



ON TIPTOE

Stewart Edward White

Illustrations by Henry Jay Lee

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WHO'S WHO IN THE STORY:

GRIMSTEAD, the "Buccaneer" of this swashbuckling story, is stranded among the California redwoods in his "private craft", a high-powered car, when its gasoline tank is broken.

BURTON GRIMSTEAD, his "spoiled" daughter, is with him against her will, especially so as she perceives her father's object in insisting on her going on the trip is to throw her into the company of

ROSS GARDINER, Grimstead's sinister "Second in Command," a capable, good looking young man.

SIMMIS, the Grimstead's English butler-chauffeur whose gay sprits are repressed by his dignity.

DAVENPORT, a youth, comes by and astonishes them first by saying his small car runs on electricity so he has no "gas" to give them, and next by winning a \$10,000 bet from Gardiner by predicting a rain storm.

CHAPTER VI.

Simmins Brightens Up

A tiny fire blazed merrily at the edge of the shelter, a marvelous sight in all this deluge to Burton when she turned out in the morning. Her father and Gardiner sat leaning against a log in the background and Simmins fussed with a coffee pot over a small gasoline stove. Grimstead looked, good-natured, and amused by the turn of events; Gardiner was company-manners polite, which meant that he was disgruntled; Simmins was bright and chipper.

There was no doubt of it; something had happened to Simmins. His manner was free and independent and human; no longer did he conceal rigidly his naturally frivolous proclivities.

"Coffee, Miss," he should have enunciated mechanically. Instead of which he remarked: "That'll warm you up."

That morning Davenport found Simmins clad in a mackintosh, delving in the pockets of the larger car.

"You certainly did call the turn," said Simmins. "I congratulate you, sir! And to rook his ribs does my heart good! I'll buy me a little souvenir with the tenner you let me in for I suppose that goes, sir?"

"Certainly," laughed Davenport. "You'd better make yours a Liberty bond though, Simmins, if you take my advice."

"Liberty bond, sir, with a tenner?" puzzled Simmins.

"Tenner," repeated Davenport, also pretending to be puzzled, "Oh!" he simulated enlightenment. "I see. Did you imagine for a moment I'd bother with a sum like ten dollars?"

"What else, sir?" asked Simmins uneasily.

"Then hundreds, of course," replied Davenport.

"Good Lord! If it had not rained I'd have been out a thousand dollars?"

"Most certainly," Davenport assured him seriously. "As it is, you shall have my check for a thousand the moment Mr. Gardiner pays his debt."

And now you know why Simmins passed the coffee in that carefree, swashbuckling spirit that would warm her up!

"Looks as if it would rain forever," remarked Grimstead after a pause.

Davenport glanced at his wrist watch and made a rapid calculation.

"It will stop at ten minutes to ten," he stated.

"I'll acknowledge that you called the turn on this storm, but you're cutting it too fine," said Grimstead. "Be reasonable!"

"Nevertheless, if you'll allow me five minutes either way," smiled the young man, "I'll lay anybody another bet." He glanced at Gardiner, who did not look up.

The millionaire laughed.

"Well, you are a good sport; I'll say that for you. I'm no heavy gambler, like you young fellows with lots of money. I'll bet you a box of cigars, just to make it interesting."

"All right."

"By the way," added Grimstead,

"didn't you say something about a tree—?"

"It's down, square across the road," interrupted Simmins eagerly.

"The deuce you say!" Grimstead sat up. "How many others are down?" he inquired after an instant.

"None, sir, not one!" cried Simmins triumphantly, as though the glory were his own personally. "I took especial pains to look."

"This is the most extraordinary exhibition of either fantastic bull luck or prophecy or a mixture of both I have ever witnessed!" said Grimstead. "It's—it's almost uncanny!"

"Not at all. The story was the exact product of a whole series of causes and effects working out; and as the causes and effects are all subject to physical law, which is unchangeable, any prediction as to the time or the direction or the strength or duration of a storm can be entirely exact, provided it is based on those causes and effects."

CHAPTER VII.

A Startling Discovery

At the hour predicted by Davenport the rain ceased and the clouds broke in the instantaneous California fashion to admit a bright shining sun. The whole world was aglitter with jewels, and little mists eddying through the forest drifted in and out of steady, broad shafts of light. Grimstead stared curiously at Davenport's little machine.

"Make her yourself?" inquired Grimstead.

"Such as she is," acknowledged Davenport. "I didn't use much pains with her looks because she is just an experiment. I'm trying something out."

"You said she was electric driven?" queried Grimstead.

"Yes."

"And I suppose charging a battery costs nothing," struck in Gardiner scornfully, "and there are charging stations everywhere."

"Often enough for my purpose," rejoined Davenport with entire good humor.

"I should think you'd want more speed and power," observed Grimstead.

"Geared as she is I can make 50 an hour on a paved road, and that means power for anything within reason—I haven't had it brake-tested; but it must develop between 35 and 45 horsepower."

"Your battery can't have a long charge-life at that rate," pursued Grimstead. "I don't see how you keep charged. How many hours do you make?"

"I don't know; I haven't determined yet. That's what I'm experimenting on."

Grimstead paused to get this straight.

"Do I understand you to say that you are running on the original charging?" he asked, "that you have not recharged since starting?"

"That's it."

"Where did you start from? How long have you been out?"

"Left San Rafael about three weeks ago." He stooped to examine a dial.

"Been just 1100 miles."

The pirate chief, like all good commanders, was always ready to climb himself to the crow's nest. This speck on the horizon was probably a mirage that would vanish on nearer approach; but there was just a remote possibility it might be a galleon heavy with untold wealth.

Or indeed, it might be somewhere between the extremes. Some craft laden mainly with dreams, but with a trifle of metal ballast worthy of a pirate's attention.

So like a prudent chief, he bore down on the stranger.

"Such a battery, if it could be well proved out, would be valuable," pursued Grimstead. One of the great elements in his success was that he knew better than to cry down the obvious. "I confess I can't imagine the principle—"

"Like to look at it?" inquired Davenport.

This was luck Grimstead had not hoped for—yet. He assented with al-

acidity. All crowded curiously around while the young man raised the hood.

They saw what appeared to be an ordinary large electric motor set across the frame. In front of it and connected to it by two thick wires was a black box measuring about a foot along all dimensions.

"There she is!" said Davenport cheerfully.

"That! Is that your whole battery?" cried Grimstead, pointing an incredulous finger. "Why, that thing wouldn't run a bell for three weeks, let alone a car. You're joshing me, young man. Where's your running battery? Under the seat?"

Without reply Davenport raised the seat cushions to display a recess occupied only by tools; lifted the trap door of the rear to show a nearly empty interior.

"You see, I have nothing up my sleeve with which to deceive you, said he, jestingly. "There's the whole works."

On the return to the camp Grimstead fell back to consult low-voiced with his second in command.

"What do you make of it, Ross?" he inquired.

"He's lying, showing off. The thing is impossible."

"Well, he certainly drove up last night from somewhere."

"He probably lives quite near and recharges from water power."

"Probably," agreed Grimstead, "but even at that he's got something. That box isn't any larger than a starting battery. We'll have to look into it a little. A battery as compact as that will drive others off the market."

Davenport put everybody to work, after a quick meal had been improvised and eaten, so that by mid-afternoon a comfortable and convenient camp had come into existence.

At supper time Simmins, panic-stricken, claimed total ignorance of camp cookery.

"I'll do it," stated Davenport briefly. "You'll do the dishes, run the errands, get the water and carry in the wood. I'll chop the wood." He looked around at the others. "That's the only thing I want you all to leave strictly alone—the axe. I'll do all the axe work myself."

CHAPTER VIII

Another Bet

"Well, this is something like!" cried Grimstead as he lowered himself to a cushion of aromatic broughs near the camp fire. He was well fed and warm and dry and pleasantly tired. He glanced about the scene with satisfaction. Everything was trim and shipshape, just the way he liked to see things.

"Young man," he went on in a large paternal manner, blowing the first cloud from his cigar, "where is your shop? San Rafael, did you say?"

"My shop—oh, Sausalito," replied Davenport.

"I suppose you could use a little more."

"Who couldn't?"

"A little additional capital might enable you to expand to advantage."

"Additional capital," said Davenport unexpectedly, with a grin, "wouldn't enable me to expand an inch."



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"But you just said that you could use more money."

"That's different."

"I don't see how it's different," said Grimstead a little impatiently, "but it crossed my mind that if you need a little—buy in a share, you understand. Of course an investigation—"

"So you are interested in my battery, after all," said Davenport.

"Kono!" Grimstead acknowledged.

"At least I'm interested in what you say about your battery. The state of Missouri isn't big enough to hold me when it comes to what you claim for it. I shrewdly suspect that in that you're trying to spoof me. But it's obvious you've come from somewhere, and it's obvious that little battery brought you. Even if it's only five or ten miles, and you expect to get home again, you've got something big."

"Of course," Davenport pointed out, "I haven't tried to sell anything nor make you believe anything. And I don't suppose, in view of your technical knowledge, I would have any right to resent your doubting my word. Nevertheless, I repeat that with that battery as my sole motive power I have driven about 1100 miles."

"Without recharging?" demanded Gardiner.

"Without recharging," repeated a polite but restrained silence succeeded this remark. Davenport himself relieved the situation.

"Don't feel embarrassed!" he laughed. "Say it if you want to; I won't be offended. It may relieve your minds. There's no way to prove it to you right now, so there's no sense worrying about it."

"Pardon me," put in Gardiner suavely. "I think your statement could be at least partially tested with the facilities at hand?"

"What do you mean?" asked Davenport.

"I mean that if you are willing to allow your battery to carry a load for any specified length of time I can arrange the load."

"It's not beyond the power of my battery, go to it," agreed Davenport.

"I figure she'll give about 40 horsepower."

"That is more than ample. For how long—"

"Long as you like—until we get out of here, if you please."

"Is it another bet?" asked Burton.

"I'm willing," said Davenport, "doubles or quits. Is it a bet?"

"I don't bet that heavily against another man's game," said Gardiner, "but I'm ready to risk five hundred that I can produce a legitimate test right here, and that this thing won't stand up under it. It is understood that my test must be met, and that the time limit is four days."

"Well," that's rather an "unsight unseen" proposition itself," rejoined Davenport. "But just to show you I'm a sport I'll go you, provided that it is not beyond the strength of the battery. Its endurance within its strength is all I claim."

"What I propose," said Gardiner, "is that the eminals of this battery be connected with the self-starter of our car; and the starting pedal be locked down. Then the battery through the self-starter, will be turn-

ing over the engine against the compression. I don't know the exact power required, but it is considerable. Tomorrow I will compute it exactly.

It is sufficient to exhaust the ordinary starting battery in from 10 to 20 minutes."

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