

WHAT JOACHIM THE CAT DID.

By
GILBERT L. LYON.

CHRISTOPHER MELVILLE was deaf; very deaf. He could not hear a word without his ear trumpets, of which he had a good many, long ones and short ones, and he was always leaving them around, to the great annoyance of the lodgers. If any one sat down on a chair, like as not they sat on one, or one would be found on the dining table.

He was a rather short, stout man, with very little hair on his head and so whiskers or mustache. He was very pleasant, and when he smiled he smiled all over his face, so that he seemed to beam on one.

He had a large mottled cat named Joachim that he thought the world of, and often when he came home at night he brought some little tidbit for Joachim, rushing up to his room at once to see his pet. Of course, in a lodging house, he was obliged to keep the cat in his own room, where during the day it would lie in the sun on the broad window sill, and at night it slept with him.

Now, no one had ever paid Mr. Melville any attention until Miss Abigail Manning came up from Somerset to spend the winter in London.

Miss Abigail Manning was a spinster of that uncertain age not mentioned by the fair sex. She was short, with dark hair and gray eyes. She had a little property—enough to live on comfortably—but she had always been looking for a man and, not finding one in Somersetshire, had come up to the capital, determined to take the first eligible one that was presented.

The truth was she had not dreamed at first of catching Mr. Melville; but, seeing that the poor man was left absolutely alone, she overcame a dislike to the queer shaped trumpets and talked to him half an hour at a time.

Mr. Melville was delighted. Here was some one that he could talk to, and, not hearing half that was said, he thought Miss Abigail Manning agreed with him in everything.

"Do you like cats?" was one of the first questions he asked her, and he understood her to say that she liked them when what she did say was that she could not endure them.

"You can have Joachim, then," said Mr. Melville, "whenever you please down in your room."

Now, it was about this time that Miss Abigail, having questioned Mrs. Jenkins, the landlady, and found that Mr. Melville had quite a little property, decided with herself that the said Mr. Melville was the very man she had been looking for. It was also about this time that Mr. Melville found that in a couple of weeks business would necessitate his going to Paris for some time.

What should he do with Joachim? Mrs. Jenkins had refused once before to take care of him, so he could not ask her. All at once a brilliant idea occurred to him. He would ask Miss Abigail to take care of the cat. She had said that she was so fond of cats. He would ask her that very day and have it off his mind.

But it happened Miss Abigail did not come home to dinner that night, and in the morning did not come down until after he left, so Mr. Melville decided to write a note and leave it with the maid when he went out. He wrote and carefully directed the following:

Dear Miss Manning—I am going to ask a great favor of you. You know how I love Joachim, and as you are fond of cats I am going to ask you to take care of him for a few days. I shall be obliged to go to Paris on business the 25th of the month and shall be gone four or five weeks. I would not ask you to keep him the whole time, but my brother James is coming to town about the 1st of next month to attend to some business in Piccadilly, and he will then take Joachim home with him, if you will kindly see to all arrangements in regard to his keeping. He is a very good fellow and the pillow and the bottle for milk are all in his closet. If you will kindly consent to do this for me, I shall be most greatly obliged. Most respectfully yours,

CHRISTOPHER MELVILLE.

This note the maid promised to deliver to Miss Abigail, but, alas, it slipped down through her dress lining and was lost and forgotten, so that Miss Abigail never received it.

That night Mr. Melville waited until dinner was over and then, retiring to the dining room, found Miss Abigail alone. Walking over to the window where she sat, he said:

"Miss Manning, I am glad to find you alone, as I want to talk to you. As you know, I always have the interest of those dear to me at heart. Of course you received my note?" he added.

"Oh, dear, where are my trumpets?"

"I have received no note," said Miss Manning, but Mr. Melville was meanwhile looking all over the room for a trumpet.

"There is one," said Miss Abigail, coming to the rescue, "on the plate warmer."

"Oh, thank you," said Mr. Melville. "Please be seated," drawing up a chair. "And I will explain all of my plans. It is so unfortunate that the house has no private sitting room."

"Yes, indeed," replied she. "It is awkward at times."

"I will repeat what I said, that whenever I love I have the greatest possible interest in," Miss Abigail blushed.

"And I know," continued Mr. Melville, "that it is asking a great deal of you to devote your time to an animal."

"Oh, no! Oh, no!" said Miss Abigail, deprecating his calling himself an animal. "You must not say such things."

"Then you will accept?" said Mr. Melville, radiantly beaming on her, for perceptions were keenly alive to his surroundings. He heard the Chinaman enter something and then depart, leaving him alone. But presently he was aware of another figure that had entered and was now sitting with its back to him at a rude table, roughly constructed from a packing box, apparently engaged in writing. It was a small Chinaman, evidently the one he had chased. The events of the past few hours—his mission, his intentions and every incident of the pursuit—flashed back upon him. Where was he? What was he doing here? Had Triton escaped him?

In his excitement he was unable to formulate a question, which even then he doubted if the Chinaman could understand. So he simply watched him intently and with a steady kind of fascination until he should finish his writing and turn round. His long pigtail, which seemed ridiculously disproportionate to his size, the pigtail which he remembered had streamed into the air in his flight—had partly escaped from the dish covered but under which it had been coiled. But, what was singular, it was not the wry, black pigtail of his Mongolian fellows, but soft and silky, and as the daylight played upon it it seemed of a shining chestnut brown! It was like—like—He stopped. Was he dreaming again? A long sigh escaped him.

The figure instantly turned. He started. It was Clissie Triton! There was no mistaking that charming sensitive face, glowing with health and excitement, albeit showing here and there the mark of the pigment with which it had been stained, now hurriedly washed off. A little bit of it had run into the corners of her eyelids and enhanced the brilliancy of her eyes.

He found his tongue with an effort. "What are you doing here?" he said with a faint voice and a fainter attempt to smile.

"That's what I might ask about you," she said, but with a slight touch of scorn. "But I guess I know, as well as I do about the others. I came here to see my father," she added defiantly.

"And you are the—the one—I chased?" he said desperately.

"Yes, and I'd have outrun you easily, even with your horse to help you," she said proudly, "only I turned back when you went down into that prospector's hole with your horse and his broken neck atop of you."

He groaned slightly, but more from shame than pain. The young girl took up a glass of whisky ready on the table and brought it to him. "Take that! It will fetch you all right in a moment. Popper says no bones are broken."

Masterton waited the proffered glass. "Your father! Is he here?" he said hurriedly, recalling his mission.

"Not now. He's gone to the station—to fetch my clothes," she said, with a little laugh.

"To the station?" repeated Masterton, bewildered.

"Yes," she replied, "to the station. Of course you don't know the news," she added, with an air of girlish importance. "They've stopped all proceedings against him, and he's as free as you are."

Masterton tried to rise, but another groan escaped him. He was really in pain. Clissie's bright eyes softened. She knelt beside him, her soft breath fanning his hair, and lifted him gently to a sitting position.

"Oh, I've done it before!" she laughed as she read his wonder, with his gratitude, in his eyes. "The horse was already stiff, and you were nearly so by the time I came up to you and got"—she laughed again—"the other Chinaman to help me pull you out of that hole."

"I know I owe you my life," he said, his face flushing.

"It was lucky I was there," she returned naively, "perhaps lucky you were chasing me."

"I'm afraid that of the many who would run after you I should be the least lucky," he said, with an attempt to laugh that did not, however, conceal his mortification, "but I assure you that I only wished to have an interview with your father—a business interview, perhaps as much in his interest as my own."

The old look of audacity came back to her face. "I guess that's what they all came here for—except one—but it didn't keep them from believing and saying he was a thief behind his back. Yet they all wanted his confidence," she added bitterly.

Masterton felt that his burning cheeks were confessing the truth of this. "You excepted one," he said hesitatingly.

"Yes," the deputy sheriff. He came to help me."

"You?"

"Yes, me!" A coquettish little toss of her head added to his confusion. "He threw up his job just to follow me without my knowing it, to see that I didn't come to any harm. He saw me only once, too—at the house when he came to take possession. He said he thought I was 'clear grit' to risk everything to find father, and he said he saw it in me when he was there. That's how he guessed where I was gone when I ran away and followed me."

"He was as right as he was lucky," said Masterton gravely. "But how did you get here?"

She slipped down on the floor beside him with an unconscious movement that her masculine garments only made the more quaintly girlish and, clasping her knee with both hands, looked at the fire as she rocked herself slightly backward and forward as she spoke.

"It will shock a proper man like you, I know," she began demurely, "but I came alone, with only a Chinaman to guide me, but I will give you an answer to take to them when we reach the station. I am going to give you a lift when my daughter is ready. And here she is!"

It was the old Clissie that stepped into the room, dressed as she was when she left her father's house two days before. Oddly enough, he fancied that something of her old conscious manner had returned with her clothes, and as he stepped with her into the back seat of the covered sleigh in waiting he could not help saying, "I really think I understand you better in your other clothes." A slight blush mounted to Clissie's cheek, but her eyes were still audacious. "All the same, I don't think you'd like to walk down Main street with me in that rig, although you once thought nothing of taking me over your old mill in your blue blouse and overalls." And, having apparently greatly relieved her proud little heart by this enigmatical statement, she grew so chatty and confidential that the young man was satisfied that he had been in love with her from the first.

When they reached the station, Triton drew him aside. Taking an envelope marked "Private Contracts" from his pocket, he opened it and displayed some papers. "These are the securities. Tell your directors that you have seen them safe in my hands, and that no one else has seen them. Tell them that if they will send me their renewed notes, dated from today, to Sacramento within the next three days

gret to say he dodged the question meekly.

"And you think your disguise escaped detection?" he said, looking markedly at her escaped brand of hair.

She followed his eyes rather than his words, half pettishly caught up the loosened hair, swiftly coiled it around the top of her head and, clapping the weather beaten and battered content but back again upon it, defiantly said:

"Yes. Everybody isn't as critical as you are, and even you wouldn't be of a Chinaman?"

He had never seen her except when she was arrayed with the full invention to affect the beholders and perfidious consciousness of her attractions. He was utterly unprepared for this candid ignoring of adornment now, albeit he was for the first time aware how her real prettiness made it unnecessary.

She looked fully as charming in this grotesque head covering as she had in that paragon of fashion—the new hat, which had excited his tolerant amusement.

"I'm afraid I'm a very poor critic," he said humbly. "I never conceived that this sort of thing was at all to your taste."

"I came to see my father because I wanted to," she said with equal humility. "And I want to see him though I didn't want to," he said, with a cynical laugh.

She turned and fixed her brown eyes languidly upon him. "Why did you come, then?"

"I was ordered by my directors." "Then you did not believe he was a thief?" she said, her eyes softening.

"It would ill become me to accuse your father—or my directors," he said diplomatically.

She was quick enough to detect the suggestion of moral superiority in his tone, but woman enough to forgive it. "You're no friend of Windmiller," she said.

"I am not," he replied frankly. "If you would like to see my popper, I can manage it," she said hesitatingly.

"He'll do anything for me," she added with a touch of her old pride.

"Who could blame him?" returned Masterton gravely. "But if he is a free man now and able to go where he likes and to see whom he likes he may not care to give an audience to a mere messenger."

"You wait and let me see him first," said the girl quickly. Then, as the sound of shuttles came from the road outside, she added: "Here he is. I'll get your clothes. They are out here drying by the fire in the shed." She disappeared through a back door and returned presently, bearing his dried garments. "Dress yourself while I take popper into the shed," she said quickly and ran out into the road.

Masterton dressed himself with difficulty. Although circulation was now restored and he felt a glow through his warmed clothes, he was still sorely bruised and aching by his fall. He had scarcely finished dressing when Montagu Triton entered the room from the shed. Masterton looked at him with a new interest and in respect he had never felt before. There certainly was little of the daughter in this keen faced, resolute looking man, though his brown eyes, like hers, had the same frank, steadfast audacity. With a business brevity that was hurried, but not unkindly, he hoped Masterton had fully recovered.

"Thanks to your daughter, I'm all right now," said Masterton. "I need not tell you that I believe I owe my life to her energy and courage, for I think you have experienced what she can do in that way. Only you have had the advantage of those who have only enjoyed her social acquaintance."

"I know I owe you my life," he said, his face flushing.

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I will return the securities. That is my message.

The young man bowed. But before the coach arrived he managed to draw out to Clissie. "You are not returning to Canada City," he said.

The young girl made a gesture of indignation. "No! I am never going there again. I go with my popper to Sacramento."

"Then I suppose I must say goodbye," the girl looked at him in surprise. "Popper says you are coming to Sacramento in three days."

"Am I?"

He looked at her steadily. She returned his glance unflinchingly, bravely. "You are," she said in her low but distinct voice.

"I will."

And he did.

THE END.

A City Destroyed by Silence.

Anyela, if the old legend of her fate is to be relied upon, actually perished through silence. The legend concerning the unique end of this ancient city is as follows: Anyela was a town of Lacedaemon, founded by the Lacedaemonian king Anyela. It was an independent city for many years, but was finally conquered by the Spartans. The city had been so often alarmed by false rumors of a projected Spartan invasion that at last, weary of living in a state of absolute terror, it was decreed that it should be made a public offense to report the approach of an enemy. So when the Spartans at last actually appeared before the city no one dared to warn the officials of their approach, and thus they were able to take the town with scarcely an effort.

There is, it must be admitted, another "silence" myth concerning Anyela. Servius says that the city was founded by Pythagoras, forbidden by laws of their order to speak of or to harm serpents. The result was that the snakes from the hills sought the precincts of the city, and, no one daring to speak of it to his neighbor or to harm the slimy creatures, one by one the inhabitants left until finally the city was completely turned into a snake den.

Swallowed a Knife.

In November, 1923, a professional hunter named Dempster swallowed by accident a knife nine inches long. Medical assistance was procured, but all efforts to recover the knife through the mouth were fruitless. The report in the *Caribbean* dispensary says: "The surgeons were unanimously agreed as to the best mode of treating this extraordinary case. They were of opinion that nothing but an operation could save the patient's life, but he could not be persuaded to submit to it. He left the hospital on Dec. 28, 1923, to return home to London against the advice of the surgeons, for he died on his road at Middlewich, in Cheshire, on Jan. 18, 1924, inflammation and gangrenous of the stomach having been produced by the irritation of the knife and the jolting of the wagon."

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NERVE WASTE.

One of the most helpful books on nerve weakness ever issued is that entitled "Nerve Waste," by Dr. Sawyer of San Francisco, now in its fifth thousand. This work of an experienced and reputable physician is in agreeable contrast to the vast mass of false teaching which prevails on this interesting subject. It abounds in carefully considered and practical advice and has the two great merits of wisdom and sincerity.

It is endorsed by both the religious and secular press. The *Chicago Tribune* says: "A perusal of the book and the application of its principles will put health, hope and heart into thousands of lives that are now suffering through nervous impairment."

The book is \$1.00, by mail postpaid. One of the most interesting chapters—chapter xx, on Nerves and Nerve Tonics—has been printed separately as a sample chapter, and will be sent to any address for stamp by the publisher, THE PACIFIC PUB. CO., Box 2078, San Francisco.

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