

The Redemption of David Corson

By CHARLES FREDERIC GOSS

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CHAPTER VIII

A little before dusk the three companions started upon their evening's business. The horses and carriage were waiting at the door and they mounted to their seats. David was embarrassed by the novelty of the situation, and Pepeeta by his presence; but the quack was in his highest spirits. He saluted the bystanders with easy familiarity, ostentatiously flung the hostler a coin, flourished his whip and excited universal admiration for his driving. During the turn which they took around the city for an advertisement, he indoctrinated his pupil with the principles of his art.

"People to-day are just what they were centuries ago, G-g-gull 'em just as easy. Make 'em think the moon is made of g-g-green cheese—way to watch larks is to p-p-pull the heavens down—extract sunbeams from c-c-cucumbers and all the rest! There's one master-weakness, Davy. They all think they are sick, or if they d-d-don't, you can make 'em!"

"What! Make a well man think he is sick?" the Quaker asked in astonishment.

"Sure! That's the secret of success. I can pick out the strongest man in the c-c-crowd and in five minutes have pains shooting through him like g-g-greased lightning. They are all like jumping-packs to the man that knows them. You watch me pull the string and you-you'll see them wig-wig-wiggle."

"It seems a pity to take advantage of such weakness in our fellow men," said David, whose heart began to suffer qualms as he contemplated this rascality in his own connection with it.

"Fellow men! They are no fellows of mind. They are nuts for me to crack. They are oysters for me to open!" responded the quack, as he drove gaily into the public square and checked the horses, who stood with their proud-necks arched, champing their bits and looking around at the crowd as if they shared their master's contempt.

Pepeeta descended from the carriage and made her way hastily into the tent which had already been pitched for her. The doctor lighted his torch and set his stock of goods while David, obeying his directions, began to move among the people to study their habits. Elbowing his way here and there, he contemplated the crowd in the light of the quack's philosophy, and as he did so received a series of painful mental shocks.

The first principle in the art of painting a picture is to know where to sit down!" In other words, everything depends upon the point of view. Now that David began to look for evidences of the weaknesses and follies of his fellow men, he saw them everywhere. For the first time in his life he observed that startling prevalence of animal types which always communicates such a shock to the mind of him who has never discovered it before. Every countenance suddenly seemed to be the face of a beast, but thinly and imperfectly veiled. There were foxes and tigers and wolves, there were bulldogs and monkeys and swine. He had always seen, or thought he saw, upon the foreheads of his fellow men some evidence of that divinity which had been communicated to them when God breathed into the great first father the breath of life; but now he shuddered at the sight of those thick lips and drooping jaws, those dull or crafty eyes, those swollen, sodden, gargoyle features, as men do at beholding monstrosities.

A few weeks ago he would have felt a profound pity at this discovery, but so rapid and radical had been the alteration in his feelings that he was now seized by a sudden revulsion and contempt. "Are these creatures really men?" he asked himself. He stood there among them taller, straighter, keener, handsomer than them all, and the old feelings that have made men aristocrats and tyrants in every age of the world, surged in his heart and hardened it against them.

By this time the quack had finished his few simple preparations, and standing erect before his audience, began the business of the evening. Having observed the habits of the game, David now chose a favorable position to study those of the hunter. He watched with an almost breathless interest every expression upon that sinister face and listened with a boundless interest to every word that fell from those treacherous lips.

He was not long in justifying the quack's honest criticism of his own oratory. His voice lacked the vibrant tones of a musical instrument and his rhetoric that fluency, without which the highest efforts of eloquence can never be attained. By speaking very slowly and deliberately he avoided stammering, but this always acted like a dragging anchor upon the movement of his thought. These were radical defects, but in every other respect he was a consummate artist. He arrested the attention of his hearers with an

inimitable skill and held it with an irresistible power.

His piercing eye noted every expression on the faces of his hearers, and seemed to read the inmost secrets of their hearts. He perceived the slightest inclination to purchase, and was as keen to see a hand steal towards a pocket-book as a cat to see a mouse steal out of its hole.

He coaxed, he wheedled, he bantered, he abused—he even threatened. He fulfilled his promise to the letter, "to make the well men think that they were sick," and many a stalwart frontiersman whose body was as sound as an ox, began to be conscious of racking pains. Nor were those legitimate arts of oratory the only ones which this arch-knave practiced.

"I gave you two dollars, and you only gave me change for one," cried a thin-faced, stoop-shouldered, helpless-looking fellow, who had just purchased a bottle of the "Balm of the Blessed Islands."

With lightning-like legerdemain the quack had shuffled this bill to the bottom of his pile, and lifting up the one that lay on top, exposed it to the view of his audience.

"That's a lie!" he said, in his slow, impressive manner. "There is always such a man as this in every crowd. Some one is always trying to take advantage of those who, like myself, are living for the public good. Gentlemen, you saw me lay the b-b-bill he gave me down upon the top! Here it is! Judge for yourselves. That is a bad man! Beware of him!"

The bold effrontery of the quack silenced the timid customer, who could only blush and look confused. His blushes and confusion condemned him and the crowd hustled him away from the wagon. They believed him guilty and he half believed it of himself.

David, who had seen the bill and knew the victim's innocence but not the doctor's fraud, pressed forward to defend him. The quack stopped and silenced him with an inimitable wink, and then instantly and with consummate art diverted his audience with a series of droll stories which he always reserved for emergencies like this. They were old and thread-bare, but this was the reason he chose them. He had one for every circumstance and occasion.

There was a man standing in an outer circle of the crowd around whose forehead was a bandage. "Come here, my friend," said the quack. "How did you get this wound? Don't want to tell? Oh! well, that is natural. A horse kicked him, no doubt; never got in a row! No! No! Couldn't any one hit him! Reminds me of the man who saw a big black-and-blue spot on his boy's forehead. 'My son,' said he, 'I thought I told you not to fight! How did you get this wound?' 'I bit it, father,' replied the boy.

"'Bit it!' exclaimed the old man in astonishment, 'how could you bite yourself upon the forehead?'

"I climbed onto a chair," says he. "And you have been climbing on a chair to bite your forehead, too, my friend?" he asked with humorous gravity, while a loud guffaw went up from the crowd.

"Well," he continued, soothingly, "whether you did it or not, just let me rub a little of this b-b-balm upon it, and by to-morrow morning it will be well. There! That's right. One dollar is all it costs. You don't want it? What the d-d-deuce did you let me open the bottle for? I'll leave it to the crowd if that is fair! There, that is right. Pay for it like a man. It's worth double its price. Thank you. By to-morrow noon you will b-b-b be sending me a testimonial to its value."

The novelty of the scene, the skill of the principal actor, the rapid growth of the piles of coin and bills, the frantic desire of the people to be guiled, all served to obscure those elements which were calculated to appeal to the Quaker's conscience. He felt like one awakened from a dream. While he was still in the half dozed condition of such an awakening, the quack gave him a sign that this part of his lesson was ended, and following the direction of the thumb which he threw over his shoulder towards Pepeeta's tent, he eagerly took his way thither.

Before the door stood several groups of young men and maidens, talking under their breath. Now and then a couple disentangled itself from the crowd, and with visible trepidation entered. As they reappeared, their friends gathered about them and sought them to disclose the secrets they had discovered.

Some of them giggled and stammered, others laughed boisterously and skeptically, while others still, looked scared and anxious. It was evident that even those who tried to make light of what they had seen and heard were moved by something awe-inspiring.

David listened to their silly talk, observed their bold demeanor and their vulgar manners, while the impression of weakness, of stupidity, of the lowliness and bestiality of humanity made upon his mind by the aged and the

mature, was intensified by his observation of the young and callow.

From the outside of the gypsy's tent he could make but few discoveries of her method; and he waited impatiently until the last curious couple had departed. When they had disappeared, he entered.

At the opposite side of the tent and reclining upon a low divan was the gypsy. Above her head a tallow candle was burning dimly. Before her was a rough table covered with a shawl, upon which were scattered cups of tea with floating grounds, ivory dice, cards, coins and other implements of the "Black Art."

Pepeeta sprang to her feet when she saw who her visitor was, and exhibited the clearest signs of agitation. David's own emotions were not less violent, for although the gypsy's surroundings were poor and mean, they served rather to enhance than to diminish her exquisite beauty. Her shoulders and arms were bare, and on her wrists were gold bracelets of writhing serpents in whose eyes gleamed diamonds. On her fingers and in her ears were other costly stones. Her dress was silk, and rustled when she moved, with soft and sibilant sounds.

"The doctor has sent me here to study the methods by which you do your work," said David, approaching the table and gazing at her with undisguised admiration.

"You should have come before. How can you study my methods when I am not practicing them? And any way, you have no faith in them. Have you? I always had until I heard your sermon in the little meeting house."

"And have you lost it now?"

"It has been sadly shaken."

"You can at least show me how you practice the art, even if you have lost your faith in it. I too have lost a faith; but we must live. What are these cards for?"

"If you wish me to show you, you may shuffle and cut them, but I would rather tell your fortune by your hand, for I have more faith in palmistry than in cards."

He extended his hand; she took it, and with her right forefinger began to trace the lines. Her gaze had that intensity with which a little child peers into the mechanism of a watch or an astronomer into the depths of space. A thrill of emotion shot through the frame of the Quaker at the touch of those delicate and beautiful fingers.

Neither of them spoke. The delicate finger of the gypsy moved over the lines of the palm like that of a little school-girl over the pages of a primer. They did not realize how dangerous was that proximity, nor how fatal that touch. Through those two poles of Nature's most powerful battery, the magnetic and mysterious current of love was passing.

"Let me now examine the lines," she said. "Here is the line of the heart. It passes clear across the palm. It is well marked at every point and is most pronounced upon the upper side. But look! it is joined to the head below the finger of Saturn. It is the sign of a violent death!"

As she uttered this exclamation, she pressed the hand convulsively between her own, and looked up into his face. The involuntary and sudden action recalled him to his consciousness. "What did you say?" he asked.

"Have you not been listening?" she replied, repressing both her anxiety and her annoyance.

"No; was it a good story or a bad one which you were reading?"

"It was both."

"Well—it is no matter, those accidental marks can have no significance."

"Why should not the character and destiny of the man disclose itself in signs and marks upon his hands?"

As they stood confronting each other, they would have presented a study of equal interest to the artist or to the philosopher. There was both a poem and a picture in their attitude. Grace and beauty revealed themselves on every feature and in every movement. They had arrived at one of those dramatic points in their life-journey, where all the tragic elements of existence seem to converge. Agitated by incomprehensible and delicious emotions, confronting insoluble problems, longing, hoping, fearing, they hovered over the ocean of life like two tiny sparrows swept out to sea by a tempest.

They were awakened from their reveries by the footsteps of the quack, and by his raucous voice summoning them back into the world of realities from which they had withdrawn so completely.

"Well, little wife," he said, "how is b-b-business?"

"Fair," she said, gathering up a double hand-full of change and passing it over to him indifferently.

The question fell upon the ears of the Quaker like a thunder bolt. It was to him the first intimation that Pepeeta was not the daughter of the quack. "His wife!" The heart of the youth sank in his bosom. Here was a new and unexpected complication. What should he do? It was too late to turn back now. The die had been cast, and he must go forward.

(To be continued.)

Save to Be It.

"He is such a lazy man that he took to manufacturing fans as the easiest way of making a living."

"The easiest way?"

"Sure. Isn't it certain to raise the wind?"—Baltimore American.

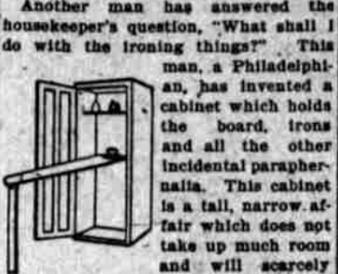
What?

"I suppose the hired girl does all the heavy work in your house?"

"Not at all; my wife makes the pies and puddings."



Another man has answered the housekeeper's question, "What shall I do with the ironing things?"



This man, a Philadelphian, has invented a cabinet which holds the board, irons and all the other incidental paraphernalia. This cabinet is a tall, narrow affair which does not take up much room and will scarcely be noticed in the corner. In the top is a shelf to hold the irons, while on the inner sides are runways with slides operative in them. One end of an ironing board is pivoted to the runner carried between the slides, and on the other end of the board is pivoted a supporting leg. When the board is to be used the closet door is opened and it is swung out into place. The irons and wax are there ready to hand, and there is practically no time lost in getting ready. Another advantage of this cabinet is the fact that it is not necessary to clear the kitchen table to get a space to support one end of the board.

English Cottage Pie.

Boil and then mash with a little milk and butter three pounds of potatoes, and line a deep pie dish with them, leaving enough only to cover the top of the dish. Chop a sufficient quantity of cooked or uncooked meat to fill the dish, season with pepper and salt, and add a grated onion. Pour half a cupful of stock over the mixture and cover with the remainder of the mashed potatoes. Brush over with milk or the yolk of an egg, and bake till brown. Serve with gravy and green peas.

Chicken Fried in Cream.

Put a pint of rich cream in a frying pan over a moderate fire until it begins to color, dip the different parts of the chicken in flour, season with a teaspoonful of salt, fry in the cream on each side till it is a delicate brown. When done put it on a hot platter. Pour another half pint of cream into the pan, let it boil one minute, add a saltspoonful of salt, a dash of pepper, then pour it over the chicken. Serve garnished with sprigs of parsley and a dish of puffed potato slices.

Pineapple Pie.

Put half a pineapple through the meat chopper. Beat the yolks of two eggs stiff, stir in a cup of sweet milk, a tablespoonful of melted butter and a cup of sugar. Last of all add the pineapple ground fine and bake immediately in an open crust. Make a meringue of the whites of the eggs and two teaspoonfuls of sugar, spread it on the pie as soon as done and return to the oven just long enough to brown the meringue.

Cranberry Pudding.

Moisten two cups of bread crumbs with one-half cup of melted butter, put a thin layer of these crumbs into a buttered pudding dish, add a layer of stewed and liberally sweetened cranberries, a dozen large seeded raisins, a little grated lemon peel and a sprinkling of sugar. Continue in this way until the dish is full, having the last layer crumbs. Cover the dish and bake for twenty minutes. Serve warm with a hard sauce.

Baked Apples.

To save gas, instead of lighting the oven when desiring baked apples, cut apples in halves and place them cut side downward in a pan on top of stove. Place in pan a little water, sprinkle apples with cinnamon and sugar, cover, and let cook slowly. When soft remove carefully, so as not to break skin.

French Foam.

Pare and cut up half a dozen peaches, strain through a sieve and mix the pulp with a half-cupful of powdered sugar. Beat the whites of three eggs to a stiff froth and add to it the peach pulp and beat until smooth and velvety. Fear into a mold, which must be placed on ice. Serve with a sweetened whipped cream.

Tomato Soup.

To three pints of soup stock add one quart of stewed or fresh tomatoes and a cupful of rice, and boil for one hour. When the rice is thoroughly done, add a lump of butter the size of an egg, season with pepper and salt and a tablespoonful of sugar.

Lemon Soufflé.

To a quart of strong beef broth (may be made from extract) add two tomatoes, half a lemon, six cloves, a pinch of thyme and sweet marjoram. Boil ten minutes, strain and serve.

Bad Breath

"For months I had great trouble with my stomach and used all kinds of medicines. My tongue has been actually as green as grass, my breath having a bad odor. Two weeks ago a friend recommended Cascares and after using them I can willingly and cheerfully say that they have entirely cured me. I therefore let you know that I shall recommend them to any one suffering from such troubles."—Chas. H. Halpern, 114 E. 7th St., New York, N. Y.

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How to Read.

Reading is not a lost art to the same degree that conversation is, but it has in most cases an arrested development through so much reading that makes no demand upon aesthetic sensibility, so that one is apt to bring to a fine story full of delicate shades of thought and feeling the same mind which he yields to a newspaper, putting a blunt interrogation as to its meaning as conveyed in the terms of a rational proposition, and the writer's charm is wholly lost upon him. While the reader's surrender to the author must be complete, his attitude should not be passive, but that of active responsiveness and partnership.—H. M. Alden in Harner's Magazine.

Can I interest you in the subject of noiseless sewing machines?"

asked the man at the front door.

"No, sir," said the man of the house; "my daughter always sings when she's using a sewing machine, no matter what kind it is."

Then he slammed the door in the caller's face.

CUT THIS OUT.

Recipe That Breaks a Cold in a Day and Cures Any Curable Cough.

"Mix half ounce of Concentrated pine compound with two ounces of glycerine and half a pint of good whiskey; shake well each time and use in doses of a teaspoonful to a tablespoonful every four hours."

These ingredients can be obtained from any good druggist, or he will get them from his wholesale house.

The Concentrated pine is a special pine product and comes only in half ounce bottles, each enclosed in an airtight case, but be sure it is labeled "Concentrated."

A prominent local druggist says that he has filled this prescription hundred of times and that it is wonderfully effective.

Hard to Locate.

"How about this new student's idea of orthography?" said one professor.

"He has me puzzled," replied the other. "I can't decide whether he is simply illiterate or a spelling reformer in advance of his time."—Washington Star.

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