



The Adventures of A Demobilized Officer Who Found Peace Dull

by **CYRIL McNEILE**

"SAPPER"
Illustrations by
IRWIN MYERS

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As if unconscious of anything peculiar he rambled on in his usual inconsistent method, heedless of whether he was answered or not; but all the time his mind was busily working. He had already decided that a Rolls-Royce was not the only car on the market which could break down mysteriously, and with the town so far away, his host could hardly fail to ask him to stop the night. And then—he had not yet quite settled how—he proposed to have a closer look at The Elms.

At length the meal was over, and the maid, placing the decanter in front of Mr. Benton, withdrew from the room.

"You'll have a glass of port, Captain Drummond?" remarked his host, removing the stopper, and pushing the bottle toward him. "An old pre-war wine which I can vouch for."

Hugh smiled, and even as he lifted the heavy old cut glass, he stiffened suddenly in his chair. A cry—half shout, half scream, and stifled at once—had come echoing through the open windows. With a crash the

With an inscrutable look at Hugh, in which thankfulness and apprehension seemed mingled, the girl left the room. There was an unnatural glitter in her father's eyes—a flash on his cheeks hardly to be accounted for by the warmth of the evening; and it struck Drummond that during the time he had been pretending to look at his car, Mr. Benton had been fortifying himself. It was obvious, even to the soldier's unprofessional eye, that the man's nerves had gone to pieces, his daughter's worst forebodings were likely to be fulfilled. He talked disjunctedly and fast; his hands were not steady, and he seemed to be always waiting for something to happen.

Hugh had not been in the room ten minutes before his host produced the whisky, and during the time that he took to drink a mild nightcap, Mr. Benton succeeded in lowering three extremely strong glasses of spirit. And what made it the more sad was that the man was obviously not a heavy drinker by preference.

At eleven o'clock Hugh rose and said good night.

"You'll ring if you want anything, won't you?" said his host. "We don't have very many visitors here, but I hope you'll find everything you require. Breakfast at nine."

Drummond closed the door behind him, and stood for a moment in silence, looking round the hall. It was deserted, but he wanted to get the geography of the house firmly imprinted on his mind. He stepped across toward the drawing-room. Inside, as he hoped, he found the girl.

She rose the instant he came in, and stood by the mantelpiece with her hands locked.

"What was it?" she half whispered.

"That awful noise at dinner?"

He looked at her gravely for a while, and then he shook his head.

"Shall we leave it as a night-bird for the present?" he said quietly. Then he leaned toward her, and took her hands in his own. "Go to bed, little girl," he ordered; "this is my show. And, may I say, I think you're just wonderful. Thank God you saw my advertisement!"

Gently he released her hands, and walking to the door, held it open for her. "If by any chance you should hear things in the night—turn over and go to sleep again."

"But what are you going to do?" she cried.

Hugh grinned. "I haven't the remotest idea," he answered. "Doubtless the Lord will provide."

The instant the girl had left the room Hugh switched off the lights, and stepped across to the curtains which covered the long windows. He pulled them aside, letting them come together behind him; then, cautiously, he unhooked one side of the big center window. Silently he dodged across the lawn toward the big trees at the end, and leaning up against one of them, he proceeded to make a more detailed survey of his objective, The Elms. It was the same type of house as the one he had just left, and the grounds seemed about the same size. A wire fence separated the two places, and in the darkness Hugh could just make out a small wicket-gate, closing a path which connected both houses. He tried it, and found to his satisfaction that it opened silently.

Save for one room on the ground-floor the house was in darkness, and Hugh determined to have a look at that room. There was a creak in the curtains, through which the light was streaming out, which struck him as having possibilities.

Keeping under cover, he edged toward it, and, at length, he got into a position from which he could see inside. And what he saw made him decide to chance it, and go even closer.

Seated at the table was a man he did not recognize; while on either side of him sat Lakington and Peterson. Lying on a sofa smoking a cigarette and reading a novel was a tall dark girl, who seemed completely uninterested in the proceedings of the other three. Hugh placed her at once as the doubtful daughter Irma, and resumed his watch on the group at the table.

A paper was in front of the man, and Peterson, who was smoking a large cigar, was apparently suggesting that he should make use of the pen which Lakington was obligingly holding in readiness. In all respects a harmless tableau, save for one small thing—the expression on the man's face. Hugh had seen it before often—only then it had been called shell-shock. The man was dazed, semi-unconscious. Every now and then he stared round the room, as if bewildered; then he would shake his head and pass his hand wearily over his forehead. For a quarter of an hour the scene continued; then Lakington produced an instrument from his pocket. Hugh saw the man shrink back in terror, and reach for the pen. But what impressed him

most in that momentary flash of action was Peterson. There was something inhuman in his complete passivity. Even as he watched the man signing his name, no trace of emotion showed on his face—whereas on Lakington's there shone a keensh satisfaction.

The document was still lying on the table, when Hugh produced his revolver. He knew there was foul play about, and the madness of what he had suddenly made up his mind to do never struck him; being that manner of fool, he was made that way. But he breathed a pious prayer that he would shoot straight—and then he held his breath. The crack of the shot and the bursting of the only electric light bulb in the room were almost simultaneous, and the next second, with a roar of "Come on, boys," he burst through the window. At an immense advantage over the others, who could see nothing for the moment, he blundered round the room. He timed the blow at Lakington to a nicety; he hit him straight on the point of the jaw and he felt the man go down like a log. Then he grabbed at the paper on the table, which tore in his hand, and picking the dazed signer up bodily, he rushed through the window onto the lawn. There was not an instant to be lost; only the impossibility of seeing when suddenly plunged into darkness, had enabled him to pull the thing off so far. And before that advantage disappeared he had to be back at The Larches with his burden, no light weight for even a man of his strength to carry.

But there seemed to be no pursuit, no hue and cry. As he reached the little gate he paused and looked back, and he fancied he saw outside the window a gleam of white, such as a shirt front. He lingered for an instant, peering into the darkness and recovering his breath, when with a vicious pout something buried itself in the tree beside him. Drummond lingered no more; long years of experience left no doubt in his mind as to what that something was.

"Compressed-air rifle—or electric," he muttered to himself, stumbling on, and half dragging, half carrying his dazed companion.

He was not very clear in his own mind what to do next, but the matter was settled for him unexpectedly. Barely had he got into the drawing-room, when the door opened and the girl rushed in.

"Get him away at once," she cried. "In your car. . . . Don't waste a second. I've started her up."

"Good girl," he cried enthusiastically. "But what about you?"

She stamped her foot impatiently. "I'm all right—absolutely all right. Get him away—that's all that matters."

Drummond grinned. "The humorous thing is that I haven't an idea who the bird is—except that—"

He paused, with his eyes fixed on the

to believe that he had ever moved from the table; only the bullet imbedded in a tree proved that somebody must have got busy. Of course, it might have been the girl, who was just lighting another cigarette from the stump of the old one.

At length Peterson spoke. "A young man of dash and temperament," he said gently. "It will be a pity to lose him."

"Why not keep him and lose the girl?" yawned Irma. "I think he might amuse me—"

"We have always our dear Henry to consider," answered Peterson. "Apparently the girl appeals to him. I'm afraid, Irma, he'll have to go . . . and at once . . ."

The speaker was tapping his left knee softly with his hand; save for that slight movement he sat as if nothing had happened. And yet ten minutes before a carefully planned coup had failed at the instant of success. Even his most fearless accomplices had been known to confess that Peterson's inhuman calmness sent cold shivers down their backs.

(To be Continued)

At the Churches

First Lutheran — S. A. Stenseth, pastor. Sunday school, with Bible class, 10 a. m.; services at 11 a. m. in Norwegian and 8 p. m. in English. A cordial invitation to all.

Baptist Mission — One block south of First National bank. Rev. W. Norton Ferris, pastor. Bible school, 9:45 a. m. This will be an interesting service. We invite you; J. Carter, superintendent. Divine worship, 11 a. m. Rev. W. Norton Ferris and wife and Dr. Keeney Ferris expect to be with us. Special evangelistic service of song and sermon at 8 p. m., and possibly baptisms. Let us come together rejoicing.

We cordially invite friends and neighbors. Strangers are always welcome.

Methodist Episcopal — J. Edgar Purdy, pastor. "The Excellence of Ordinary Things" will be the pastor's theme tomorrow morning at the 11 o'clock service. There will be music by the choir.

"The Wells of Yesterday" will be the topic at the evening service at 8 o'clock.

Sunday school at 9:45, as usual. Epworth league at 7 p. m., preceded by the social half hour at 6:30.

You will always find a most cordial welcome to all the services of this busy church, now meeting in Epworth hall, corner Kansas and Bond streets.

Dr. E. C. Hickman of Salem and Rev. Gabriel Sykes of Hood River have agreed to serve on the summer school faculty, beginning June 12. Dr. Hickman will deliver a series of addresses on "Life Work," and Rev. Sykes will conduct a class in community service each evening at 7 o'clock. We are expecting Dr. Robert Brumblay of Sunnyside, Wash., to preach each evening at 8 o'clock. Local workers will have charge of the other classes. Plan to attend this practical and helpful school, it will refresh and stimulate you.

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Christian Science Society—Services every Sunday morning at 11 o'clock. Sunday school convenes at 9:45 a. m. Testimony meeting every Wednesday evening at 8 o'clock. The society maintains a public reading room at room 8, Deschutes Investment Co. building. Open from 12 m. to 5 p. m. daily.

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stopper fell from Mr. Benton's nerveless fingers, breaking the finger-bowl in front of him, while every vestige of color left his face.

"It's something these days to be able to say that," remarked Hugh, pouring out himself a glass. "Wine, Miss Benton?" He looked at the girl, who was staring fearfully out of the window, and forced her to meet his eye. "It will do you good."

His tone was compelling, and after a moment's hesitation, she pushed the glass over to him. "Will you pour it out?" she said, and he saw that she was trembling all over.

"Did you—did you hear—anything?" With a vain endeavor to speak calmly, his host looked at Hugh.

"That night-bird?" he answered easily. "Eerie noises they make, don't they? Sometimes in France, when everything was still, and only the ghostly green flames went hissing up, one used to hear 'em. Startled nervous sentries out of their lives." He talked on, and gradually the color came back to the other man's face. But Hugh noticed that he drained his port at a gulp, and immediately refilled his glass. . . .

Outside everything was still; no repetition of that short, strangled cry again disturbed the silence. With the training bred of many hours in No Man's Land, Drummond was listening, even while he was speaking, for the faintest suspicious sound—but he heard nothing. The soft whispering night-noises came gently through the window; but the man who had screamed once did not even whimper again. He remembered hearing a similar cry near the brick-stacks at Guinchy, and two nights later he had found the giver of it, at the edge of a mine-crater, with glazed eyes that still held in them the horror of the final second. And more persistently than ever, his thoughts centered on the fifth occupant of the Rolls-Royce.

It was with almost a look of relief that Mr. Benton listened to his tale of woe about his car.

"Of course you must stop here for the night," he cried. "Phyllis, my dear, will you tell them to get a room ready?"