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The Recluse of Fifth Avenue

CHAPTER I

By WYNDHAM MARTYN

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It was characteristic of Peter Milman that he should bear the shock of the second of his life's tragedies with no visible symptom of emotion.

The first of these blows had been dealt him twenty-five years before. He had suffered it in this same richly furnished room of his house in Lower Fifth Avenue. Sneed, the butler, who had just handed him the morning papers, had brought him—a quarter of a century ago—the letter in which his wife told him she had gone away and would not return.

The second blow swept away his comfortable fortune. At fifty, without near relatives and long estranged from old friends, Peter Milman would be compelled to move from the house in which he had been born—the house where he hoped to die—to mix with the world he had forgotten, among people he had grown to mistrust.

The three morning papers Sneed placed before him, although they varied somewhat in their telling of Hazen Brewer's failure, had substantially the same account of it.

Brewer's liabilities were five million dollars. His assets were given as less than five thousand dollars. Somewhere, sandwiched among these vast debts, was Peter Milman's modest million.

The butler, sensing ill news from the hastily read captions, grew relieved when he saw his employer take out his pocket-scissors and begin to dip such extracts from the papers as interested him. Later these clippings would be arranged systematically with the thousands of others which during long years Milman had gathered. In the library, steel-lined drawers, carefully locked, held the harvest of these dealings.

At three o'clock Peter Milman came down the stairs and selected a cane. He was dressed as though he were going to pay an afternoon call. He was one of those slight, small-boned men so often seen in the dwindling amiles of races near extinction. His martly cut coat, his immaculate silk hat and distinguished cane made him seem, from a rear view, a boyish figure. It was when one saw the pale, lined face, the tired eyes, and the thin supercilious mouth, that one realized this was a man to whom the world has long since seemed empty and void. On the whole, Peter Milman presented the appearance of one to whom familiarity would be distasteful and friendship the slow growth of years.

He was on his way to see his lawyer and find out how he stood financially. He felt almost certain that he had fallen with Hazen Brewer. Not more than twenty years had Peter Milman been so much disturbed. Ruin meant giving up his home. The idea was intolerable.

He entered the private office of Herman Loddon as one assured of his position and certain of his welcome. Assuredly Loddon, who owed so much to the Milmans, would be able to supply him with the information he desired.

The first direct intimation of the difference between a millionaire and a poor man was given him as he entered Loddon's room. Loddon remained seated. Hitherto he had risen tumultuously to his feet at sight of his distinguished client and with awkward gestures motioned him to the seat of honor. And his face had been wreathed with smiles. For the first time Peter Milman saw the man Herman Loddon as he really was. Loddon hated him, and had always hated him. There could be no other explanation of his lack of courtesy and the sneering smile with which he greeted his client. For a quarter-century he had worn a disarming smile. Hazen Brewer's failure had swept away the necessity for using it any more. Things, then, were desperate.

Milman's manner was still as lofty and courteous as ever. "I hope you have been able to find out the extent of Mr. Brewer's misfortunes," he said.

"Misfortunes!" Loddon cried. "His crimes, you mean."

"I am not asking you to prejudice my friend," Peter Milman said quietly. "I want to know if the morning papers are correct in stating that his entire fortune has disappeared."

"They are," Loddon answered with an appearance of satisfaction, "and as you wouldn't take my advice about your investments, your money has gone too. I tell you, Milman, you've only got what I prophesied a million times."

Milman: "Never before had Herman Loddon presumed so much. Loddon's father had been the Milman coachman at their country place at Hastings years before. When he had been killed in a runaway accident, Peter Milman, the elder, had taken charge of the son's education and had eventually set him up in practice and given him his first case."

"Then nothing is left?" Milman asked.

"Not a cent. You're luckier than Brewer is, because you've got a valuable lot on Fifth Avenue, and there are fifty men waiting to make you an offer for it and put a big building where that mansoleum of yours stands."

Milman said nothing. He allowed Loddon's sneer at his home to pass. Loddon did not know that, when Hazen Brewer incurred the enmity of great financial interests, and was so hardy pressed for money, he had come by night to Milman and begged in utter desperation for a loan. It

was Hazen Brewer who had arranged the mortgage on the Milman home. It was Brewer alone who had profited by the affair. And this mortgage was shortly to fall due, and there was no money to pay it.

Peter Milman could have sold the house and lot and retired to some other place in relative comfort until the end of his life had he been less obstinately desirous of remaining where he had been born.

"You can't stay there, if that's what you are trying to figure out," Loddon said brutally. "The taxes are heavy and you have some outstanding debts. My account, for instance. Sell it and live in Italy is my advice." He yawned rudely.

Peter Milman's question turned his red face a deeper hue. "Have you always hated me, Loddon?"

The lawyer did not answer immediately. This hate of his was a complex thing, less the result of a deep injury than of a thousand envies. He



"Have You Always Hated Me, Loddon?"

had always resented Milman's discriminations when social functions were still a part of his life. It is true that he had dined many times in the Milman house, but his wife had never been asked there. He came to understand in the end that he was asked because Peter Milman found it a less tedious business than going to Loddon's office.

It was this fancied slight to his wife which most angered the lawyer. She was a social climber, and the magic of the Milman name was a tradition in New York. Her husband, ashamed of his obscure origin, had claimed to have been at school with Peter Milman, and Mrs. Loddon felt that, were he to insist, she could be a guest in the envied home.

Loddon hated Milman because, despite his unwise boasting, he knew he had never convinced Milman of his importance.

"Always," he said slowly, with a rush of relief at being at last able to voice his emotions. "Yes, I hated you when my father drove you to school and I couldn't get either inside with you or on the box with him. I've hated you for your friends and the way you've expected me to come when you felt like calling." Loddon laughed sneeringly. "But that's all done with. I'm on top and only pity you now."

"I think I preferred the former emotion," Milman murmured.

"In future," Loddon said majestically, "I shall have too many big things to attend to to have time for you. I'll turn your affairs over to my managing clerk."

"Thank you," Milman said, rising. "I shall not come again. Send in your bill at once. You have been loyal to our interests, and that is why we employed you." Peter Milman passed over the Loddon outburst of hate as though it had not interested him.

Herman Loddon watched him depart with the feeling that his triumph had not been as assured as he could have wished. He had won no look of fear

or apprehension from the man he hated. Perhaps, after all, there was something about men like Milman different from him. Then the thought of his two millions reassured him and he lumbered to the window and watched his former client cross the road. The great limousine opposite would presently take Herman Loddon to his lavishly appointed apartment, where he would dine largely. He pictured Milman's solitary and dismal meal. There would not be many more for him in the family home on Lower Fifth Avenue. The Patrician age was gone.

Peter Milman reached his home without encountering anyone who knew him. Fashionable New York with her residences and clubs had long passed on her northward way. Those few houses which, like his own, were still owned by their builders' families, were mostly unoccupied save for a few weeks in the year. With these people Milman had now nothing in common. He had rejected their overtures. They spoke of him with pity, almost with contempt. A legend of eccentricity grew up about him and presently gave way to rumors of mental deterioration.

Sneed, who concerned himself greatly with the sudden change in his employer's habits, saw him return with obvious relief. Sneed had read the papers and realized the extent of Hazen Brewer's troubles. He wished he dared ask Mr. Milman if he, too, were badly hit. Peter Milman's face told him nothing. Nor was his customary manner changed.

"I am going over the upper rooms after luncheon," said Milman. "Please see that they are in order."

The upper rooms. It was in these spacious chambers that the old furniture was stored about which experts raved. The six rooms were arranged as a museum. Milman moved from place to place. Everything had its definite association. He stopped before an Eighteenth century card table covered with sealskin. On this table, in 1745, a Peter Milman had lost a thousand pounds on a cut of cards with a blue-blood of South Carolina. Those six chairs, called "banister-backed by their creator, Heppelwhite, had been made to order for a Milman.

There was one room devoted to the Dutch furniture that had come to the Milmans from a marriage with a Van Sluyter heiress. Peter Milman bent down to look at a Dutch church stool which a Van Sluyter servant had carried to a place of worship two hundred years before. It was black in color, and on one side bore a picture of the Last Judgment and some appropriate verses.

"I don't read Dutch," Milman observed, "but I remembered the translation. Listen, Sneed, it may do you good."

"Certainly, sir," said Sneed respectfully.

"The Judgment of God is now prepared; there is still time, leave unwidom. The pious will be separated from the wicked. God's wisdom encircles the Universe."

"Very true, Mr. Peter, sir," said Sneed. There was a look on his employer's face that he did not understand, something hard and ruthless.

"There are some of the wicked I should very much like to separate from the pious without waiting for post-mortem judgments. I am not sure that such an act would not be a logical way of acquiring merit. I take it, Sneed, that in your essence you are law-abiding?"

"Always," said Sneed with conscious rectitude. "In that respect, Mr. Peter, I'm like you."

"A very admirable frame of mind," said Milman.

Sneed had rarely known him comment on any of the exhibits before. To day it seemed he had a word for everything.

"On this settle with folding candlestick," he observed, "Benjamin Milman fell asleep in the Revolutionary war and was captured by a red-coat major, who gave him liberty owing to his pretty skill on a six-string bass viol. The viol is in the next room. These three mahogany pieces," he said, pausing before a six-legged high case of drawers, "once belonged to the man whom Aaron Burr speaks of as my friend Hamilton whom killed."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Song Composed Under Stress of Loneliness

Some persons assert that John Howard Payne wrote his wonder song, "Home Sweet Home," while in a debtors' prison. Others say he wrote it at a time when he was penniless and homeless, stranded in London. Payne, however, leaves behind him the statement that he was a fairly successful playwright, with a good supply of money and excellent prospects ahead when he wrote the song. He did admit that he was somewhat depressed at the time he penned the words, but he attributes his depression to a dull October day, merry crowds passing his window as he sat and watched them. He was lonesome. Being a wanderer, he had strayed far from home, but at times he had memories of the days he spent in happy childhood with a mother he adored in a humble cottage at Easthampton, L. I. The tune he had eadth from a song he had heard a peasant girl singing to herself in the

fields of Italy while he was visiting that country. After writing the words, he jotted down a semblance of the tune he had heard in Italy and sent the suggestion to the composer, Harry E. Bishop, who produced the air that so admirably fits the words.—Kansas City Star.

Folly of Fashion

"So great was the weight of the elaborately padded garments worn by men in England during the reign of Henry the Eighth," points out Frederick Tisdale in an article in Liberty, "that a bench was built along the house of parliament so the fainting dandies could rest their matted thighs."

Out of Yellowstone park's total area of 3,248 square miles, each American citizen owns an area 30 feet square.



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Warming the Ocean

The German inland watering place Westerland has now been connected with the mainland by railroad. The cars cross the marshes on a newly-erected dam. Westerland is very ambitious and expects to have a winter as well as a summer season. When cold weather comes the bathing cabins are to be heated; also the covered ways leading to the water. And the water itself? That is the most remarkable part of the project. Hugo artificial electric "suns" are to be installed, making a winter dip in the sea practicable.

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If the Trend Goes On

T. W. writes: "Women who think about nothing but clothes are going to have a lot of time on their hands in about 1940, judging from the present trend of things."—Boston Transcript.

Too many people think opportunity means a chance to get money without earning it.

Advertisement for Allen's Foot-Ease, showing a woman's foot and the product box.

Advertisement for Allen's Foot-Ease, showing the product box and text: "Ladies Can Wear Shoes one size smaller and walk or dance in comfort by using Allen's Foot-Ease, the Antiseptic, Healing Powder to shake into your shoes."

Advertisement for Babies Love Mrs. Winslow's Syrup, showing a baby and the product box.

Advertisement for Clear Your Skin, showing a person's face and text: "CLEAR YOUR SKIN of disfiguring blotches and irritations. Use Resinol"

Advertisement for Resinol, showing a person's foot and text: "Resinol Banions Quick relief from pain. Prevent shoe pressure. At all drug and shoe stores. Dr. Scholl's Zino-pads Put one on—the pain is gone."

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