

Between Two Fires

By ANTHONY HOPE

"A wise man will make more opportunities than he finds." —Francis Bacon.

CHAPTER VI.—(Continued.)
"Hello, Johnny! Why not at the House?" said I to him. "You'll want every vote to-night. He off and help the ministry, and take Donna Antonia with you. They're eating up the minister of finance."

"All right! I'm going as soon as I've had another muffin," said Johnny. "But what's the row about?"

"Well, they want their money," I replied; "and Don Antonio won't give it them. Hence bad feeling."

"Tell you what it is," said Johnny; "he hasn't got a—"

Here Donna Antonia struck in, rather suddenly, I thought.

"Do stop the gentlemen talking politics, Madame Devargas. They'll spoil our tea-party."

"Your word is law," I said; "but I should like to know what Don Antonio hasn't got."

"Now do be quiet," she rejoined; isn't quite enough that he has got—a charming daughter?"

"And a most valuable one," I replied with a bow, for I saw that for some reason or other Donna Antonia did not mean to let me pump Johnny Carr, and I wanted to pump him.

"Don't say another word, Mr. Carr," she said, with a laugh. "You know you don't know anything."

Meanwhile Madame Devargas was giving me a cup of tea. As she handed it to me, she said in a low voice:

"If I were his friend I should take care he told me what he knew, Madame Devargas." I replied.

"Perhaps that's what the Colonel thinks," she said. "Johnny has just been telling us how very attentive he has become. And the Signorina, too, I hear."

"You don't mean that?" I exclaimed. "But, after all, pure kindness, no doubt!"

"You have received many attentions from those quarters," she said. "No doubt you are a good judge of the motives."

"Don't, now, don't be disagreeable," said I. "I came here for peace."

"Poor young man! Have you lost all your money? Is it possible that you, like Don Antonio, haven't got a—?"

"What is going to happen?" I asked, for Madame Devargas often had information.

"I don't know," she said. "But if I owned national bonds, I should sell."

"Pardon me, madame; you would offer to sell."

I did not see any need to enlighten her further. So I passed on to Donna Antonia, who had sat somewhat sulky since her outburst. I sat down by her and said:

"Surely I haven't offended you?"

"You know you wouldn't care if you had," she said, with a reproachful, but not unkind glance. "You will not let your real friends save you, Mr. Martin. You know you want help. Why don't you consider the state of your affairs?"

"In that, at least, my friends in Whittingham are very ready to help me," I answered, with some annoyance.

"If you take it in that way," she replied sadly, "I can do nothing."

I was rather touched. Clearly she wished to be of some use to me, and for a moment I thought I might do better to tear myself free from my chains, and turn to the refuge opened to me. But I could not do this; and, thinking it would be rather mean to take advantage of her interest in me only to use it for my own purposes, I yielded to conscience and said:

"Donna Antonia, I will be straightforward with you. You can only help me if I accept your guidance? I can't do that. I am too deep in."

"Yes, you are deep in, and eager to be deeper," she said. "Well, so be it. If that is so I cannot help you."

"Thank you for your kind attempt," said I. "I shall very likely be sorry some day that I repulse it. I shall always be glad to remember that you made it."

She looked at me a moment, and said: "We have ruined you amongst us."

"Mind, body and estate?"

She made no reply, and I saw my return to flippancy wounded her. So I rose and took my leave. Johnny Carr went with me.

"Things look queer, eh old man?" said he. "But the President will pull through in spite of the Colonel and his Signorina."

"Johnny," said I, "you hurt my feelings; but still I will give you a piece of advice. Marry Donna Antonia. She's a good girl and a clever girl!"

"That's not bad idea," said he. "Why don't you do it yourself?"

"Because I'm like you, Johnny—an idiot," I replied, and left him wondering why, if he was an idiot, and I was an idiot, one idiot should marry Donna Antonia, and not both or neither.

As I went along I bought the Gazette, the government organ, and read therein:

"At a Cabinet council this afternoon, presided over by his excellency, we understand that the arrangements connected with the national debt formed the subject of discussion. The resolutions arrived at are at present strictly confidential, but we have the best authority for stating that the measures to be adopted will have the effect of materially alleviating the present tension, and will afford unmixed satisfaction to the immense majority of the citizens of Aureaualand. The President will once again be hailed as the savior of his country."

"I wonder if the immense majority will include me?" said I. "I think I will go and see his excellency."

CHAPTER VII.

The next morning I took my way to the Golden House, where I learned that the President was at the ministry of finance. Arriving there, I sent in my card, writing thereon an humble request for a private interview. I was ushered into Don Antonio's room, where I found the minister himself, the President and Johnny Carr. As I entered and the servant, on a sign from his excellency, placed a chair for me, the latter said rather stiffly:

"Slipped his memory, no doubt. All right, Jones."

"May I go now, sir?" said Jones. "Mrs. Jones wanted me to go with her."

I saw all now. That old villain had stolen the cable. And his excellency's words came back to my memory, "I make the most of my opportunities."

CHAPTER VIII.

The next week was a busy one for me. I spent it in scraping together every bit of cash I could lay my hands on. If I could get together enough to pay the interest on the \$300,000 supposed to be invested in approved securities—really disposed of in a manner only known to his excellency—I should have six months to look about me. Now remaining out of my "hounds" was nil, out of my "reserve fund" \$10,000. This was enough. But, alas, how happened it that this sum was in my hands? Because I had borrowed \$5,000 from the bank? If they wouldn't let their own manager overdraw, whom would they? So I overdraw. But if this money wasn't back before the monthly balancing, Jones would know! And I dared not rely on being able to stop his mouth again. When I said Johnny Carr was the only honest man in Aureaualand I forgot Jones. Jones also was honest, and Jones would consider it his duty to let the directors know of my overdraft. If once they knew, I was lost, for an overdraft effected privately from the safe by the manager is, I do not deny it, decidedly irregular. Unless I could add \$5,000 to my \$10,000 before the end of the month I should have to default!

This melancholy conclusion was re-enforced and rendered demonstrable by a letter which arrived, to crown my woes, from my respected father, informing me that he had unhappily become indebted to our chairman in the sum of \$10,000, the result of a deal between them, that he had seen the chairman, that the chairman was urgent for payment, that he used most violent language against our family in general, ending by declaring his intention of stopping my salary to pay the principal debt. "If he doesn't like it he may go, and small loss." This was a most unjustifiable proceeding, but I was hardly in a position to take up a high moral attitude toward the chairman, and in the result I saw myself confronted with the certainty of beggary and the probability of jail. But for this unoward reverse of fortune I might have taken courage and made a clean breast of my misdeeds, relying on the chairman's obligations to my father to pull me through. But now, where was I? I was, as Donna Antonia put it, very deep in indeed. So overwhelmed was I by my position, and so occupied by my frantic efforts to improve it, that I did not even find time to go and see the Signorina, much as I needed comfort, and as the days went on, I fell into such despair that I went nowhere, but sat dismally in my own rooms, looking at my portmanteau, and wondering how soon I must pack and fly, if not for life, at least for liberty.

At last the crash came. I was sitting in my office one morning, engaged in the difficult task of trying to make ten into fifteen, when I heard the clatter of hoofs. A moment later the door was opened, and Jones ushered in Colonel McGregor. I nodded to the Colonel, who came in with his usual leisure step, sat himself down, and took off his gloves. I roused myself to say:

"What can I do for you, Colonel?"

He waited till the door closed behind Jones, and then said:

"I've got to the bottom of it at last, Martin. That old scamp's villainy," said he, jerking his thumb toward the Piazza and the statue of the Liberator. "He's very cute, but he's made a mistake at last."

"Do come to the point, Colonel. What's it all about?"

"Would you be surprised to hear," said the Colonel, adopting a famous mode of speech, "that the interest on the debt would not be paid on the 31st?"

"No, I shouldn't," said I, resignedly.

"Would you be surprised to hear that no more interest would ever be paid?"

"What do you mean, man?" I cried, leaping up.

"The President," said he, calmly, "will, on the 31st instant, repudiate the national debt!"

(To be continued.)

She Knew Her Business.

He had been sweet on her for some time and one evening he dropped in on his way home from the office.

"I hope you will excuse me for calling in my business suit," he said, "but—"

"Oh, that's all right," interrupted the fair maid, "that is, if you mean business."

And the next day a downtown Jeweler separated him from a month's salary in exchange for the ring.

Another Version.

Jack was just about to build his fa-mous house.

"Why don't you get some men to help you?" asked a curious friend.

"No, sir," replied Jack, "they would call a strike on me before the house was finished. I'll build it myself."

Thus we know why the house was called "the house that Jack built."

Well, Yes.

Araminta (exhibiting the family chevrons)—Is there anything sweeter than a baby?

Young Spoonall—Why, I sometimes think a baby's 18-year-old sister is just a little—er—"

Willing Martyr.

Merchant—I would be glad to give you the position, young man, but I make it a rule to employ married men only.

Applicant—Beg pardon, sir, but have you an unmarried daughter?

Life.

His Wife—I'm awfully tired. I spent the afternoon at my dressmaker's trying to get a fit.

Her Husband—I'm tired too. I met my tailor on the street and he gave me fits.

Whist.

Eva—Yes, it was a long, long quarrel, but they made up when they met at the card table the other night.

Edwin—Ah, they hastened to "bridge" over the difference eh?

How About It?

Profits of Middlemen.

Consumers of fruits and vegetables in large cities are charged high prices by the hucksters and grocers. In Chicago peaches are selling retail for thirty-five or forty cents for a small basket containing about twenty to twenty-five peaches; other fruits and vegetables in proportion. It would be interesting to farmers to know just how much of this is booked as profits. Farmers get no such prices; in fact they are lucky if they get one-third of the prices now prevailing in Chicago. Either some class of handlers is making exorbitant profits or there is an unnecessary expense attached to the business of distribution. It costs money to handle produce. It requires storage, horses and men, and none of these things are cheap in the city, but there is no good reason why the consumer should pay three hundred per cent profit on what the farmers sell. Farm, Field and Fireside.

A Splendid Wheat Crop.

The annual crop and business report of the Commercial National Bank of Chengtu, covering the Mississippi Valley, and a few of the more important States of the Pacific coast, says, in part:

"The wheat crop of 1903 will be among the largest and best ever produced. The yield not only will be great, but the weight and quality will be far beyond the ordinary. In these respects it may be considered nearly perfect. The period of uncertainty is closing rapidly and the crop may now be called practically out of danger. The yield of soft winter wheat is large, quality the finest and movement free. Inasmuch as this movement has begun early and all grain is now nearly or quite on an export basis (with the tendency of prices downward), a large export business may be expected."

Cucumbers.

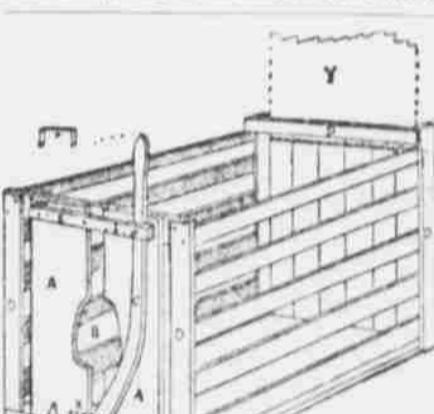
I raise five crops instead of one on the same ground, and on the same vines with hardly any extra work. Plant in the usual way. When a cucumber is taken from the vine let it be cut with a knife, leaving about an eighth of an inch of the cucumber on the stem. Then slit the stem with a knife from its end to the vine twice, leaving a small portion of the cucumber on each division. On each separate slit there will be a cucumber as large as the first. By this method you will only need one-fifth the ground that you would need if growing cucumbers in the old way.—Walter Strohmeier in Epitomist.

Marketing Farm Produce.

A small farmer who has made a success of marketing his produce gives sound and judicious advice in a recent magazine. His preliminary work suggests Hanuman Glass's famous preface to her instructions for cooking hare: "First find a lady customer," is his advice. To her sell nothing but the choicest of fruit and produce. It will not be long before she will acquaint her friends, and they in turn will pass along the word to others. It pays to sell nothing but the best; the inferior produce can be fed to stock, and in a short time the farmer will find he has a good market and a good price, with no leakage of profit to the middleman.

Hog-Ringing Trap.

The frame for this hogringing trap should be made of 2x4inch lumber bolted together at corners. The dimensions are 4 feet 2 inches long, 2 feet 4 inches high and 1 foot 6 inches wide. There is a sliding door at the back end. When the hog puts his head through the hole in front, jam the lever against his neck.



SIMPLE HOG-RINGING TRAP.

At the top of the page is a diagram of a simple hog-ringing trap. The trap is a rectangular frame made of 2x4inch lumber. It has a sliding door at the back end. In the front, there is a lever mechanism that can be jammed to prevent a hog from escaping. The dimensions are given as 4 feet 2 inches long, 2 feet 4 inches high, and 1 foot 6 inches wide.

Below the trap is a section of text that continues the description of the trap's construction and usage.

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The Farm Toolhouse.

No building on the farm pays better than a good toolhouse. It should be so convenient of access that there need be no excuse for leaving farm implements exposed to the weather when not in use. Properly cared for, many implements that now last only a few years ought to be serviceable as long as the farmer lives to need them. Besides, a tool that has not been rusted, warped and cracked by exposure will work as well the second and third year of use as the first. On many farms the tools are so much injured by being left out of doors that after the first season they cost more for repairs than they save in labor.

Oiling Harness.

To give harness a good finish saturate the leather with as much oil as it will take, and then sponge the harness with a thick lather made of castile soap. When dry, wipe gently with a solution of gum tragacanth, which is made by boiling half an ounce of the gum in two quarts of water, boiling down to three pints, stirring freely while it is on the fire. When cool apply it lightly on the leather.

New Volcano Island Visited.

Officers of the revenue cutter service were able to explore on July 20 the new volcanic island in the Bogoslof group of the Bering sea, although it was still very hot from the action of the volcano which threw it up ten days prior to that. A great column of smoke and steam continued to rise over this new-born Isle. At the northern end the land rises abruptly to 400 feet, and on the west to a height of 700 feet. Notwithstanding that, the surface was still warm and soft the explorers ascended to the summit.



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