

A Social Impossibility

By Donal H. Haines.

Copyright, 1907, by Donal H. Haines.

DESBRO shifted in his seat, settled his eyeglasses more firmly upon his nose and, with his gloved hands folded on the top of his cane, turned his glance again to the field of play. On all sides of him men and women were abandoning themselves to excesses of enthusiasm, but his cold neutral tinted eyes followed the movements of the muddied figures on the gridiron without a trace of excitement, though they lost no details of the play.

"I beg your pardon"—Desbro's high pitched, nervous voice cut incisively into the throaty cheer of which the man next to him was delivering himself—"but can you tell me who is the black haired man at tackle?"

"Babbington," snapped the other shortly and turned again to his cheering, while Desbro murmured courteous thanks.

Turning a pair of fieldglasses upon the field, Desbro watched the struggling figures intently for a few moments; then, laying the binoculars aside and lighting a cigarette, he commenced to talk to himself in a low tone, oblivious of his surroundings.

"A matchless physique," he muttered, "coupled with a face which might have been Adam's—as devoid of the spark of intelligence as an ox—the very embodiment of the game he is playing."

His intent gaze noted a sudden congestion of the padded figures below him and an eager craning of necks from the seats of the big stand. One of the opposing players lay stretched on the turf writhing in pain, while a group of the visiting eleven's supporters leaned from their seats and pointed impotently accusing fingers at the man called Babbington, who stood looking down at the prostrate figure with his hands on his massive hips.

A cold little sneer gathered about the corners of Desbro's mouth as he watched the incident.

"What callousness," he exclaimed softly, "what savagely unconscious callousness! Is the man an anachronism or only a brute? Such simple minded unconcern for physical agony caused by one's own hands is the mark of mere coarseness or a throwback."

"I must see more of this strange man," he told himself and walked to the gymnasium, where he sat for an hour gazing at the ceiling with a preoccupied air. When Babbington's great bulk emerged from the door leading to the baths an hour later, Desbro rose and walked to meet him.

"Mr. Babbington?" he asked. The other nodded.

"My name is Desbro," he went on rapidly, his suddenly keen eyes searching the other's face. "I come from the same part of the country that you do, and I thought possibly you might give me news of an old friend, Morton—Harold Morton. Did you happen to know him?"

"Morton?" he said slowly. "Morton? No, don't believe I know him."

"Ah, of course," Desbro hastened to say, "I thought perhaps—" And he wove a few sentences of easy fiction before turning abruptly on his heel.

A few hours later he sat in the billiard room of his fraternity house listening curiously to the talk of the men which centered about the game of the afternoon. The comments were all lively, enthusiastic, on the team's chances, on the individual prowess of the men, and constantly recurring in the hum of conversation was Babbington's name.

"The finest type of a player the crop of new men has produced," a fair haired man with a big voice called from one end of the smoky room.

"Right you are!" Desbro broke in suddenly. The men around the tables turned in astonishment, for to have Desbro offer comment on matters of this nature was unusual.

"Right you are, I say," he repeated, leaning back in his chair and surveying the curious faces through his eyeglasses. "This man is the very embodiment of the spirit fostered by this beautiful game of yours—built for a human chopping block or battering ram, as the case may demand! By the exertion of those muscles for which he is no more responsible than Thompson there for his red hair he brings down on his richly undeserving head the frenzied cheers of a sport crazed crowd. He sends a man less fortunately endowed physically than himself into a few moments of unhappy oblivion and then grins at you with crass satisfaction when you cheer him—not for himself or because his name means anything, but simply for what he has done."

"This Babbington comes out of nowhere," Desbro continued, "a graceless, coarse fibered clod, with a giant's strength and the broad ideas of a goat, hungry for notoriety of the sort his great muscles can command, and you papper his cheap cravings with uncouthness. You sit in the stands and shout yourselves hoarse while he is battering some poor fellow in the arena, and you will go further. You will desire the capture of this athletic lion in spite of the fact that he is a social impossibility, and you will be crowding around

trying to put your fraternity pins on his coat. Bah!

"I talked with the man, looked into his great, oxlike eyes—dead, devoid of the spark of real life!"

The unfinished sentence broke abruptly, and every eye in the room followed Desbro's startled glance to the doorway, where, turning his cane in his hands and staring at the speaker with an expression wholly indescribable, stood Babbington. For a moment there was the dead silence of utter embarrassment; then one by one the men turned to the tables, while Babbington cleared his throat and spoke.

"I came to see if possibly I hadn't misunderstood you," he said, turning to Desbro. "That name you mentioned was Morton, wasn't it?"

Desbro, redder than any man had ever seen him, nodded without speaking.

"I thought possibly I hadn't understood," Babbington explained, backing awkwardly out of the door, "and I did know a man named Horton."

A few moments later Desbro passed the door of the billiard room, wearing the raincoat and slouch hat which he invariably wore on the evening walks which were as much a part of his existence as his meals.

No man pretended to know the object of these nightly walks of Desbro's. To all inquiries he responded that "they gave him a chance to think without interruption."

At the gate Desbro paused to light a cigarette, and the flare of the match as he shielded it from the snappy October wind brought his thin features into prominence against the darkness. Babbington, standing under a tree not a dozen yards away, turned as the sulphur sputtered and saw. His great hand clinched instinctively into a fist, and he had already taken a step forward when Desbro turned and started quickly down the street.

Babbington waited a few moments, then stepped lightly on to the sidewalk and followed, quietly at first and then without caution as Desbro paid no attention to the footfalls behind him. He glanced now and then at the receding lights and then increased the length of his strides as Desbro's phrases throbbed through his mind.

"Social impossibility!" he muttered, gritting his teeth over the phrase. "I'll teach the little whelp!"

His eyes never left the little spark which marked the other's position, but every time he started to close the gap between them something checked him. His thoughts refused to run to any but a given point—a fierce desire to get his hands upon the man who had held his ignorance up to a roomful of men while he stood and listened helplessly. As he had stood under the tree in front of the house he had felt only a sense of impotency, of shame, a gutting feeling of disappointment which was not easy to understand, a sickening realization that some of Desbro's words had rung true.

Block after block the man in front walked, turning now to the right and now to the left, sometimes walking rapidly and again idling along at a snail's pace. They passed through the business streets, lonely and deserted under the harsh glare of the arc lights. Here Desbro paused to talk with a policeman with whom he seemed to be on excellent terms, and, turned suddenly cold at the sight of the patrolman, Babbington crossed the street and nearly lost his man, who wheeled abruptly into a dark side street.

Babbington was conscious that a struggle had commenced within him and that the first heat of anger was passing. He grew ashamed of his growing calmness, fearful lest the cooling influence of the walk rob him of the merited retaliation which he knew his massive arms could administer.

Desbro stopped abruptly to light another cigarette, and his pursuer halted in the midst of a stride. For an instant he paused irresolute, divided between the lingering desire to close his fingers on Desbro's neck and a sudden impulse to run, to get away from everything, back to the life where other men had lived and talked like himself. The hotter sensation triumphed, and Babbington had taken three quick, lithe steps toward his victim when, silent as the shadows from which they sprang, a little knot of men threw themselves at Desbro.

The shock of the attack not only drove from Babbington's mind every vestige of his own wrath, but bereft him for an instant of the power of motion. He heard Desbro give a low exclamation and saw by the last flicker of the match the slight figure attempting to shield itself by leaping behind an iron pole. In another instant he found himself in the center of a press of struggling figures. He received blows and felt the impact of his hand against flesh as he returned them.

"Where are you, Desbro?" he shouted. "Sing out!"

"Here," came a choking voice from behind him, "quick!"

A club struck Babbington's arm with a numbing shock, but he kicked the man who wielded it into insensibility and the next instant was tearing another ruffian from off Desbro's prostrate form. Two of the assailants lay on the ground, mere blotches in the darkness. The others had disappeared.

Desbro rose to his feet slowly and took a step toward his rescuer.

"I say," he commenced, then stopped abruptly. "So this is the cheap 'coals of fire' method you pursue, is it?" he continued, with a sneer.

A sudden easy smile passed over Babbington's face.

"No," he answered shortly; "this is what I came for," and he struck Desbro squarely in the face, felling him instantly.



"WILL YOU SHAKE HANDS, BABBINGTON?" HE ASKED.

no harder than he intended, he leaned against the iron post panting from his exertions. The two ruffians on the ground recovered their senses and scuttled off into the night. He could hear Desbro's watch ticking and kept track of the seconds for two full minutes. Then he noticed that the fallen man was bareheaded and pattered about on his hands and knees in the dead leaves and the slith of the gutter until he found Desbro's hat.

"Can you walk?" he asked shortly. The disheveled figure nodded, and in silence they made their way back through the deserted streets. In front of the fraternity house they separated without words.

Desbro gave up his nightly walks for a week and was seen but little outside his room. He explained his marred cheek and a stiffness in one leg by a fall through a broken crossing.

.....

"Going to make another character study of the game, Desbro?"

Desbro shook his head and smiled.

"I'm continuing one," he answered shortly.

It was with a more interested, less coldly critical expression that he followed the movements of the men on the white striped field beneath him. The problem confronting the varsity team was a different one from that which Desbro had watched on the first occasion, for instead of feeble opponents who would only afford them good practice they faced an eleven of their own class.

From the first the enemy's tactics had been obvious. They realized that in Babbington there was a living opposition which barred all progress to the varsity's goal line, and toward the wearing down of his great strength they had directed their efforts. Men had been led to the side lines pale and bleeding, and the list of the visitors' substitutes was diminished, but still Babbington formed the center of every attack and was the rock about which split the enemy's onslaughts. It was not a showy exhibition, but it was a splendid piece of physical stamina, and the great crowd was appreciative. They saw that Babbington's endurance would make victory possible, and they rose in a great wall of color and cheered him furiously.

"Babbington! Babbington!"

Close to the goal posts Babbington raised his great frame from the tangle of the last attack which had shattered its force upon him and faced the shouting crowds. Slowly he raised a huge fist and shook it in the face of the multitude, which grew wonderingly silent.

"Curse you," he shouted, and the sound of his hoarse voice carried to every part of the stands, "leave my name alone!"

Desbro smiled quietly.

"In the term 'social impossibility,'" he muttered, "I was guilty of gross injustice."

When the whistle sounded the end of the half, he scrambled down from his seat, climbed the wire fence inclosing the field and walked toward Babbington, who, with hanging head, was walking slowly toward the side lines.

"Will you shake hands, Babbington?" he asked, smiling.

Babbington looked up in surprise. Then his somewhat heavy features lighted up, and the big hand shot out.

.....

No Cause on Record.

There is no case on record of a cough or cold resulting in pneumonia or consumption after Foley's Honey and Tar has been taken, as it will stop your cough and break up your cold quickly. Refuse any but the genuine Foley's Honey and Tar in a yellow package. Contains no opiates and is safe and sure. T. F. Laurin, Owl Drug Store.

.....

Given up to Die.

B. Spiegel, 1204 N. Virginia street, Evansville, Ind., writes: "For over five years I was troubled with kidney and bladder affections which caused me much pain and worry. I lost flesh and was all run down, and a year ago

Cardiff Coal & Coke Co.

4 C C C C COAL AT \$5.00 PER TON

A Few Reasons why you should Burn 4 C C C C Coal:

- First. Because it costs you only about half what you are now paying for coal.
- Second. Because it is helping to develop a home industry instead of developing coal mines in Australia.
- Third. Because it will give absolute satisfaction wherever used. It is free from soot, burns freely, gives a good heat and lasts well.
- Fourth. While we do not claim it is the best coal on the market it is good, honest value at \$5.00 per ton, and if properly handled we will guarantee that 5 tons of our coal will give the same results for either steam or domestic purposes as 4 tons of the best Australian coal. We will have a barge load here in a few days. Give us your order for a ton and give it a fair trial. That is all we ask.

Cardiff Coal & Coke Company

Stock at \$3.00 Per Share

is a good clean profitable Investment

A Few Reasons Why You Should Buy this Stock:

- First. Because coal is one of the necessities of life; it is as staple as flour.
- Second. Because it is not a prospect, but a fully developed mine with more than 5 tons of coal in sight to secure every dollar you invest.
- Third. Because the stock is figured conservatively on a basis of 12 per cent on par \$10.00 per share, which means more than 40 per cent on the present selling price of \$3.00 per share.
- Fourth. Because the price of stock will be advanced to \$5.00 per share on or before the 15th of April. Only a limited amount of the stock will be sold at \$3.00 per share and we would prefer to sell it to 100 people rather than 5, as we would have 100 people boosting OUR MINE and inducing their neighbors to burn OUR COAL.
- Fifth. It is a matter of business that every man or woman who has a dollar to invest to put it where it is reasonably safe and where they can realize the most profit from it, and we believe that any one who will investigate this stock as they would if they were buying a stock of goods or a farm, that they would find it had sufficient merit to warrant them making the investment.

Orders for either Coal or Stock or any information about either will be cheerfully furnished by C. H. CALLANDER, at the Callander Navigation Co. or J. C. LEE, at the Northern Hotel.

had to abandon work entirely. I had three of the best physicians who did me no good and I was practically given up to die. Foley's Kidney Cure was recommended and the first bottle gave me great relief, and after taking the second bottle I was entirely cured." Why not let it help you?—T. F. Laurin, Owl Drug Store.

Kemp's Balsam will stop any cough that can be stopped by any medicine and cure coughs that cannot be cured by any other medicine. It is always the best cough cure.

IRENUS K. HAMILTON DEAD.

CHICAGO, Mar. 25.—Irenus K. Hamilton, a millionaire lumberman and banker, died at his home in this city yesterday aged 78 years.

Best Healer in the World.

Rev. F. Starbird, of East Raymond, Maine, says: "I have used Bucklen's Arnica Salve for several years, on my old army wound, and other obstinate sores, and find it the best healer in the world. I use it too with great success in my veterinary business." Price 25c at Chas. Rogers & Son's drug store.

When the doctor is called he asks: "How are the bowels?" They are generally wrong. His visit might have been saved by a timely dose of Lane's Family Medica.

Create an Appetite

BY DRINKING BASS' ALE AND GUINNESS STOUT WITH YOUR DINNER PUT UP IN NIPS. IT IS A SYSTEM BUILDER RECOMMENDED BY ALL PHYSICIANS. PRICE, \$1.50 PER DOZEN.

AMERICAN IMPORTING CO.

589 Commercial Street

THE TRENTON

First-Class Liquors and Cigars

602 Commercial Street. Corner Commercial and 14th. ASTORIA, OREGON