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Richard the Brazen
 ... By ... **CYRUS TOWNSEND BRADY,**
 Author of "For the Freedom of the Sea," "The Southerners," Etc., AND **EDWARD PEPLE,**
 Author of "A Broken Rosary," "The Prince Chap," Etc.
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Continued from last
 When Mr. Corrigan left the telephone he found that Harriet and Imogene had gone upstairs. The latter young lady had been unable to restrain her emotions longer, and in the seclusion of her chamber she gave vent to every species of pyrotechnic despair to which the tender age of nineteen is subject. Miss Renwyck was the busiest Samaritan on record, and her ministrations to the stricken one made a word with Richard out of the question for the present.
 Mr. Van der Awe perceived that his inamorata was profoundly agitated, but why he could not imagine. Therefore he paced solemnly up and down the hall, looking more like a funeral director than ever. Richard sat on the front porch, smoking one cigarette after another furiously, when Mr. Corrigan came out and accosted him.
 "Hello, your lordship! What is your British opinion on hornets' nests in general?"
 "The inmates thereof come at you endwise and all at once," observed the young man grimly. "In my humble opinion things are going to wake up presently."
 "Right!" laughed the merry little lawyer with what Richard could not but feel was ill timed merriment. "My esteemed brother-in-law is fairly boiling. He's on his way out here now with two policemen. I'm glad you're not mixed up in this particular phase of the comedy, Dicky, boy. You have somewhat of a load to carry as it is."
 "Um!" grunted Richard, staring absently at the gravel path.
 Mr. Corrigan eyed him suspiciously and started away. Richard was about to ask permission to accompany him, intending again to lay bare his heart to his counsel, but at that instant his attention was arrested in an entirely different direction.
 Woolsey Bills was coming toward him from the direction of the railroad station.

CHAPTER XX.
 THE adventurer allowed Mr. Corrigan to walk away without offering any further remark, then waited patiently for his servant to reach the porch.
 "Good mornin', your lordship," said Bills, with a look of guileless innocence which made the Texan long to throttle him on the spot.
 Richard regarded him earnestly, striving to read the secrets of his soul, but came to the conclusion that the servant had no soul, inasmuch as the face before him was as placid as that of a slumbering babe.
 "Bills," he said in his sternest tone, "come upstairs. There is a matter which we must settle now—at once."
 Contrary to his expectations, the servant did not flinch, but followed him meekly to the upper floor. Once inside the room, the Texan locked the door and turned on his companion savagely.
 "Now, my man, just give an account of yourself, and be quick about it!"
 Richard had flung himself into the morris chair, while the valet stood before him, nervously shifting his feet and picking at the brim of his hat.
 "M'lord!" Richard cut him short.
 "Drop that! This is no time for infernal nonsense! Well?"
 "Yes, sir. Thank you, sir," Bills began again, though the task to which he had evidently nerved himself was proving larger than he at first supposed.
 "Mr. Williams, sir, I done wrong. I know that. An' I come back to tell you all about it, sir, an' ask your pardon, sir, if you'll be so good."
 "Leave the trimmings out and get down to facts!" snapped Richard, with unconcealed impatience. "You sneaked off last night without permission. Why?"
 "Because," confessed the valet, with a sudden spurt of courage—"because I forgot, sir, and drank your brandy up again, Mr. Williams, sir. Honest, sir, I was afraid you'd shoot me, an'—an' I went away to New York, intendin' to never come back again. I left w'ilst you was 'avin' the play, sir."
 "How did you get to New York at that time of night? There are no trams at that hour."
 "No, sir. I know they ain't. I-I got on a freight train, sir."
 The Texan looked at him keenly, then nodded permission for the balance of the fishy story.
 "When I got to New York, sir," the valet continued, "I realized wot a bloomin' ass I was, Mr. Williams, sir, an' I confesses it now, sir, without no 'ope of covertin' up the fact."
 "Bills," said Richard calmly, "it comes to me that this is the first honest truth you have spoken. I have hopes of you yet. Go on."
 "Yes, sir, thank you, sir. As I was a-sayin', there I was in a big city, sir, without much money an' no character an' no humanly prospect of a pence. Says I to myself, 'Bills, sez I, you're a lousy-ass. Now, what a gentleman would do in such a case, sez I, 'you'd get a job. An' I sez, 'I'll get a job of you'."

"I'll get a job of you' for anything. Go back to him, Bills," says I, 'an' tell 'im 'ow it 'appened. 'E's a kindly disposed gentleman with a sweet, forgivin' nature an' wot 'oid it agin' you that you was afraid of 'is terrible pistol, Mr. Williams, sir.'"
 "H'm!" sniffed Richard. "What was your other reason for coming back?"
 The servant shifted uneasily, turned his hat round and round in his nervous hands and apparently decided to keep back nothing.
 "Yes, sir," he began again; "I 'ad another reason. I fancied if I come back your lordship—er—I mean Mr. Williams—no, beg pardon—Mr. Williams, sir—that you would pay me wot you promised me, w'ich is better than starvin' to death in Noo York without no character, meanin' no offense an' awsk'in' you not to be angrier than you can 'elp. I sleep' restless, Mr. Williams, sir. Then I come back. That's all."
 "Is it?" asked Richard dryly.
 "Yes, sir," answered the valet, with profound solemnity, "as Gawd is lookin' at us both, me a-sittin' an' you a-sittin' down, m' lord."
 The Texan arose and took several reflective turns up and down the room. Then he paused and stood with his hands in his pockets and his legs apart.
 "Bills," he said, "I'm going to pay you a compliment. Without an exception you're the biggest liar between New York and San Antonio. It's a long stretch, my friend, and I'm not a flatterer."
 Bills stared at him sadly, reproachfully, but made no answer. Richard continued:
 "Of course I didn't see you when you left—that is, with my own eyes—and I didn't see you when you got off the train awhile ago, but just the same I have a chain of evidence which I trust will refresh your memory. When I employed you, you came to me with the following recommendations: 'Discharge him at once. He's a thief. The last time it was \$2 6d. and my jeweled cigar cutter. His friend, Mr. Drake of Scotland Yard, is also inquiring for his address.' So much for your character as endorsed by your former master. If I hadn't been, as you aptly express it, 'a bloomin' ass,' I would have spared myself the mortification of stating the fact. I didn't discharge you and must take the consequences. But let us proceed. Next you tried to blackmail me for the purpose of extorting £300 from one who had treated you squarely. Item three: Both Miss Renwyck and I saw you in whispered conversation with a—with a cock eyed tramp who was going out of the front gate. By the way, what was it you said to him?"
 Bills looked uncomfortable.
 "E awsked me for money, sir, an' I told 'im to go about 'is business, sir."
 Richard wheeled upon the man sharply.
 "You lie, Bills! You told me at the time that he asked directions to the station."
 "Yes, sir," answered Woolsey, flushing to his ears. "I did lie the first time, sir. I-I didn't want to seem uncharitable inclined."
 The Texan sneered and turned upon his heel. After another contemplative turn up and down he once more faced the culprit.
 "Look here, Bills; I haven't finished with you yet. I have only told you the lightest part of it. After falling to gorge money out of me you hold conversation with a suspicious character and acknowledge that you told a lie concerning it. Next you disappear, claimin' to go to New York at a time when no trains were running. For the present we'll accept the story of the freight, but can look that part up later. In the meantime, while you are in New York, of course your cock eyed friend drops in on Restmore at 3 o'clock in the morning. He—er—watches in the billiard room while a pal slips through the open window of the library, opens Mr. Renwyck's safe and drifts away with a cool hundred and fifty thousand dollars' worth of diamonds. Question is, who was the pal? I don't happen to be either a detective or a fool, but I have my own ideas. Mr. Renwyck is coming out here presently with a couple of what you call 'bobbies; I believe I shall tell him every thing about both of us'—and never did the humiliation of his position so enter into Richard's soul as when he had to class himself with that miserable trash of mankind—"but I have an idea that you will shortly represent an expression used both here and in England, which is to say, 'Collected Bills.' Am I clear?"
 As Richard forgot this chain of evidence (and by link the valet's terror became pitiful to behold), his eyeballs almost started from his head, while his putty-like complexion paled to an ash grey. His slim hands shook, his weak legs quivered under him, till at last he collapsed and sank upon his knees.
 "My Gawd, Mr. Williams, sir!" he gasped. "You don't 'dare I done it, do you? Honest, sir, I was in Noo

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York! W'y. It don't stand to reason, sir, that I'd come back 'ere immedjly if I'd done it. 'Deed, sir, it don't stand to any sort of reason."
 "It does," flashed Richard. "You thought I'd swallow that cock and bull story of yours and be grateful for the dose. Why, you fool, the pill is as big as a football. We'll drop absurdity now and get down to business. Can you get those diamonds back?"
 In vain Bills groveled at his master's feet, protesting his innocence with sobs and tears. It was no use. The evidence against him was too clear, and while Richard himself was the real culprit in allowing the man to remain at Restmore at all, still, if he ever hoped to recover the stolen property, he must hold on like grim death to the bird in hand.
 He put poor Bills through a sort of third degree, but without results further than copious tears and more copious protestations. Finally, his patience exhausted utterly, he took the terrified valet by the collar and dragged him to the door of the bathroom.
 "Go in there!" he commanded in a low, tense tone, which was far more terrible to Bills than any shout he had ever heard. "Go in, I say, and stay there until I come for you. If you try to escape, by heaven, I'll kill you! It isn't a joke this time. It's the word of a gentleman from Texas!"
 The servant knew that his master told the truth, so he sunk down upon the bare, cold tiles, where he lay in limp distraction until such a time as the terrible Texan came to pronounce his doom.
 Richard saw that the bathroom window was far too small to admit of the man's escape. He closed and locked the door, passed the back of a chair beneath the door and went downstairs. In the rear hall he encountered Mr. Van der Awe, whose mournful cast of countenance seemed but a foretaste of what fate had in store for him.
 "Beg pardon, Lord Croyland," said that sad young gentleman, with a faint, wan smile, "can you tell me what happens to be the matter with Miss Chittenden?"
 "Yes!" snapped Richard. "She's got the collywobblers. I've got 'em, too, so look out!"
 The Texan crossed the lawn and flung himself upon an iron bench. Then he took his getting head between his hands and cursed the English aristocracy from Alfred straight down the glittering line to a certain noble earl who reposed in peace in a comfortable modern hospital with only a broken bone or two to cause him misery.
 "O Lord!" he groaned. "The course of true love never did run smooth, but never is it but rougher on a flea bitten bucking broncho!"

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