

# Between Two Fires

By ANTHONY HOPE

"A wise man will make more opportunities than he finds." —Francis Bacon.

"Yes," continued the President, "owing to the recent sales of your real property in this country (sales, due, I fear, to a want of confidence in my administration), you have at this moment a sum of \$300,000 in the bank safe. Now (don't interrupt me, please) the experience of a busy life teaches me that commercial reputation and probity depend on results, not on methods. Your directors have a prejudice against me and my government. That prejudice you, with your superior opportunities for judgment, cannot share. You will serve your employers best by doing for them what they haven't the sense and courage to do for themselves. I propose that you should assume the responsibility of lending me this money. The transaction will redound to the profit of the bank. It shall also," he added, slowly, "redound to your profit."

I began to see my way. But there were difficulties.

"What am I to tell the directors?" I asked.

"You will make the usual return of investments and debts outstanding—mortgages—loans on approved security—but you know better than I do."

"False returns, your excellency means?" "They will no doubt be formally inaccurate," the President admitted.

"What if they ask for proofs?" said I. "Sufficient unto the day," said the President.

"You have rather surprised me, sir," I said, "but I am most anxious to oblige you, and to forward the welfare of Aureataland. There are, however, two points which occur to me. First, how am I to be insured against not getting my interest? That I must have."

"Quite so," he interrupted. "And the second point I can anticipate. It is, what token of my gratitude for your timely assistance can I prevail on you to accept?"

"Your excellency's knowledge of human nature is surprising."

"Kindly give me your attention, Mr. Martin, and I will try to satisfy both your very reasonable requirements. You have \$300,000: those you will hand over to me, receiving in return government 6 per cent bonds for that amount. I will then hand back to you \$65,000; \$45,000 you will retain as security for your interest; in the event of any failure on the part of Aureataland to meet her obligations honorably, you will pay the interest on the whole \$300,000 out of that sum. That secures you for more than two years against absolute failure of interest, which in reality you need not fear. Till the money is wanted, you will have the use of it. The remaining \$20,000 I shall beg of you to accept as your commission, or rather as a token of my esteem. \$20,000 absolutely—\$45,000 as long as the Aureataland pays interest! You must admit I deal with you as one gentleman with another, Mr. Martin. In the result, your directors get their interest, I get my loan, you get your bonus. We are all benefited, no one is hurt! All this is effected at the cost of a harmless stratagem."

I was full of admiration. The scheme was very neat, and, as far as the President and myself were concerned, he had been no more than just in pointing out its advantages. As for the directors, they would probably get their interest; anyhow, they would get it for two years. There was risk, of course; a demand for evidence of my alleged investments or a sudden order to realize a heavy sum at short notice would bring the house about my ears. But I did not anticipate this.

"Well, Mr. Martin," said the President, "do you agree?"

I still hesitated. The President rose and put his hand on my shoulder.

"Better say yes. I might take it, you know, and cause you to disappear—believe me, with reluctance, Mr. Martin. It is true I shouldn't like this course. It would perhaps make my position here untenable. But not having the money would certainly make it untenable."

I saw the force of this argument, and said:

"I can refuse your excellency nothing."

"Then take your hat and come along to the bank," said he.

This was sharp work.

"Your excellency does not mean to take the money now—to-night?" I exclaimed. "Not to take, Mr. Martin—to receive it from you. We have made our bargain. What is the objection to carrying it out promptly?"

"But I must have the bonds. They must be prepared, sir."

"They are here," he said, taking a bundle from the drawer of a writing table. "\$300,000 6 per cent stock, signed by myself, and countersigned by Don Antonio. Take your hat and come along." I did as I was bid.

## CHAPTER III.

It was a beautiful moonlight night, and Whittingham was looking her best as we made our way along the avenue leading to the Piazza 1871. The President walked briskly, silent but serene; I followed, the trouble in my mind reflected in a somewhat hang-dog air, and I was much comforted when the President broke the stillness of the night by saying:

"You have set your foot on the first rung of the ladder that leads to fame and wealth, Mr. Martin."

I was rather afraid I had set it on the first rung of the ladder that leads to the gallows. But there the foot was; what the ladder turned out to be was in the hands of the gods; so I threw off care,

and as we entered the Piazza I pointed to the statue, and said:

"Behold my inspiring example, your excellency!"

"Exactly," he replied, "I make the most of my opportunities."

I knew he regarded me as one of his opportunities, and was making the most of me. This is not a pleasant point of view to regard one's self from, so I changed the subject, and said:

"Shall we call for Don Antonio?"

"Why?"

"Well, as he's minister of finance, I thought perhaps his presence would make the matter more regular."

"If the presence of the President," said that official, "can't make a matter regular, I don't know what can. Let him sleep on. Isn't his signature on the bonds enough?"

What could I do? I made one more weak objection:

"What shall we tell Jones?"

"What shall we tell Jones?" he echoed. "Really, Mr. Martin, you must use your discretion as to what you tell your employees. You can hardly expect me to tell Jones anything, beyond that it's a fine morning."

We had now reached the bank, which stood in Liberty street, a turning off of the Piazza. I took out my key, unlocked the door, and we entered together. We passed into my inner sanctum, where the safe stood.

"What's it in?" asked the President.

"United States bonds, and bills on New York and London," I replied.

"Good," said he. "Let me look."

I unlocked the safe and took out the securities. He examined them carefully, placing each after due scrutiny in a small handbag, in which he had brought down the bonds I was to receive. I stood by, holding a shaded candle. At this moment a voice cried from the door:

"If you move you're dead men!"

I started and looked up. The President looked up without starting. There was dear old Jones, descending from his upper chamber, where he and Mrs. Jones resided. He was clad only in his night-shirt, and was leveling a formidable gun full at the august head of his excellency.

"Ah, Mr. Jones," said the latter, "it's a fine morning."

"The President!" cried Jones; "and Mr. Martin! Why, what on earth, gentlemen—?"

The President gently waved one hand toward me, as if to say, "Mr. Martin will explain," and went on placing his securities in the bag. In the face of this crisis my hesitation left me.

"Mr. Martin received a cable from Europe, Jones," said the President, "instructing him to advance a sum of money to me."

"Cable?" said Jones. "Where is it?"

"We must have left it at the Golden House. I saw it was on the table just before we started. Though I presume Mr. Jones has no right—?"

"None at all," I said briskly.

"Yet, as a matter of concession, Mr. Martin will no doubt show it to him tomorrow?"

"Strictly as a matter of concession perhaps I will, though I am bound to say that I am surprised at your manner, Mr. Jones."

Jones looked sadly puzzled.

"It's all irregular, sir," said he.

"Hardly more so than your costume!" said the President, pleasantly.

Jones being thus made aware of the havoc the draught was playing with his airy covering, hastily closed the door, and said to me appealingly:

"It's all right, sir, I suppose?"

"Perfectly right," said I.

"But highly confidential," added the President. "And you will put me under a personal obligation, Mr. Jones, and at the same time fulfill your duty to your employers, if you preserve silence till the transaction is officially announced. A man who serves me does not regret it."

Here he was making the most of another opportunity—Jones this time.

"Enough of this," I said. "I will go over the matter in the morning."

His excellency walked up to Jones and looked hard at him.

"Silent men prosper best, and live longest, Mr. Jones."

Jones looked into his steely eyes, and suddenly fell all of a tremble.

The President was satisfied. He abruptly pushed him out of the room, and we heard his shuffling steps going up the staircase. His excellency turned to me, and said with apparent annoyance:

"You leave a great deal to me, Mr. Martin."

He had certainly done more than tell Jones it was a fine morning. But I was too much troubled to thank him; I was thinking of the cable. The President divined my thoughts, and said:

"I must prepare that cable."

"Yes," I replied; "that would reassure him. But I haven't had much practice in that sort of thing, and I don't quite know—"

The President scribbled a few words on a bit of paper, and said:

"Take that to the postoffice, and they'll give you the proper form; I will fill it up."

Certainly some things go easily if the head of the State is your fellow criminal.

"And now, Mr. Martin, it grows late. I have my securities; you have your bonds. We have won over Jones. All goes well. Aureataland is saved. You have made your fortune, for there lie your \$65,000. And, in fine, I am much obliged to you. I will not trouble you

to attend me on my return. Good-night, Mr. Martin."

He went out, and I threw myself down in my office chair, and sat gazing at the bonds he had left me. I wondered whether he had merely made a tool of me; whether I could trust him; whether I had done well to rely on his promises. And yet there lay my reward; and I soon arose, put the government bonds and the \$65,000 in securities in the safe, locked up everything, and went home to my lodgings. As I went in it was broad daylight, for the clock had gone five, and I met Father Jacques sallying forth. He had already breakfasted, and was on his way to administer early consolation to the flower women in the Piazza. He stopped me with a grievous look, and said:

"Ah, my friend, these are untimely hours."

I saw I was laboring under an unjust suspicion.

"I have only just come from the bank. I had to dine at the Golden House and afterward returned to finish up a bit of work."

"Ah, that is well," he cried. "It is then the industrious and not the idle apprentice I meet?" referring to a series of famous prints with which my room was decorated, a gift from my father on my departure.

I nodded and passed on, saying to myself: "Very industrious, indeed. Not many men have done such a night's work as I have."

And that is how my fortune became bound up with those of the Aureataland national debt.

## CHAPTER IV.

After the incidents above recorded, things went on quietly enough for some months. I had a serious talk with Jones, reproaching him gravely for his outrageous demeanor. He capitulated abjectly on being shown the cable, which was procured in the manner kindly indicated by the President. The latter had perhaps been in too great a hurry with his heavy guns, for his hint of violence had rather stirred than allayed Jones' apprehensions. If there were nothing to conceal, why should his excellency not stick at murder to hide it? However, I explained to him the consideration of high policy, dictating inviolable secrecy, and justifying a somewhat arbitrary way of dealing with a trusted official; and the marked graciousness with which Jones was received when he met the President at the Ministry of Finance on current business went far to obliterate his unpleasant recollections. I further bound him to my fortunes by obtaining for him a rise of salary from the directors, "in consequence of the favorable report of his conduct received from Mr. Martin."

Peaceful as matters seemed, I was not altogether at ease. To begin with, the new loan did not apparently at all improve the financial position of Aureataland. Desolation still reigned on the scene of the harbor works; there was the usual difficulty in paying salaries and meeting current expenditure. The President did not invite my confidence as to the disposal of his funds; indeed before long I was alarmed to see a growing coldness in his manner, which I considered at once ungrateful and menacing; and when the half-year came round he firmly refused to disburse more than half the amount of interest due on the second loan, thus forcing me to make an inroad on my reserve of \$45,000. He gave me many good reasons for this course of conduct, dwelling chiefly on the necessary unproductiveness of public works in their early stages, and confidently promising full payment with arrears next time. Nevertheless I began to see that I must face the possibility of a continual drain on resources that I had fondly hoped would be available for my own purposes for a considerable time at least. Thus one thing and another contributed to open a breach between his excellency and myself, and, although I never ceased to feel his charm as a private companion, my distrust of him as ruler, and, I may add, as a fellow-conspirator, steadily deepened.

Other influences were at this time at work in the same direction. Rich in the possession of my "bonus," I had plunged even more freely than before into the gaieties of Whittingham, and where I was welcome before I was now a doubly honored guest. I became acquainted with the Signorina, the lady to whom the President had referred during his interview with me; and my acquaintance with the Signorina was very rich in results.

This lady was, after the President, perhaps the best known person in Aureataland—best known, that is, by name and face and fame; for her antecedents and circumstances were wrapped in impenetrable mystery. When I arrived in the country the Signorina Christina Nugent had been settled there about a year. She had appeared originally as a member of an operative company, which had paid a visit to our "National Theater" from the United States. The company passed on its not very brilliant way, but the Signorina remained behind. It was said she had taken a fancy to Whittingham, and, being independent of her profession, had determined to make a sojourn there. At any rate, there she was. She established herself in a pretty villa, closely adjoining the Golden House; it stood opposite the presidential grounds, commanding a view of that stately enclosure; and here she dwelt, under the care of a lady whom she called "Aunt," known to the rest of the world as Mrs. Carrington. The title "Signorina" was purely professional; for all I know the name "Nugent" was equally a creature of choice; but, anyhow, the lady herself never professed to be anything but English, and openly stated that she retained her title simply because it was more musical than that of "Miss."

## (To be continued.)

## Comes Natural to Him.

Sinkers—Did you ever notice Reel-ton's hook nose and fishlike eyes?

Corker—Yes. It isn't any wonder that he tells such fishy stories.



## Cost of Raising a Calf.

A good deal of discussion has often been provoked as to the cost of bringing up a heifer calf. Mr. Clark, of the Alabama experiment station, has recorded data. The record covered the period from birth to maturity—approximately two years.

One of the calves, which weighed at birth fifty-six pounds, consumed during the first year of her life 150 pounds of home milk, 273 pounds of skim milk, 66 pounds of bran, 224 pounds of hay and was pastured for 161 days. When she was 1 year old she had cost \$12.86 and she weighed 435 pounds.

During the second year her rations were made up of sorghum hay, silage, oat straw, corn stover and a little cotton seed and bran. The pasturage period covered 224 days. The cost of the feed was \$9.00 for the second year and she weighed at the end 665 pounds. Thus the total cost of feed up to the time of maturity was \$21.95.

## No All-Round Poultry Food.

A correspondent asks for some poultry food which will answer for general purposes—that is, a food which will make hens lay, which is also good for little chicks and which may be used for fattening later if desired. Novices in poultry raising are quite likely to be more or less disturbed by the amount of detail required to carry on the work successfully and are generally seeking for some short cut, especially in the line of feeding. The same food which will make hens lay without fattening them will not do to fatten them on. Of course, corn is usually a part of the variety fed hens and will of itself fatten them, but it is not used by itself as a regular diet for laying hens. It would be as absurd to feed hens cracked corn entirely as it would be to feed little chicks the whole kernel.

## Water Before Feeding.

This question of watering before or after feeding has never been settled. A leading English authority states that horses should never be watered until after feeding, but always before, especially if the feed is grain. If a horse is very thirsty give him water and then wait a short time before feeding. If possible, horses should always have access to water. They will drink less and there is much less danger of indigestion or cholera. If a horse is exhausted from overexercise, the supply of cold water should be limited. If water is tepid, a much larger amount may be allowed.

## Hog Catcher.

Chasing hogs is exceedingly amusing when the chaser is bent on pleasure only. When it becomes an everyday duty the funny feature disappears, and instead the air is generally laden with expletives not suitable to polite society.



SUBDUES THE HOG.

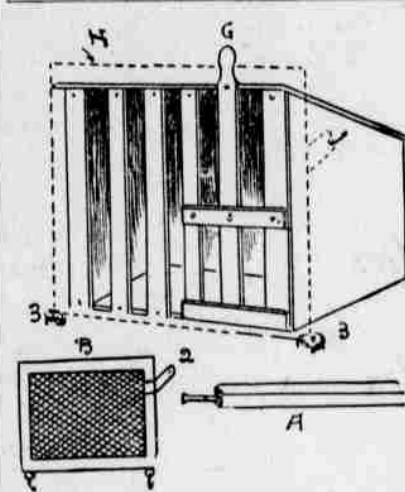
The hog is an elusive beast. Being round and fat—and also slippery—the chaser is not afforded any point of vantage to obtain a firm hold. This is true with but one exception, and that is his tail. But here again the chaser is handicapped. Hogs' tails are so little and at the same time so frail that not infrequently the hog emerges from the chase minus his tail. A more sensible method is the use of the implement illustrated herewith. The inventor, an Iowa man, claims that no difficulty is experienced in getting the noose in position. When once it is securely clamped on the hog's nose it is an easy matter to lead the animal to any place desired.

## New Use for Watermelons.

A Georgia farmer is said to have become the pioneer in a new industry—namely, making sirup out of watermelons. He cuts the melons in halves, scoops out the pulp, runs it through a cider mill, presses out the juice and then boils the liquid for twelve hours over a hot fire. Out of 270 melons, worth \$5 or \$6 at wholesale, he gets thirty gallons of sirup, and markets the product at 50 cents a gallon. The refuse is fed to the hogs, cattle and chickens, and the whole operation is very profitable.

## Comfort for Hen and Chicks.

It is a cruel plan which shuts off the air almost entirely from the hen with a brood of chicks by placing a board in front of the coop at night; nor is such a plan necessary if one will take the trouble to build a coop or coops after the following plan. Build the coop after the usual plan, sloping the roof to the rear and covering the front with slats except at one lower corner, where a door should be arranged, so that the hen can be easily let out when desired. To solve the problem of plenty of fresh air and at the same time freedom from prowling small animals, construct a screen; make the frame large enough completely to cover the front of the coop and cover it with wire netting; at either side fasten a strap with a hole in the end, and on the sides of the coop



COOP FOR THE CHICKS.

place a screw, over which the straps are placed to hold the screen in place. To make the screen still more secure when placed have the side pieces large enough so that a long wire nail may be driven in them about one-quarter the length of the nail, at the end; then sink in the ground at either end of the coop two pieces of wood, each having a hole in the end, into which the nail in the end pieces of the screen will fit when the latter is in position. In this way it will be impossible for the screen to get loose. In the illustration, H, at dotted line, shows where the screen will come when in position; A, the side piece of the screen, with the long wire nail in position; B, the screen complete; C, 3, the stakes in the ground to receive the nails; D, the swinging lath by which the door for the use of the hen is kept in place, and E, the manner of attaching the small strap to the side of the screen.—Indianapolis News.

## What Makes Quality in Eggs.

The grocer soon learns that he must send good eggs to his customers or he will not have them long, and the farmer who is progressive will soon learn that he must do the same. The word "fresh," when applied to eggs, may mean a great deal, or it may not. The egg grower who wishes to create a regular demand for his eggs at high prices must market his stock promptly, for there is nothing that so disgusts the experienced handler of eggs as to find that the eggs that he bought for fresh had been held in the country for two or three weeks. Storage eggs, that are put into the refrigerator immediately after they are laid, come out better, after four or five months have elapsed, than the eggs that are allowed to remain in the farmer's pantry for a month after they are laid before they are marketed.

## The Truck Garden Insect.

Insects infesting truck gardens very often affect field crops as well, but it should be borne in mind that pest exterminating methods that are of no use in large areas are often the best in a small patch where there is more intensive cultivation, and where the price the output brings will warrant more outlay.

## Kerosene Emulsion.

One-half pound of soap, one gallon of boiling water, two gallons kerosene. Churn with a force pump for a few minutes until it forms a smooth, butter-milk like emulsion and reduce ten to twenty-five times.

## Foul Odors in Cellar.

When cellars become musty or foul, and odors are noticed, the best thing to do is to close all the doors and windows and burn enough sulphur to fill the cellar room with dense fumes. Leave it closed for an hour or two, and then open the doors and windows. Next, whitewash the walls and ceilings with two coats of good whitewash. Sulphur gas is heavy and settles, hence care must be used to agitate the air in the cellar by selecting a windy day for the work. Sulphur fumes will destroy all kinds of germs.