any machinery-left butt-in? Like that I was waitin' for the word to pile Sir Peter on the baggage truck. Danvers and I.

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as a Conservative. Anyway, I've promised to vote for Balfour, or somebody like that next election; so I'm goin' to send word to Little Tim that he needn't come around. Had to do it, just to please the old gent. By the time we'd got to the little cups of black he'd switched to something else.

"I don't suppose you know anything about railroads?" says he to Mr. Gordon.

"Then it was my grin. Railroads is what Pyramid plays with, you know. He's a director on three or four lines himself, and is always lookin' for more. It's about as safe to leave a branch road out after nightfall when Gordon's around, as it would be to try to raise watermelons in Minnetta Lane. He grinned too, and said something about not knowin' as much about 'em as he did once.

With that Sir Peter lights up one of Mr. Gordon's Key West night-sticks and cuts a drift on the railroad business. That made the boss kind of sick at first. Railroads was something he was tryin' to forget for the evening. But there wasn't any shufflin' the old boy off. And say! he knows the one-cards all right. There was too much high finance about it for me to follow close; but anyways I seen that it made Mr. Gordon sit up and take notice. He'd peg in a question now and then, and got the old one so stirred up that after awhile he shed the bucket, tucked out one of his bags, and flashed a lot of papers done up in neat little piles. He said it was a report he was goin' to make to some board or other, if ever the deacons would quit botherin' him long enough.

Well, that sort of thing might keep Mr. Gordon awake, but not for mine. Half-way to Baltimore I turns in, leavin' 'em at it. I had a good snooze, too.

Mr. Gordon comes to my bunk in the mornin', very mysterious. "Shorty," says he, "we're in. I've got to go up to the State Department for an hour or so, and while I'm gone I'd like you to keep an eye on Sir Peter. If he takes a notion to wander off, you persuade him to stay until I get back."

"What you say goes," says I.

"I showed up the shade and sees that they'd put the Adeline down at the end of the train-shed. About all I could see of Washington was the top of old George's headstone stokin' up over a freighter. I fixed myself up and had breakfast, just as if I was in a boardin'-house, and then sits around waitin' for Sir Peter. He an' Danvers shows up after awhile, and the old gent calls for tea and toast and jam. Then I knows he's farther off his base than ever. Think of truck like that for breakfast! But he gets away with it, and then says to Danvers:

"Time we were off for the city, my man. I got a glimpse of trouble ahead right there, for that chump of a Danvers never made a move when I gives him the wink. All he could get into that peanut head of his at one time was to collect those leather bags and get ready to trot around wherever that long-legged old lunatic led the way."

"They've changed the time on that train of yours, Sir Pete," says I. "She don't come along until 10:25 now, Spring schedule," and I winks an eye loose at Danvers.

"Pon my word!" says Sir Peter, "you here yet? Danvers, show this person to the gates."

"Yes, sir," says Danvers. He comes up to me an' whispers, kind of ugly: "I say now, you'll have to stop chaffin' Sir Peter. I won't 'ave it!"

"and if you remember that, you can handle 'em easy."

And say, Sir Peter seemed to look tickled and interested. The first thing I know he'd chucked the bucket on my head and was doin' a war-dance, lambsartin' that tennis-ball on me to beat the cars. It was workin' all right.

When he got tired of that I organized a shiny game, with an umbrella and a cane for sticks, and a couple of wicker chairs for goals. He took to that too. First he shed his frock-coat, then his vest, and after awhile we got down to our undershirts. It was a hot game from the word go. There wasn't any half-way business about Sir Peter. When he started out to drive a goal through my legs he whacked good and strong and often. My shins looked like a baker's pole afterwards; but I couldn't squeal then. There was no way to duck punishment but to get the ball into his territory and make him guard goal. It wasn't such a cinch to do, either, for he was a lively old gent on his pink.

After about half an hour of that, you can bet I wished I'd stuck to the bucket game. But Sir Peter was as excited over it as a boy with a new pair of roller-skates. He wouldn't stand for any change of programme, and he wouldn't stop for breathin'-spells. Rufus Rastus came out of his coop once to see what the row was all about, but when he saw us mixed up in a scrimmage for goal he says: "Good Lawd or mighty!" lets out one yell, and shuts himself up with his canned soup and copper pans. I guess Danvers thought I was draggin' his boss around by the hair; for I heard him yell once in awhile, but he couldn't get loose.

Sir Peter began to leak all over his head, and his gray hair got mussed up, and his eyes was bulgin' out; but I couldn't get him switched to anything else. Not much! Shiny was a new game to him, and he was stuck on it.

"Whew-ree!" he'd yell, and swing that crook-handled cane, and bang would go a fancy gas globe into a million pieces. But a little thing like that didn't faze him. He was out for goals, and he wasn't particular what he hit as long as the ball was kept movin'.

It was a hot pace he set, all right. Every time he swung I had to jump two feet high, or else get it on the shins. And say! I jumped when I could. I'd have given a sabbie-lined overcoat for a pair of leg-guards just about then; and if I could have had that young bur-ward doctor to myself for about ten minutes—well, he'd have learned something they didn't tell him at Bellevue.

Course, I don't keep up regular ring trainin' these days; but I'm generally fit for ten rounds or so any old time. I thought I was in good trim then, and that dippy old snooter had rushed me for about 25 goals. Then I began to breathe hard and wish some one would ring the gong on him. There was no counting on when Mr. Gordon would show up; but his footsteps wouldn't have made me sad. I've let myself in for some lay stunts in my time; but this gettin' tangled up with a bad dream that had come true—well, that was the limit. And I'd started out to do something real easy. You could have bought me for a bunch of pink trading-stamps.

And just as I was wonderin' if this Bloomin'ville seance was to go on all day, Sir Peter gives out like a busted grog, and I reckon things was loopin' the loops when he looked at 'em; but his

bluff that he'd never had the thing on his head.

"Oh, well," says I, "you've got a right to be some if you want to. It's your turn, anyway. But let me swap you off a little."

He didn't kick on that, and I was settin' busy with warm water and towels when the door opens, and in drifts Mr. Gordon with three well-fed gent's behind him.

"Great ones!" says he, blazin' up both hands. "Shorty, what in blazes has happened?"

"Nothin' much," says I. "We've been playin' a little shiny."

"Shiny?" says he, just as though it was somethin' I'd done, and that he was wonderin' if I'd done it.

"Sure," says I. "And Sir Peter won out. As a shiny player he's a bird."

Then the three other ducks swarms in, and the way they powwow around there for a few minutes was enough to make a certain seance for a Third-venue melodrama.

Mr. Gordon claimed 'em down though, after a bit, and then I got a chance. I was a little riled by that time, I guess. I was offered to the pillows on both hands and take 'em all three at once, kikin' allowed.

"Oh, come, Shorty," says Mr. Gordon. "These gentlemen have been a little hasty. They don't understand, and they're great friends of Sir Peter. This is the British Ambassador, Lord Winchester, and these are his two secretaries. Now, what about this shiny?"

"It was a stem-winder," says I. "Sir Peter was off side most of the time; but I don't carry no froth for that."

Then I told 'em how I done it to keep him off the tracks, and how he got so warmed up he couldn't stop until he ran out of steam. They were polite enough after that. We shook hands all round, and I went in and resurrected Danvers, and they got Sir Peter fixed up so that he was fit to go in a cab, and the whole bunch clears out.

In about an hour Mr. Gordon comes back. He wears one of the won't-come-off kind, and steps like he was feelin' good all over. "Professor," says he, "you needn't be surprised at gettin' a medal of honor from the British government. You seem to have cured Sir Peter of the bucket, hadn't you?"

"We're quiet, then," says I. "He's cured me of wantin' to play shiny. Say, did you find out who the old snooter was, anyway?"

"The old snooter," says he, "if the crack financial expert of England, and a big gun generally. He'd been over here lookin' into our railroads, and when he gets back he's to make a report that will be accepted as law and gospel in every capital of Europe. It was while he was working on that job that his brain took a vacation; and it was your shiny game the doctors say, that saved him from the insane asylum. You seem to have brought him back to his senses."

"He's welcome," says I; "but I wish the British government would ante up a bottle of opium-cure. Look at that shin."

"We'll make 'em pay for that shin," says he, with a kind of it's-coming-to-us grin. "And by the way, Shorty; those few after-dinner remarks that Sir Peter made about his reputation, you could forget about 'em. He ain't nothin' but a bucket."

"I can forget everything but the bucket," says I.

"Good," says Mr. Gordon. "It—It's a private matter for awhile."

We took a hansom ride around town until the moon limited was ready to pull out. Never saw a cat 'tude do a man so much good as that one back to New York seemed to do Mr. Gordon. He was as pleased with himself as if he was a red apple on the top branch.

It was a couple of weeks too before I knew why. He let it out one day after we'd had our little 'tude session with the gloves. Seems that hearin' Sir Peter tell what he was goin' to report about American railroads was just like givin' Gordon an owner's tip on a hand-cap winner; and he'd wanted to be hit on the head with a maul, either. Near as I can get it, he worked that inside information for a while, and there's a hum-drum down around the street that don't know just what hit 'em yet.

Me? Little Rollo? Say! this is on the foot-rule now; but would it be carryin' too much baggage for a plug like me to sport one of them brass-bound gasolene carryalls? What?



"LOOKS LIKE HE'S GOT HIS WHEELS ALL UNDER COVER," SAYS I.



RUFUS RASTUS WAS TRYING TO SHUNT SOMEBODY.

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did it, though. Regular John Drow numbers, the old duffer had. Lord knows where he thought he was, though; somewhere on Highgate Road, I suppose. But wherever it was, he was right to home-called Rufus Rastus Jenkins, and told Danvers he could go for the day. Gave me the gooseflesh back until I got used to it; but Mr. Gordon seemed to take it all as part of the game.

It beat all the dinners I ever had, that one. There we were, poundin' over the rails through Pennsylvania at a mile-a-minute clip, the tomato soup doin' a merry-go-round in the plates, the engine lookin' for grades-

and if you remember that, you can handle 'em easy."

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self and crushed the unfortunate youth. Even such a cause of danger cannot always be foreseen and allowed for, but there is one consideration which it is never superfluous or inopportune to insist upon, and that is the state of health of the Alpine climber. In fact, some 12 years ago a congress of Swiss medical men, convened at Arosa, issued, after full discussion, a unanimous recommendation that professional mountaineers should be available at the stations both of departure and arrival of even the funicular mountain railways to save the traveler from the dangers of the Alps. It is true to an altitude of several thousand feet with what Sir William Gull used to call a tired heart, and also in case of sudden cardiac failure at the terminus to render all assistance possible. In truth, many cases of so-called 'misadventure' are simply cases of instantaneous arrest of the heart's action on the brink of a crevasse or other danger point. This was exemplified in the tragic fate of Baron Pécoux, an enthusiastic Belgian 'peak-stormer', who, some 12 years ago, in the presence of Queen Margherita (now the Dowager), dropped down dead when 'negotiating' one of those critical 'hazards' on the Lyskamm. There was no misplaced feeling or loss of balance due to a false step, but the sudden failure of a heart known to be atheromatous and exhausted by many hours' exertion.



I WAS GETTING BUSY WITH WARM WATER AND TOWELS.

"Help!" says I. "There's a rat after me."

"He's bash yer bloomin' nose in!" says he, battin' pink behind the ears.

I was wishin' that would fetch him, and it did. He comes at me wide open, with a pained like a soft-shell crab. I slips down the stateroom passage, out of sight of Sir Peter, catches Danvers by the scruff, chucks him into a berth, and ties him up with the sheets, as careful as if he was to go by express.

"Now make all the holler you want," says I. "It won't disturb us none," and I shut the door.

But Sir Peter was a different proposition. I didn't want to rough-house him; he was too ancient; and anyway, I kind of liked the old chap's looks. He'd forgotten all about Danvers, and was makin' figures on an envelope when I got back. I let him figure away, until all of a sudden he puts up his pencil and lugs out that bucket again.

"It's quit rainin'," says I.

Alps a Dangerous Playground

SIR LESLIE STEPHEN'S familiar name for the Swiss Alps—"The Playground of Europe"—takes on a somewhat sinister aspect when we realize that the Alps are responsible for over 60 accidents a year. So many of these are fatal that the Lancet (London, November 13) seems justified in saying that this "playground" has for many years been a graveyard—a fact which experience from year to year emphasizes rather than modifies. Says this paper:

"Statistics officially compiled for 1907 supply us with the death rate due to misadventure in the year now closing on the Alps—Italian, Swiss and Austrian, and those of Dauphine. Actual loss of life is noted in 75 cases, the majority of the victims being divided between Swiss and German 'peak-stormers'; next in number are those from the British Isles, and then come the Italians. Among the causes of this fatality, that which overtops all others is the footholdlessness (every year more prevalent) of ascending the more difficult ascents without a guide; in many cases, moreover, without even a companion. The Alps which figure first in the black list as the scene of most frequent 'misadventure' are those of Central Switzerland—the Bernese Oberland particularly; next come the Graian Alps, the highest peak of which is the Grand Paradiso, and the Pennine range, culminating in Mont Blanc and Monte Rosa. Among the 'incidents of fatality' it is classed under the head of 'flower' (the dangerous localities) the edelweiss tempting the majority of victims. Of those thus injured to their destruction there were two ladies of mature years, two young ladies and three young men. Accidents not terminating fatally, but more or less grave, were 250—some not figuring in that number from not having been reported or registered."

The compilers of the above statistics, the writer goes on to tell us, recommend "international action" on the part of Switzerland, France, Italy and Austria to prohibit this class of dangerous mountains unless the adventurer is accompanied by a duly qualified and accredited guide. We read:

"So accented he might be spared even such risks as that which cost the young student, Herr Manek, his life only a few days ago when clambering up the Jungfrau—a mass of ice, loosened by the Summer heat, having finally detached it-

A Factory Girl Slings.

W. P. Eaton in Storyday's. You make me with your whirl aprons, Stone-eyed Yiddish maid. Kinging as you hem a row, sleeve over turn a strip of broad, I lie in bed and nurse your infant. That spoiled my morning rest. And wonderin' on earth connected That airy-ripping rest. He may get up what time it please him—For that and so it means the homestead. But what is that you sing. . . . To lose my best sleep, too? A plaintive, minor thing. Perhaps they sang it in the steeple. To comb your eyelids down, Perhaps for you it means the homestead. Where? Grasses. At night the sweet dew falls; I rise to face the day. And humbly send my prayer for pardon Across the area-way.