



(Continued)

The butler knew that there was no argument he could use to change his employer's determination. But he was cheered by the faint hope that some day he might return. Mr. Peter, he reflected, had never been like other men. Reserved, non-communicative, aloof and austere, but inflexibly a man of his word. Six months was not so long. Sneed thought he would spend the period in foreign travel. He had understood that during the past quarter century certain improvements had been made in the world.

When Peter Milman told Sneed that his presence would imperil certain plans, he was speaking sober truth. In the upper rooms of his home there had been born the determination to save the things he loved from being disposed of at auction. It seemed almost as though the shades of his forbears, lingering about the things that had been theirs, had concentrated their influence upon their ultimate descendant. He had gone to the Milman museum to say farewell. He had put down his ancestor's sword with the determination to fight. And in this fight Sneed, for all his faithful ways and honest heart, could have no part. Any deviation from the way of life he had followed for so many years would alarm the faithful butler. He would inevitably have imagined his employer was ill and buzzed about him like an anxious fly.

Milman's way of life changed directly. Achilles Luty entered his service. To the Frenchman it was nothing unusual that Milman went out frequently. Luty knew nothing of the former secluded existence.

A few days after Sneed's hegira had begun, Achilles Luty dropped three letters into a nearby mail-box. The letters were addressed to: Fleming Bradley, Edgewater, N. J.; Floyd Malet of Philadelphia; Neeland Barnes of Peekskill-on-the-Hudson. Fleming Bradley, returning home from a tedious day of work in the laboratory of an oil refinery, found his letter on the table where his meal was set. He was a big, untidy man of middle age, taciturn, and unpopular with his fellows because he invited no confidences nor answered personal questions. At the Edgewater refinery, as in that at Bayonne from which he had come two years previously, he was known as F. Bradley. None suspected him of being the great physicist, Fleming Bradley, once the foremost man in his line America had produced.

He slit the envelope and looked at the address and signature. The name Peter Milman meant as little to him as his own name to Edgewater. Bradley had never read a Social Register in his life. Between the pages was a money order for one hundred dollars. "I beg you," Peter Milman wrote, "not to imagine that by inclosing this money I suppose you to be an object for charity. I urgently desire you to dine with me today week at half-past seven o'clock, and it may be that you must engage a substitute or be put—by my request—to some expense not otherwise necessary.

"You may ask yourself why you should go to this trouble for a man unknown to you. I would answer that I am thoroughly acquainted with your life history and entertain a great admiration for your genius. Think of me as one anxious to see you regain your rank as one of the great scientists of the world. Perhaps at this dinner you may be offered the opportunity.

"Beside yourself there will be, I trust, Neeland Barnes, formerly an international polo player and owner of race horses, and Floyd Malet, who, when he seemed about to take his place in the world as a great sculptor, suffered an unfortunate eclipse."

Bradley went to the library and opened the New York directory. Sure enough, Peter Milman was recorded as living on Lower Fifth avenue. The thing, then, was not a foolish practical joke.

Puffing at a big pipe, Fleming Bradley sat on his little balcony and gazed at Manhattan lights. This strange letter had awakened old hopes and ambitions that he had thought for ever dead. Of course, there could be no practical joke which expended a hundred dollars on its fulfillment. Bradley read the letter again. The phrase, "Perhaps at this dinner you may be offered the opportunity," took his fancy strangely. Opportunity! Did any exist for a man who had been disgraced and was now forgotten? Until this letter came Bradley had believed his career finished. He went

into his bedroom and disinterred a suit of full evening dress from its mothball tomb. He had not worn it for a dozen years.

Peter Milman's letter reached Neeland Barnes at a moment when that eminent sportsman was engaged in staving off his most persistent creditor, the landlord Lippyky.

Barnes was a tall, finely made man who had run through several fortunes by his love for horses and his inability to judge of their chances in races. After his wife had died, his relatives had shrugged their shoulders and abandoned him. The many schemes for his rehabilitation had failed. He disappeared from fashionable resorts. His only daughter was being brought up in England by rich relations. He had drifted about the world until, at the end of all resources, he had taken a little house on the outskirts of Peekskill.

Here he was engaged in what he explained as an attempt "to stage a comeback." He was trying to become physically fit, and he was succeeding. But mountain hikes and sculling up the noble stream brought no grist to the mill.

"Mr. Barnes, you are a loafer," Lippyky cried when the sportsman had announced his inability to pay rent long overdue. This seemed cruelly unjust to a man who had just returned from a twenty-mile walk.

"Some day, if you keep on annoying me," said Neeland Barnes, "I shall kill you."

"You don't have to kill me," Lippyky cried shrilly. "You just pay my rent. Sell your swell clothes and get overalls." He waved Peter Milman's letter. "Get some of your swell friends to lend you money."

Neeland Barnes looked at the letter, puzzled. He did not recognize the writing, but the stationery was reassuring.

"When what you term my swell friends know I am living in a hovel like this, they will advance me the money. I shall not ask them until I have finished my training. I am about to begin. If I hit you, it's your lookout."

Barnes began his shadow-boxing exercises. Dimly Lippyky perceived that his debtor was getting nearer and nearer. He went out muttering: "Loafer." It was a word which did much to appease him.

Barnes boxed no more when his landlord had disappeared. He read the astonishing letter a dozen times and secreted the money-order at once. Alone of the three who had received somewhat similar communications, he knew of Milman and his family. Very

distinctly they were connected by marriage. Barnes had no idea that the Brewer failure had brought Peter Milman to penury. One sentence he found strangely intriguing: "If, as I believe, you feel yourself unfairly treated by the world that was yours, I may be able to offer you the opportunity to take your place again in society."

Neeland Barnes longed above all things for the comfortable life that had once been his. He had never permitted himself to become shabby. Never had he sunk to such a state that former friends would hesitate to recognize him. He clung to the idea that when once he ceased to shave and wear clean linen the descent to hell would have begun.

He rolled a cigarette and indulged in pleasing reveries. Good dinners were not given idly nor were hundred-dollar bills expended for nothing. Peter Milman wanted him to do something. Well, Neeland Barnes was his man. Perhaps after all these years the man who had run away with Mrs. Milman was back in America. Perhaps Peter Milman desired him to be chastised publicly. He would find Neeland Barnes devoid of fear and in better physical trim than he had been for a dozen years. Barnes always saw himself in a heroic light. He hoped the thing would be staged so that his old cronies might see it. They would never believe that he could keep so fit after the scandalous rumors that had been spread about him.

Naturally there would be expense money. It would be a delightful experience to pay Lippyky his deferred rent in nickels and cents and watch him scrambling feverishly for the coins among poison ivy. And he would be able to send his daughter a decent present at last. Poor Nita, whom he had not seen for years, brought up by zealous relatives far from his care. The adventure might lead to amazing things.

Presently these brilliant prospects faded. He was conscious that his only home was in Lippyky's grotesquely furnished house. Adventures with clerical endings offered themselves only to youth. He sighed a little. Then he smiled. After all, he had the hundred dollars and the prospect of a good dinner.

Floyd Malet, under the name of M. Floyd, was earning a poor living by teaching drawing in Philadelphia private schools. The man who had hoped to see his name associated with Rodin and Mennier was forgotten by all save the few who had seen in him the signs of genius. Malet was a man of middle size, thin and haggard. Once or twice fastidious pupils had complained that he paid too little attention to his personal appearance. Milman's letter came by late mail. At first the sculptor was inclined to think it an advertising scheme of some sort. The Lower Fifth avenue address was thick with loft and office buildings. Like Bradley, he went to a library and looked up Milman. The genealogical department gave him ample data.

The stranger's letter held out the promise of temporary relief from an intolerable life. There was money for the trip and enough over to live for many weeks as he had lately learned to live. He packed his grip, thankful he had saved a suit of evening clothes.

There is something vivifying about the air of Manhattan. It had its effect on the three men bound for Peter Milman's house. Bradley held up his head again and Malet lost his droop of depression. Neeland Barnes, walking briskly down the avenue, passed clubs which had dropped him on account of nonpayment of dues and felt himself within measurable distance of re-election. His military mustache and fine carriage made him a marked figure, and he liked the limelight.

As he neared the Milman house he wondered what his fellow guests would be like. In other years no physicists had been numbered among his acquaintances. He was not quite certain what a physicist was. As to sculptors, he had met one in Rome, but he was a marquis. Sculptors were probably all right. He was reassured by remembering that the wife of a former polo pal had her own studio. But he would probably have to dominate the conversation with Peter Milman and talk of old New York society. He must be careful not to mention the Daynes. The runaway wife had been a Dayne.

Wedged in between tall buildings, the Milman house looked squat and unimpressive. Yet Barnes gazed at it with respect. To be able to retain it spelled wealth. Lesser men would have sold at a profit and moved uptown. What this millionaire might want with Neeland Barnes was a delightful mystery. He rapped loudly with the brass knocker.

A few minutes earlier Floyd Malet had stood appalled at the smug ugliness of the building. He did not think with any sympathy of that generation, represented by the bulldier, which had distrusted elegance and loved what was solid and lasting. To the sculptor it seemed the Milman home was modeled on the old Astor house. But he liked the door and the brass knocker, which was a copy of that decorating an Oxford college.

The last to come was Fleming Bradley, whom the subway had delayed. He rather liked the house. It had strength and the air of studied isolation. None could look through its windows to disturb the inmates. It lay fifteen feet back from the sidewalk. Bradley had that imagination without which mathematicians can never be great. Whom and what was he to see behind the tall door?

### CHAPTER III

Neeland Barnes disapproved of Achille, who admitted him with lavish gestures. This was not the sort of butler a Milman should employ. He followed him to a library, where he found his host speaking to Floyd Malet. It was as Barnes thought. Sculptors were not quite up to his social standard. This stranger was physically inconspicuous, and his clothes should have been more recently pressed.

Neeland Barnes held out his hand to Peter Milman, as one could to a man of his distinguished ancestry with a smile which said plainly, "I, at least, belong here."

"It is very kind of you to come," said Peter Milman. He turned to Floyd Malet: "Mr. Malet, this is Mr. Neeland Barnes."

Barnes nodded a little coldly. Curious, he thought, that Peter Milman should have introduced Malet to him. Then Fleming Bradley came in. Although his clothes were of another era, there was an air of power about him. His was a carelessness due less to ignorance than to lack of concern with other people's modes of life and thought. In an age when beads were unpopular he wore one, and little children bled "Beaver" to him at every street corner.

Peter Milman, so Barnes thought, treated him with extreme respect. It was not until Achille brought in the cocktails that Barnes' brow left him. It was easy to see that of the three Peter Milman considered him the least important. Why, he wondered, did Milman esteem it an honor to have a physicist to dinner? The word re-

some new way of describing a physician. That was it. Physicians were not so bad. One had married a Vanderbilt in America and another a duke of Norfolk's daughter in England. The second cocktail found Neeland Barnes more amiable. He looked keenly at his host, but discovered no trace of nervousness about him, no wildness of eye which might confirm the world's opinion that he was mentally unfit. Perfectly dressed, as usual, but no better turned-out than Neeland Barnes.

The dining room was beautifully furnished.

"Ha, ha," said Barnes, "good old Chippendale!"

"Sheraton," the sculptor corrected gently. "Just as you like," Barnes said generally. There were certain bottles in plain view which banished any ill-humor he might have felt. Not for years had he sat down to a really well-chosen and well-cooked dinner. Everything about him spoke of lavish expenditures. To Floyd Malet every-thing spoke of exquisite taste. The relief, after years of furnished dissonance, was grateful. He felt cheerful after a decade of gloom.

The bearded Bradley noticed only that he was sitting at a bountiful table and invited to sip excellent vintage wines. What was the reason? He was impatient to know. What opportunity was he to be offered to regain the rank in science that disgrace had bereft him?

By degrees Bradley found himself listening to Barnes' anecdotes with a



By Degrees Bradley Found Himself Listening to Barnes' Anecdotes.

less critical attitude. Barnes had humor. A handsome man, Bradley decided, courageous, popular with men and women alike and not burdened with sufficient mental power to enable him to feel he had a mission in life. He lived, no doubt, as his wealthy class does, simply for the moment.

In truth, Neeland Barnes had forgotten Lippyky entirely. The dinner was excellent. A fellow-countryman of Achille's had seen to that. The wines were superb. Barnes adopted an air of exquisite but lofty courtesy toward his fellow-guests. They said very little, but their table manners were reassuring. When the dinner should be finished, Barnes determined to lean back in his chair, survey Milman with a smile that had world-knowledge and kindly cynicism in it, and demand to know for what reason he was brought from Peekskill retirement. As one old New Yorker to another, Peter Milman would give his reasons.

"That's a very fine oil-painting over your head, Mr. Milman," said Floyd Malet, disturbing the train of Barnes' fancies.

"A relative of mine," Milman answered. "Capt. Oliver Milman. He was painted in Holland when he was a young soldier in England's war with France. It is by Jordans, the brilliant fellow-student of Rubens. He joined his brother in Plymouth county, Massachusetts, just after that picture was painted. Later he fought in 'King Phillip's war.' He was killed fighting for England against France in Pennsylvania. Historians know it as 'King William's war.' His brother disowned him for his godless ways of life. In revenge Captain Oliver bequeathed him his entire fortune, which rescued the stern and righteous brother from beggary. But for Oliver Milman we might have become obscure farmers on Cape Cod. What the Milmans had, they owe to him."

Neeland Barnes launched into a bitter invective against righteous relatives. "Take it from one who knows," he concluded, "it is the black sheep who'd do a man a good turn when he needs it. I've found that my righteous relatives always gave me good advice and the shadier sort slipped me the coin."

"Some day a great lawlessness will sweep over the world," Malet declared. "I don't mean as a concerted action on the part of any Socialist or Syndicalist, but an expression of human unrest. We have been tied down too long. We have endured too much the oppressions of those in authority." "We'll stampede, you mean?" said Barnes. "I'll be there." "Do you think," Peter Milman

asked, "that there is any justification for the human herd stampeding because it is dissatisfied with its masters?"

"Certainly," Floyd Malet said. "Sometimes it is just to take the law in one's hands."

"The law," scoffed Bradley, recalling certain earlier passages of his life. "The law. Now I'm a typical law-abiding citizen, but I cannot regard any man-made statutes as sacrosanct. What is law? A rule of civic conduct prescribed by the supreme power and prohibiting what is wrong. That's Blackstone's definition."

Neeland Barnes looked instinctively over the table to his host. It was his experience that all rich men supported those laws which kept the masses in order. In his own days of wealth he had done the same. But there was no frown on Peter Milman's face. "This is a discussion which interests me more than you can imagine," said Peter Milman. His guests noticed that he turned his head and glanced swiftly at Captain Oliver. "I usually have coffee and liqueurs served in the garden." He rose. "Think you may prefer it there."

"A garden?" Floyd Malet cried. "A garden in Lower Fifth avenue?"

"You shall see," said Milman. They followed their host through library and corridor to what seemed a blank wall. A door, cleverly concealed by moldings, swung open. Not for twenty years had strangers been offered the chance to gaze upon Peter Milman's Japanese garden.

"This is Japan," Malet exclaimed. "I have seen this in Nagasaki." "I modeled it on a part of the gardens in 'The Teahouse of the Indescribable Butterflies' in Nagasaki, with a suggestion, here and there, from the Fukawaga garden."

Neeland Barnes knew nothing about Japanese gardens, but the thing took his fancy amazingly. Quiet bridges, little streams with brilliant goldfish, garden-lanterns, strangely set stones, made this back yard of seventy feet long by half as much wide the most entrancing garden he had seen on this Avenue where he, too, had been born.

At the other end of it was a sort of platform on which comfortable seats were arranged. Immediately below it was a lily-pool. Twenty feet above was a framework of steel mesh to which mosquito netting was attached.

"This is exquisite," Malet murmured. "No wonder you do not move. Your taste seems to me to be perfect. I have never been in a more harmonious and beautifully furnished house."

While Achille was bringing coffee and liqueurs, Milman explained how, by the use of glass where now was netting, he could regulate the temperature and keep his garden beautiful when snowstorms raged and frost bit viciously.

It was when Achille had gone that Neeland Barnes found himself sighing. He had abandoned the idea of his man-of-the-world questioning of his host. He was content that this pleasant atmosphere remain unchanged. He did not want to think of going back to Lippyky and the rent question. The wine and the green Chartreuse induced a pleasant lassitude. Neeland Barnes stretched his long legs and felt at peace.

"You have been very patient, gentlemen," Milman began, "in not asking me ere this for what reason I invited you. And you have been very courteous to come when my letter might have been construed in an offensive light." Neeland Barnes permitted himself to smile at being insulted by a gift of a hundred dollars. "I have never met any of you personally before, although I have heard Mr. Bradley lecture and have seen some of Mr. Malet's work. I also was thrilled many years ago by Mr.

(Continued on page 5)

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