

by Perceval Gibbon

The Story of a Thrilling Night in Paris and Its Bizarre Aftermath.

AT THE BACK of the room, beyond the marble-topped counter of the American bar—America is to her tailors—the little tables were spaced widely; the clientele of the place was of that kind which frequently needs privacy. Without the moderate traffic of the Rue Dauphine, the leakage from the spate of the boulevard, ceased past its door; within, two or three ornate ladies sat each alone at a table with her untouched glass of liqueur before her, motionless, wordless, sunk in a seeming of gentle melancholy, and in the furthest corner Mr. James Smith—held forth across his table for the enlightenment and profit of his two young friends.

"Neumann!" he was saying in accents of surprise. "Pony Neumann! Mean to tell me you don't know Pony Neumann? Well, you certainly ought to know Pony. It's an education for any man."

He himself was a man of about 20 years of age, bullet-headed and thick in the neck. His clothes and linen had a showy sumptuousness; the whole of his accoutrement was choice and costly, and with it went that manner of sophistication, that air of gesture and attitude, which is only acquired to perfection by those to whom bars and race courses and gaming houses are the familiar landmarks of life. His blunt-featured face had none of callous cheeriness, but neither the graces of his manner nor the gloss of his equipment availed to hide the feral and dangerous quality that inhabited the man as a flame inhabits a lantern. Of his two young companions, one looked like a jockey and the other like a curate; nevertheless, neither was a horseman nor an ecclesiastic.

"Well, what about 'im'?" queried the counterpart curate, restively. "What is he, any 'er?"

"What is he?" sneered James Smith. "He's everything that you're not, me lad, and everything you'll never be. When you're talking about Pony you want to be careful; he's got more friends than a pretty millonair, and I don't know the man that can say he ever got the better of him. Fellows like you—"

"But what is 'er'?" interrupted the other. "What's 'er' do? Us three—well, 'im an' me, our game is smashing stummers; you're a jeweler; but what's this 'ere Pony?' That's what I was asking."

"Oh! Mr. James Smith was mollified. "Well, I don't know just what you'd call him. He's in a class by himself. January 31st March, you'll find him at Monte Carlo or Biarritz; then a month or two in Paris; then over to London for the season and back to Trouville or Ostend about August. Then he'll trot off to Carlsbad, maybe, and in the winter you're likely to hear of him at Cairo or Thebes. Wherever the swells are—the real swells, the real money—the real swells you'll find old Pony holding his own with the best of 'em and not losing by it, you bet! Why, if that fellow was to write a book, there'd be scores of 'em—scores, I tell you, from lords an' bishops an' birds of paradise of that kind down to members of parliament an' stock brokers—that'd never be able to show their faces again."

"Yess, he's got the style for it. Man of about 45, I should say, and plumpish, with a kind of short-spoken heartiness about him and a friendly look; you'd take him to be a colonel in the army or a lively kind of country squire. And he's got that trick of dressing—you know! The minute you see it you know it's the right thing. I've seen him on the Promenade des Anglais at Nice. Two or three of 'em come along together, General This an' Sir John That an' old Pony all together—Pony doin' the talkin', too—an' I give you my word that out of 'em the bunch of them Pony was the one I could have been afraid of an' called 'er' when I was speakin' to him."

The youth who looked like a jockey coughed conspicuously, wiped his lips and glanced at his handkerchief; he returned it to his pocket. "Ye-ek," he drawled. "Blackmail's his game, then?"

Mr. Smith hesitated. "I dunno," he said thoughtfully. "You can hardly call it blackmail; when Pony does it. And it isn't his only game, anyhow; Pony never misses a chance. Why, talkin' of Nice, there used to be a fellow down there, the Honorable Samus Barzilac, Young feller, was son of a lord, but his family had kicked him out, and he spent his time busily and solemnly going to the devil. He was regularly tottering from side to side between delirium tremens and suicide; I never saw such a beastly sight as that chap when he really got going. Well, Pony had a look at him an' put out feelers for information about him an' his people, and when he'd learned all he wanted to know he took charge of him."

"The Honorable Sam had been in drink cure homes before till most of 'em were sick of him; there didn't seem to be a blue ribbon doctor in the world that could handle him; but Pony was a new experience for the guy. Pony took him to some filthy hole on the top of a snowy old Alp where you needed wings for goin' up an' where you were apt to get a harp and a halo, too, when you started to come down, and there he put him through it. He made him do winter sports till he was black an' blue all over; he cut off his liquor, his smokes, an' his dope, and he exercised a friendly influence over him till the Honorable Sam couldn't call his soul his own."

"And in the spring he took him home an' presented him to his family. They'd never seen him before when he wasn't so sodden with booze that he squelched when he moved, and Pony handed 'em over a lean, leathery young athlete, with nothing wrong with him but an awful way of carrying whammy. Pony was mentioned. Were they grateful? They were so grateful that when Pony

wanted to get rid o' some copper stock he'd managed to dig up they took it off his hands before he'd finished suggesting it.

"Still," Mr. Smith continued, "talkin' of blackmail, I'd like to tell you about a queer thing I was in with Pony. Yess—"

"Let's have some drinks, then," stipulated the young man who looked like a curate.

Mr. Smith accepted the condition and the drinks were duly served. When the waiter had departed he resumed:

"The game began one day when I was havin' my lunch in the Rocheser down the street here. I was alone an' I was just about done and ready to pay my bill an' go when in strolls Pony an' another man that I only know by sight. Pony was like he always is, cheery, masterful, and certain of himself; but the feller with him, a tall, drooping sort of chap, was lookin' sort of ill and worried. I won't tell you his name, 'cos he's still on Pony's list; an' by the looks of it, I thought for a moment that Pony must have been makin' 'im too hard. Pony nods to me and half stops. 'Don't go away for a minute, Jim,' he says; 'I might want you.'"

"The other one gave me a sort of thoughtful, gloomy look and Pony led him on, whispering to him as they went. They took a table at the other end of the room, and after talkin' together for a few minutes they gave their order to the waiter and Pony looked up and beckoned me over."

"Sit down, Jim," he said to me. "This is Jim Smith," he told the other feller. "I thought for a moment that Pony must have been makin' 'im too hard. Pony nods to me and half stops. 'Don't go away for a minute, Jim,' he says; 'I might want you.'"

"The other one gave me a sort of thoughtful, gloomy look and Pony led him on, whispering to him as they went. They took a table at the other end of the room, and after talkin' together for a few minutes they gave their order to the waiter and Pony looked up and beckoned me over."

"Sit down, Jim," he said to me. "This is Jim Smith," he told the other feller. "I thought for a moment that Pony must have been makin' 'im too hard. Pony nods to me and half stops. 'Don't go away for a minute, Jim,' he says; 'I might want you.'"

"The other one gave me a sort of thoughtful, gloomy look and Pony led him on, whispering to him as they went. They took a table at the other end of the room, and after talkin' together for a few minutes they gave their order to the waiter and Pony looked up and beckoned me over."

"Sit down, Jim," he said to me. "This is Jim Smith," he told the other feller. "I thought for a moment that Pony must have been makin' 'im too hard. Pony nods to me and half stops. 'Don't go away for a minute, Jim,' he says; 'I might want you.'"

"The other one gave me a sort of thoughtful, gloomy look and Pony led him on, whispering to him as they went. They took a table at the other end of the room, and after talkin' together for a few minutes they gave their order to the waiter and Pony looked up and beckoned me over."

"Sit down, Jim," he said to me. "This is Jim Smith," he told the other feller. "I thought for a moment that Pony must have been makin' 'im too hard. Pony nods to me and half stops. 'Don't go away for a minute, Jim,' he says; 'I might want you.'"

"The other one gave me a sort of thoughtful, gloomy look and Pony led him on, whispering to him as they went. They took a table at the other end of the room, and after talkin' together for a few minutes they gave their order to the waiter and Pony looked up and beckoned me over."

"Sit down, Jim," he said to me. "This is Jim Smith," he told the other feller. "I thought for a moment that Pony must have been makin' 'im too hard. Pony nods to me and half stops. 'Don't go away for a minute, Jim,' he says; 'I might want you.'"

"The other one gave me a sort of thoughtful, gloomy look and Pony led him on, whispering to him as they went. They took a table at the other end of the room, and after talkin' together for a few minutes they gave their order to the waiter and Pony looked up and beckoned me over."

"Sit down, Jim," he said to me. "This is Jim Smith," he told the other feller. "I thought for a moment that Pony must have been makin' 'im too hard. Pony nods to me and half stops. 'Don't go away for a minute, Jim,' he says; 'I might want you.'"

"The other one gave me a sort of thoughtful, gloomy look and Pony led him on, whispering to him as they went. They took a table at the other end of the room, and after talkin' together for a few minutes they gave their order to the waiter and Pony looked up and beckoned me over."



the bottom of the pack. I picked up my cards and threw them into the middle of the table.

"We'll have that deal again," I said.

"They all stared at me as if they were astonished and started. It was well done, but—no, he nodded at me like a judge, because, though he didn't don't you know, and I saw through it."

"Why, what's the matter?" asked the American. "Are you drunk?"

"No," I said. "Not nearly drunk enough to stand that kind of deal."

"His laid the cards down before him and started to get up. I jumped up, too, and so did the others."

"If you're trying to say I'm not dealing straight," he shouted, and I pointed a finger at him.

"You deal yourself a card from the bottom of the pack, you sharper," I answered.

"Why, you swine," he shouted. They were all around me and I stepped back against the buffet where the bottles were. And all at once I saw the bearded man with a pistol in his hand. I had my hand on a champagne bottle, and I stepped forward and swung it at him. I got him on the side of the head—a clinking piece bang—and the bottle flew to pieces in my hand and down he went."

Mr. James Smith laughed. "It was funny to see him while he told about it," he said. "Like a little girl tellin' how she killed a nasty big wasp—proud and horridly, you know. But the rest of the story was queer."

"The minute the bearded fellow went down two of the English chaps got hold of his lordship and dragged him back, and the third knelt down above the fallen man. His lordship was still kicking and plunging in the hands of the fellows who were holding him when this third man got up and holds out his hands, dripping with blood. 'You've killed him!' he says. 'Let him go now,' he tells the other two. 'We've got to think what to do and think quick!'"

"It staggered his lordship. They let him go and stood, all three, consulting together in murmurs, while he, stepping slow and on tiptoe, edged forward to look. The body was lying beside the card table on its back, like him. At any rate, he began to watch things pretty close, as far as the liquors he'd taken would let him."

"And I'll swear," he was telling me, 'that the dealing was crooked. That American had the cards, and I distinctly saw him flick a card from

"Well, you've done it," they told him, when he was able to listen.

"You've killed Casey."

certificate of identification and a copy of the police permit for burial."

"O' I said. 'But who was this Casey, anyhow? I've known two or three Caseys, but if you was to try hittin' any one of them with a bottle after he'd drawn a gun you'd need identifyin' and buryin'—not him!'"

Old Pony nodded. "Yes, there's that, he said thoughtfully."

"And then," I went on, "it doesn't sound real to me that three poker shemps would have to foodle a deal so badly as all that in order to squeeze the juice out of his lordship here. And which of the three Englishmen was a doctor to make sure the man was dead so quick? And why have they taken in this messenger chap? And why are they so blamed modest and cheap to deal with?"

"His lordship stared, but old Pony understood. 'I ought to ha' seen that for myself,' he said to him. 'If my little—er bit of information is worth a couple of h-andred to you now an' again, 'cos I've hit a man with a bottle myself in my time and he didn't bleed so lavish!'"

"Pony sat thinking for a while. 'First thing is to get a look at this bald headed messenger,' he said. 'One of 'em might know him by sight. Where have you got to meet him and hand over the money?'"

"It was to be in a certain big cafe on the boulevard at three in the afternoon."

"Well be there," said Pony. "And you pretend not to know us. Prob'ly we'll be able to fix things up for you. 'Cos I'm bloody if I'm goin' to have a lot of crooks like come trespassin' on ground that I discovered for myself."

"The smallest, containin' only one room with kitchen and bathroom."

"And how about bathrooms?"

"Any American would ask the question, be he of the athletic shower-every-morning kind or only of the Saturday night tub variety."

"But the workman of France is willing to climb seven flights of stairs 'cos he's had his bath in a washbowl, foregoin' both elevator and bathroom to make expenses meet for the roof over his head. It will be hard enough, architects say, to get him used to what modern plumbing there is in the new houses, an' educatin' him to a bathtub must be the work of the next generation."

"In addition to the group of apartments to be completed in July, construction will soon begin on a new group of five apartment houses containin' 400 flats each. These will cost from 17,000,000 to 25,000,000 francs each to build."

50,000 That's Needed.

It is estimated that 50,000 flats will be needed in all to provide for the present shortage of houses in Paris, without taking into account future growth in population. All of these the city cannot hope to provide, and for this reason the putting up of municipal tenements in Paris in no way discourages private building enterprise."

With this future building in mind, the city of Paris held in the zoological gardens an exhibition of methods and materials of construction, with a view to findin' some apartment houses more economical still, and especially of findin' some more economical building material than brick and stone."

Among the exhibitors at this "concourse," which was concluded April 19, was an American architect, Milton Dana Morrill, who urged the use in future municipal buildings of an American system of concrete construction, through which a 40 per cent saving may be effected in building costs."

Meanwhile, most places at home, city councils and state legislatures, appoint rent committees, rent boards, pender and some of them evade, rents continue to climb, or remain stationary; and the tenant continues to be squeezed, and apparently, will continue to do so long after the Parisian has resumed contented silence in the living room of his economical municipal apartment."

Every flat has windows on two sides, so that a current of air can be sent through the apartment. Anyone familiar with the odors of French cooking will appreciate what a boon this is to the household of the workman class, where kitchen and dining room often are one.

One of the hardest tasks that fall to the lot of the French mother is doing the family wash. Everything is being done in these new apartment houses to lighten that task. A large laundry room, well lighted and well ventilated, is provided on the ground floor.

There are five types of apartments, varying from the largest, containing three bedrooms for children, one of them double; one parents' bedroom, one kitchen and one dining room, to

PARIS BUILDS MUNICIPAL APARTMENTS TO HELP SOLVE BIG HOUSING PROBLEM

Relief in Sight for Poor Flat Dweller and in Story of Project Representing Outlay of \$14,000,000 Is Seen Lesson for American Cities to Learn.

BY HERBERT M. AND LILLIANE R. DAVIDSON

PARIS, Feb. 4.—"High rents! Too few houses!" Build a tower high as Jack's beanstalk in the middle of the Atlantic, climb to the top, and shout those words through a magically amplified megaphone.

Paris, the city of two continents will respond with a groan of understanding. And turn, hopefully but in vain, toward another rental agency!

In Paris, the groans would be augmented, not only by Gallic fervor, but by genuine despair. A French family, house hunting, differs from an American family, ditto, only by the additional degree to which money has depreciated, the number of steps to climb through scarcity of elevators, and the universal absence of the by-product, family silver.

But for the poorer flat dweller of Paris relief is in sight, and in the story of that relief lies a lesson for American municipalities.

"If there are not enough decent economical dwellings for the people of Paris and if a large majority of those existing are in the hands of profiteers," argues logically enough that municipality, "we'll just build some, that's all."

Which is exactly what Paris is doing. Reviving a pre-war project, the city has pushed it forward with remarkable speed and efficiency, and by the first of July will have completed and ready for occupancy 14 municipally owned and operated apartment houses containing nearly 2000 flats.

Already the Parisian housewife of the laboring and clerical classes has descended in flocks upon the municipal rental agency in the Rue Taitbout. Parking her baby buggy on the sidewalk, she has come to investigate and remained to rent, and practically all of the 2000 apartments already are assigned. As for the baby buggies, the more of them the cheaper the rent, but of that more later, and American apartment house owners are invited to read.

The municipal apartment house project in Paris was inaugurated in 1912, when a bond issue of 200,000,000 francs (now about \$14,000,000) was

voted to construct houses in Paris which would combine the three qualities of sanitation, beauty and economy.

A fair was held to investigate materials and methods of construction which would be at the same time cheap, durable, healthy and comfortable. A contest was held in which architectural plans for the houses were selected. Five prizes were awarded and it is according to the model which won first prize that the first group of 14 houses is being built.

Next, large strips of land were set aside from the city's parks and promenades, chosen in such a way as not to interfere with the beauty or adequate size of any public place. Of these a strip on Avenue Emile Zola was chosen as the site for the first group.

All this in 1912. The war, of course, interfered with the entire project, but the housing crisis which followed the war called for its immediate revival.

Work was started in spite of the greatly changed financial conditions. Paris had to abandon her housing project, or swallow the loss. She chose the latter course. In spite of a slight additional sum raised and the scheduling of rents a trifle higher than was planned originally, Paris will have to foot a large bill. Under present conditions it will take the houses from 100 to 125 years to pay for themselves. And they are only being constructed to last 100 years!

In the group to be completed in July, 11 out of the 14 apartments are rented. They will house in 1476 flats, 7590 persons, the entire population of an average size French village. Each house cost 6,000,000 francs.

How are these apartments rented? First, preference is given in renting to workmen and the small-salaried clerical classes. Although it is believed that, in general, economic laws will operate in sending the small-income renter to these cheap houses, inquiry is made as to the status of the proposed tenant, and apartments rented only to those who could not otherwise afford such pleasant and hygienic lodgings.

Secondly, these apartment houses

are designed boldly and unashamedly to favor families with children, and the more the merrier. Two-thirds of each house is reserved for families with four children under 16 years old. And for every child under 16 belonging to a renter of one of the municipal apartments the fortunate father is allowed a rebate on his rent of some somewhat poorer grade.

The price-winning plan from which the houses are being built is an admirable piece of work. Every apartment opens on a street, giving not only ventilation but a view to every tenant—all of which is only another way of putting our familiar "all outside rooms." There are only two main entrances, making necessary only two concierges, which is French for janitors. Halls, which customarily take up great quantities of room in France, are reduced to a minimum.

Windows on Two Sides.

Every flat has windows on two sides, so that a current of air can be sent through the apartment. Anyone familiar with the odors of French cooking will appreciate what a boon this is to the household of the workman class, where kitchen and dining room often are one.

One of the hardest tasks that fall to the lot of the French mother is doing the family wash. Everything is being done in these new apartment houses to lighten that task. A large laundry room, well lighted and well ventilated, is provided on the ground floor.

There are five types of apartments, varying from the largest, containing three bedrooms for children, one of them double; one parents' bedroom, one kitchen and one dining room, to

"His lordship looked a bit startled at that, but presently he gathered himself together and ambled off, leaving Pony an' me alone together. Pony sat chewing his cigar and looking at the smoke of it."

"Presently Pony nudged me with his elbow; he'd seen our man flinch his blinkers with his small shining and close past our table walks the blessed messenger. I glanced up sort of absent minded and got a good look at him. He certainly was a miscellaneous sort of creature. Young, you'd say; not more than 30, by the gait of him; but on his face was a pair of big, round spectacles and from his collar up there wasn't a hair on him. He took off his hat as he sat down opposite his lordship, and he showed a dome like a billiard ball or an egg. An ordinary bald man has got fringes or wisps somewhere, but this freak wasn't so much bald as naked; it was downright indecent to sit there, beaming softly through his blinkers with his small shining through his scalp like that."

"This is a nightmare," murmured Pony to me. "There aren't really such people as that. If there are, there must be a reason for it. Think, Jim—thing, man! Where does this hairless wonder come from?"

"But I'd get no answer and Pony went on."

"This game's too queer not to mean something. Is this specimen the real murderer turning an honest penny? But that wouldn't explain anything. There's been good, sound sense behind every move in this business; they maneuvered his lordship just where they wanted him; and there's some reason, some special reason, for this fellow's peeled head to appear in it. Can't you make up a quick movie plot that'll fit the facts?"

"Over at the other table the bald man was still smiling kindly as his lordship passed over a big envelope. "He's got the loot an' he'll be gone in a moment," moaned Pony. Then suddenly he clapped his hand to his forehead and gave a sort of whispering shout."

"It's him," he said. "It must be—! It must be! Gosh, what a genius! Come on, Jim; we'll go over to them now."

"He got up, took his cane and gloves, and strolled across, me with him. I didn't understand at all, but I cleared for action in case a punch should be wanted and held my tongue. Pony was fine—smiling and lofty and more like a colonel than ever. The pair of 'em looked up as we came alongside their table."

"Hullo!" said Pony, affable and off handed. "I didn't know you two knew each other." He nodded to his lordship and then turned to the other. "You're lookin' very well, Casey!"

"There was a moment or two of silence, broken only by the fall of his lordship's jaw. The bald man stared up at Pony as if he was the devil. Pony went on smiling.

"Who—who are you callin' Casey?" demanded the bald man.

"Why, you 'course," said Pony. "Now, don't you start being silly with me, 'cos I haven't the patience. Sit down, Jim!"

"He pulled himself out a chair and we sat down, one on each side of the bald man, where he'd have to turn his back on one of us if he wanted to start anything with the other. His lordship was still goggling at the blood so lavish."

"Well, said Pony, 'any complaints? You aren't goin' to call in a policeman in 'er, Casey? I wouldn't if I were you!'"

"My name's not Casey," snarled the other. "The man named Casey is dead and buried, an' this man killed him."

"I know," nodded Pony, "and if you don't want him brought to life, about ten seconds to explain where you got that other corpse you hand

over that envelope which his lordship just gave you."

"He laid his open hand flat on the table and waited. The other glanced at him, and Pony just smiled at him. Me, I'd rather he'd pull a gun on me than smile at me like that; but then, you see, I know him. And after a bit it worked. The bald man let his breath go in a loud puff and fetched out the envelope and put it in Pony's hand."

"How did you know?" he said in a natural voice.

"His lordship got his thoughts in order at that. 'Are you Casey?' he cried. 'You—you infernal scoundrel, I'll—!'"

"Pony turned on him. 'Now, now!' he said. 'What's all this noise? After all the trouble that Jim and I have taken to break out like this! I've ashamed of you! It was as if he'd been scolding a noisy child, and Casey—it was him, all right—grinned at it."

"You see," Pony explained to him, 'in my humble opinion you overdid it. You were knocked out with a bottle while you'd a gun in your hand, and there was that silly unnecessary deal at poker, and the fact that you three friends, with a gold mine all to themselves, took in a fourth. But the thing that finally gave you away was—pardon me—that head of yours."

"You see, once I'd got my brains to workin' there was clear enough that a long-haired man with a beard couldn't choose a better disguise than a head like a bladder of lard. The only thing that still puzzles me is your dead body."

"Casey grinned again. 'Well,' he said, 'maybe there's a better disguise for a man with the police after him than a 500-franc funeral, but it's good enough for me. An' that corpse—it's only a question of biding your time and the Seine is certain to contribute an unknown Frenchman with a black beard which a few obligin' friends can go along and identify."

"But there's one thing that puzzles me," I put in. "You ain't got a mark nor a scar on you. Where'd all that blood come from, then?"

"Blood?" he says. "O, that! and he laughs. 'He provided the blood,' he says, nodding at his lordship. 'It was not a champagne bottle he hit me with. It was burgundy and that was the blood!'"

"His lordship gasped. 'I've had enough of this,' he snaps to Pony. 'Give me that money and I'm off!'"

"Pony stared at him. 'Give you the money?' he said. 'Why, it isn't yours; you gave it to Mr. Casey here. What the deuce should I give you the money for?'"

"If you want me to call a policeman in 'er," he cried.

"Yes!" said Pony and Casey together.

"That was enough for him and he shambled off, his very back blaspheming as he went. Pony and Casey and me sat and smiled at each other."

"Well," said Casey, "I suppose we split it 50-50?"

"I suppose not!" answered Pony sharply. "There'll be no split in this. His lordship was my private property before you ever heard of him and I'll have no poaching on my preserves, the late Mr. Casey. Remember that, if you please!"

"An' what about me?" I chimed in. "It was you that asked me to help in this; don't I get anything?"

"He had stood up while he was answering Casey and now he nodded down to me.

"Yes, Jim," he said, kindly. "You've been useful; you certainly deserve something. Lemme see, Jim; I'll let you off that 200 francs you owe me!"

"He smiled and nods and off he goes swinging his cane. O it certainly is an education for a man to know old Pony Neumann!"

(Copyright, 1922, by Chicago Tribune.)

Advertisement for Krause's Stellar Chocolates, featuring a large illustration of a chocolate box and text describing the product and its availability in gift packages.