

SHEEP'S CLOTHING

By LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE

Author of "THE LONE WOLF," "THE BRASS BOWL," etc.

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CHAPTER XI—Continued.

Abruptly the door to Craven's room flew open with an echoing bang, and she heard him call her in a voice instinct with mortal terror.

Startled, she turned and ran into the adjoining room, pulling up with a cry at sight of her father. His face, a stricken mask, mottled, ghastly; sweat stood out upon his forehead, his lips trembled, his eyes sick with fear. The hinges of his knees loosened, he swayed.

In one quivering hand he held a playing card—a knave of diamonds.

He enunciated with difficulty, "What—what—?" With a half frantic gesture he tore at his collar. "Where did that come from?" he cried hoarsely. "How—how did it get in that d—box?"

He made a strangled sound, reeled, and fell back heavily into a chair, the card fluttering from his grasp to rest face upward at his feet.

"Daddy, what can I do? What's the matter? If only you'd speak to me!" Kneeling at her father's side in a passion of anxiety, she fondled a hand inert and frightfully cold.

His position unchanged, Craven wore every indication of complete physical collapse. A hand—his left—clutched at his coat, above the heart.

But as Lydia moved to rise and telephone for the hotel physician the man stirred. His lips quivered. She bent near to catch their whisper:

"Brandy!"

"I'll order it at once."

But his fingers, knitted with hers, restrained her with singular strength and insistence. "No—flask on my bureau—"

"Yes, dearest. Let me go and get it, won't you?"

"No—let me—all right now."

He managed to lift head and shoulders from the chair; then again collapsed, his fingers relaxing.

The bureau top in his bedchamber was littered with a confusion of articles turned out haphazardly from Craven's dressing case. For a moment Lydia searched the disarray, at a loss to single out anything resembling a flask. Then a low cry of stupefaction escaped her: in a clear space to one side the puzzle box lay open.

In its shallow oblong drawer, upon a layer of cotton wool, blazed the pearl and diamond collar stolen from Mrs. Merrilees—or the imitation?

But immediately the mystery and the wonder of this was lost in her solicitude, and, another glance discovering a small leather-bound flask, she seized it and ran back to the other room.

Craven's eyes were open and, she fancied, informed with a look of almost frightened inquiry as she unstopped the flask, dashed a generous amount of brandy into a glass, and turned toward a silver water pitcher. But his husky whisper stayed her hand.

"No—straight—"

She put the glass to his lips, inverting it slowly while he gulped and spluttered.

"More!" he demanded with his first free breath. "A little water—"

After this second draft, which he drank unaided, he seemed more himself. For the first time he ceased to clutch his side; a little color crept back into his face. He remained silent, however, his gaze bent upon the knave of diamonds at his feet, his countenance darkly perplexed.

At length Lydia ventured anew, "What is it, daddy? Can't you tell me?"

"Heart," he muttered, "an old affection. Nothing to worry about; but that card keeled me over—rather!"

"But what—what does it mean?"

"You wouldn't understand. It's something secret, a code signal to me to—I wasn't expecting it in the box—"

That thought he left unfinished, mumbling something indistinguishable. But his eyes flashed toward his daughter's face, then were quickly averted.

"In the box with the necklace, you mean?" Lydia prompted evenly.

He wouldn't reply directly. "Gave me devil of a shock!" After a moment of silence he cried out in accents of exasperation, "But how in the name of God did it ever get there?"

A knock checked Lydia's reply. With a start Craven pulled himself together and rose.

"Mustn't let the waiter see me like this. You let him in—will you?"

He managed a slow but unwavering return to his room. When he was out of sight Lydia turned to the door, admitting the waiter with his heavy tray, signed for the meal, and tipped and dismissed the man.

CHAPTER XII.

The door had barely closed when Craven returned, now at least outwardly quite himself again. He brought with him the puzzle box, still open, the necklace exposed on its bed of cotton wool.

"You saw this in there just now, of course. I wonder," he mused, with a hint of remorse, "what you must have thought?"

"I thought," she told him stoutly,

"what I still think: That you owe me an explanation."

"That's so; but first I'd like to get at this matter of the card—"

"Father," Lydia interrupted, a heightened color glowing in her cheeks, "are you still feeling ill?"

He questioned her with a look of surprise. "No," he said slowly. "I'm all right now—I presume. Why?"

"Then I think I must insist on your explanation. You forget how you've treated me—how you've deceived me, made me an accessory to a mean crime, how you've hurt me, shamed me—"

Checking her with a gesture and a word eloquent of deep pain, "Please!" he sighed desolately, dropped into a chair, and drew a hand wearily across his face. "Perhaps you're right; and I feel I owe you an apology even more than an explanation. Well, the fact is, I couldn't resist Betty. She was determined to smuggle, and she won me over; and, sure they'd catch her if anything was attempted in the usual way, I hit on the scheme of using you without your knowledge. Being an alien, you were too facile a convenience to be resisted. God forgive me—I lied to my girl!"

"But why need you have kept it up? Only a little while ago you were telling me how easily a thief might have secured the counterfeit—"

"That wasn't altogether fancy, you know," he insisted—as if a substratum of truth could mend the breach between them! "Betty herself used the counterfeit to fool the inspectors."

He bent forward and picked up the knave of diamonds, frowning thoughtfully.

"Is that all you have to say to me?" the girl persisted.

"What more can I say?" he expostulated, aggrieved. "I'm sorry. I deeply regret having deceived you. I apologize! What more do you want?"

Lydia gave a gesture of despair. "Nothing, I suppose—unless you will answer me one question honestly. Are you or are you not in the English secret service?"

Craven's face darkened. "My dear girl," he said slowly, "are you sure you've any right to talk to me in this secret service?"

"If I'm late, don't fret about me, please. I'm quite all right now. Chances are I shan't have another turn like tonight's in several—"

A knock sounded on the door. He broke off with a start, and for half a minute stood motionless and silent, his mouth ajar, his eyes transfixed; then, recollecting himself, he said almost nonchalantly:

"Mind answering that? If it's anybody for me, say I'm out."

As Lydia rose he swung sharply back into his bedchamber. When she turned back from the door she saw him poised alertly just within the threshold, his right hand buried in his coat pocket.

"A note for you—wants an answer. The bellboy's waiting."

With a nervous gesture Craven advanced and took the envelope, his breath quickening and brows clouding as he conned the superscription—his name in ink and the room number in blue pencil. But for several seconds he seemed to hesitate. Then abruptly he ripped it open.

And this time he seemed to have been prepared; for he manifested no outward emotion when he drew from the envelope a single playing card, the knave of clubs.

Drawing a deep breath, which might have been a sigh of relief, Craven deliberately tossed the card face upward on the table. "You'll notice a pin puncture in the stem of the club, beneath the small J," he observed coolly. "That means one of my agents, on urgent business."

"I'll stay in my room with the door shut," Lydia volunteered.

"No—wasn't thinking of that; merely wondering if you could. You see, I'm likely to be detained by this chap—can't tell how long." He consulted his watch, frowning. "After ten now; I can't well call on Betty much later. How would you like to take a taxi to the Margrave, and give her this confounded collar?"

He could have made no suggestion more shrewdly calculated. In a breath Lydia's countenance lightened and her eyes grew animated.

"Oh, if I may!"

"Why not? You'll be perfectly safe. It's no great distance, nobody knows you have the collar, and Betty'll be glad to see you. You might stop with her till I call for you—if you don't mind being made an excuse of."

"Yes," she agreed, breathless. "I'll be glad."

"Then jump into your hat and coat and—Half a minute! I wonder would you mind running another errand for me?"

"Of course not."

"It's only a few blocks out of your way, and won't delay you longer than to deliver a note and get an answer. I'll write the note now—two lines will do."

"I'll hurry," Lydia promised, dashing off into her bedchamber.

When she returned, ready for the street, Craven was folding down the flap of an envelope blank save for the figures in ink, "98." "I'm suppressing the address," he said, smiling mysteriously, "because this is official business. That, however, is the number of the house; the street you'll have to carry in your memory, East Seventy-sixth, also the name, Mrs. Ellsworth, one of our most valued agents. Hand this to her personally, and ask for an answer. I'll join you at Betty's about eleven-thirty; earlier if possible. Now the Margrave—but every chauffeur in the town knows where that is."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Holland's Great Dikes.

One of the great dikes of Holland is 40 miles long, starting far up in the country, near the Yssel river, and continuing across the Hook of Holland to the sea. It was built in sections, and for seven centuries has held back the waters from the low-lying fields. It is 3 feet broad at the base, 35 feet broad at the top, and its height varies from 25 to 35 feet.

He gave her a sullen glance. "Smith and Colonel Gordon. Gordon's the other crook's name—if Quoin forgot to tell you. Curse it! Why didn't you tell me this first?"

"They?"

"Yes," he agreed simply. "It would have been better if I'd told you the truth. But then, of course, you wouldn't have consented to bring the stuff in. And how was I to know they were watching me so closely? How did they guess I'd—"

"They?"

"They?"

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"Why? What difference—"

"No difference," he grumbled. "Too late; now mischief's done!" He withdrew into morose contemplation of the knave of diamonds.

"What have such men to do with the secret service?" Lydia demanded abruptly.

"With the—ah—secret service?" He looked up blankly. "Why—nothing whatever! What makes you ask?"

"Then what were they after when they attacked me? Not the 'evidence' you talked about?"

"My dear child! What do you suppose? What but the loot—that necklace? They've been hot on Betty's trail from the moment it became known she had bought the thing from Cottier's."

"You confuse me so!" Lydia protested in bewilderment. "If they weren't connected with the secret service, if—if you had nothing whatever to do with them, why are you so afraid of them?"

"I? But—my dear child," Craven said indulgently, "you're quite mistaken. I'm no more afraid of them than of—well—say Mr. Collector Loeb."

Seated across the table from him, resting her elbows upon it, Lydia regarded her father with an expression in which were blended amazement, stupefaction, misery and uncertainty.

If Craven read her look, he refused to acknowledge it. With an air of thorough satisfaction he rose and, taking up the puzzle box, shut it with a snap, its treasure undisturbed.

Her eyes followed the puzzle box, which Craven was slipping into the side pocket of his coat, with an expression he was quick to interpret.

"This goes to Betty Merrilees as fast as a taxicab can take it," he announced promptly. "In fact, I stopped in only to get it on my way uptown."

"I'm glad of that," said Lydia, listlessly tracing an empty pattern on the table.

"If I'm late, don't fret about me, please. I'm quite all right now. Chances are I shan't have another turn like tonight's in several—"

A knock sounded on the door. He broke off with a start, and for half a minute stood motionless and silent, his mouth ajar, his eyes transfixed; then, recollecting himself, he said almost nonchalantly:

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WILL BUILD UNCLE SAM'S GREAT AIR FLEET



Uncle Sam's aircraft protection board is co-ordinating the work of airplane manufacturers and makers of allied materials in the interest of standardization and efficiency and will place contracts for everything the government buys in connection with the development of the great air-fighting force which the government plans. Members of this important board, shown in this picture, are: Seated, left to right, Rear Admiral David W. Taylor of the navy; Brig. Gen. George O. Squier, chief signal officer of the army; Howard E. Coffin, chairman of the board and a member of the council of national defense. Standing, left to right, Sidney G. Walden of Detroit, automobile manufacturer; E. A. Deeds of Dayton, O., ignition expert; R. I. Montgomery of New York, a banker.

THREE AGENCIES USED INDIAN IS HEALTHIER

Uncle Sam Has Big Organization in Foreign Trade Work.

Collects Information Through Several Hundred Consuls, Commercial Attaches and Special Agents.

The foreign trade work of Uncle Sam's department of commerce is centered in the bureau of foreign and domestic commerce, which is organized to collect commercial information in foreign countries and to distribute it to American manufacturers and exporters. Its work partakes of the nature of a commercial reconnaissance. For collecting information, it now relies mainly upon three agencies—commercial attaché, special agent and the consul.

The ten commercial attaches were sent to their posts about two and a half years ago, when the war started, these posts being at London, Paris, Berlin, Petrograd, Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Santiago (Chile), Lima (Peru), Peking and Melbourne. These men are highly qualified business diplomats, who are expected to be capable not only of reporting the minor incidents of commercial importance, but of following up the bigger developments, and of detecting and understanding the undercurrents of the business and commercial life of the districts to which they are assigned.

The special agent is a specialist in some one line, and if he proves to be the right man he may be sent to every corner of the earth to study the markets for his line of goods.

The consular service of the state department has long been one of the chief reliances of the bureau, and in this branch of the information-gathering service there are some 230 consuls. These consuls give part of their time to reporting on commercial conditions for the bureau, and in years past the publications of the bureau were based entirely upon the work of the consuls.

CARE OF DIVERS' PERSONNEL

Uncle Sam's Doctors Find That Duty on Undersea Craft Has Effect on Health of Men.

Uncle Sam's medical officers are keeping the closest watch on the health of the personnel on duty in submarines, in order that every manifestation of bodily and mental disorder may be noted quickly. Assistant Surgeon Walter W. Cross of the navy, has compiled some interesting facts as a result of his observations of the personnel attached to submarines. He believes that long continued duty on such craft is conducive to high blood pressure. He says:

"Whether this is due to mental strain, loss of sleep, overeating with lack of exercise, excessive use of tobacco, coffee and tea, or some toxic agent peculiar to submarines, I am unable to say. It is noted that a slight fall occurred after a 47-hour surface run and a three-hour dive. Undoubtedly this could be accounted for by fatigue or lack of all physical exercise during the preceding 48 hours."

One effect, natural under the circumstances, was lack of weight, and it is observable that there is probably no occupation, except that of a boiler-maker, giving rise to so many cases of partial deafness as submarine duty. It is not uncommon for men to report to the medical officer that they have increasing difficulty in hearing the commands. This is attributed to the constant vibratory movement of the submarine, the straining of the ears to hear above the noise of the engines, the presence of cold drafts of air down the hatches while operating on the surface, excessive temperature while running submerged, and the inhalation of gases given off by the batteries and fumes from oil tanks.

However, it is believed that the number of bacteria and molds present in the air of submarines while running awash and submerged probably is less than in dwellings and battlements.

Uncle Sam's Fight to Save Race Is Bearing Fruit.

Trachoma Largely Subdued in Schools and Infant Mortality, Once Appalling, Reduced.

Those who think of the Indians as members of a dying race are not acquainted with the progress of the work carried on in their behalf by Uncle Sam's department of the interior.

To struggle against tuberculosis and trachoma, and the fight to lower a high infant mortality rate, are generally conceded to be the greatest problems confronting medical men of the Indian office. Supplementing the work of regular agency doctors, special physicians at intervals visit the various reservations, performing eye operations, caring for defective teeth and spreading information.

Already trachoma has been very largely subdued in the schools, and such new cases as appear generally come from outside. Acute cases are segregated and treated with regularity, and at present a large majority of the cases known are among the old and feeble. The unhealthy manner of living that marks the period of transition between the old life and the new is fast passing.

The building of sanitary homes is urged and the value of clean food and cooking utensils emphasized. As a result of the campaign, there has been within the last three years a very noticeable falling off in the number of illnesses and deaths from tuberculosis.

Last year structures valued at \$775,885.57 were built on Indian reservations, and included practically everything from frame cottages and office buildings to heating plants and flour mills and laundries.

The younger generation now knows that a sturdy child grows into a sturdy man, and great care is taken of the young mother in childbirth. Before the present administration assumed control, three-fifths of the little Indians died before they were five years old. The introduction and enforcement of modern methods has reduced this appalling percentage, and the health of the Indian is now, as a whole, far better than it has been at any other time since he came under the influence of the white man.

WOULD USE MEXICAN GOATS

Head of Breeder's Association Tells Uncle Sam's Experts They Will Help Solve Food Problem.

Civilize the Mexican goat and solve the problem of the poor, was the message carried to Uncle Sam's agricultural experts by S. Douglas Demmon, president of the American Goat Breeders' association.

"Since the time of the Aryan race along the Euphrates the goat has supported the poor," said Mr. Demmon. "Turn him loose on the mountainous lands of the eastern states and he'll sweep through them like the German army, turning shrubbery into meat and milk."

"Goat kid flesh is a delicacy," Demmon said. "The average female goat will produce six kids a year—two or three at a time—and until these kids are six months old the meat is fine if they are fed as lambs are fed."

Mexicans Turn to Business.

To the chamber of commerce at Torreon falls the distinction of being the first chamber to be organized in Coahuila since the beginning of the Mexican revolution. Uncle Sam's consul at Piedras Negras reports. It is actively proceeding with the work of restoring commercial relations with other sections of the state and with the United States and regularly issues an interesting bulletin. There is a great deal of talk among the merchants of other towns relative to the formation of these business clubs.

MOUNT M'KINLEY IS REAL MONSTER

Central Feature of Uncle Sam's Newest Park Presents Amazing Spectacle.

SEEMS LOFTIER THAN OTHERS

Abrupt Rise of More Than 17,000 Feet Makes Mass Appear Higher Even Than Tallest of the Himalayas.

Uncle Sam's new national park in Alaska is one of the monster spectacles of the world. To say that it rises 20,300 feet above sea level and that it is the loftiest peak in America is to convey no idea whatever of its grandeur. There are several mountains in the Himalayas which materially exceed its height—one which rises more than 25,000 feet above sea level—and yet Mount McKinley, to the observer, is loftier than any of these.

The reason is that the greatest Himalayas are seen from valleys 7,000 to 10,000 feet in altitude, while Mount McKinley rises abruptly from valleys 3,000 feet and even less in altitude. The visitor to the Mount McKinley National park will look up more than 17,000 feet to the double peak, the upper 14,000 feet of which are covered with perpetual snow.

This enormous mass is the climax of the same Alaskan range which extends roughly east and west across southeast central Alaska, separating the vast northern inland from the more populated country whose shores are the Gulf of Alaska. The range parallels the mighty Yukon many miles to its south.

Titanic Alpine Scenery.

The reservation contains 2,200 square miles. Its northern slopes, which overlook the Tanana watershed with its gold mining industry, are broad valleys inhabited by enormous herds of caribou. Its southern plateau is a perpetual water wilderness through which glaciers of great length and enormous bulk flow into the valleys of the south. In this national park, which the railroad now building by the government into the Alaskan interior will open presently to the public, America possesses Alpine scenery upon a titanic scale.

From the stormy south, Mount McKinley is wholly inaccessible. But from the plains of the north, valleys of easy grade lead one from another to its foot.

"It is an awe-inspiring region of massive mountains and ice-capped peaks," Belmore Browne of the Camp Fire club, testified before the senate committee on territories. "The Piedmont plateau that follows the range affords a beautiful roadway direct to Mount McKinley, and when you reach the plateau all difficulties vanish and you see a view that is unique on this earth. You see the huge mountain line of perpetual snow, rising like a great wall on the southeast. You can ride a pony to where Mount McKinley rises 17,000 feet above you in a glittering wall of snow and ice. It is flanked by stupendous mountains which make a wonderful setting for the monster."