

Wells David Dwight

**His Lordship's Leopard: A
Truthful Narration of Some
Impossible Facts**



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David Dwight Wells

His Lordship's Leopard: A Truthful Narration of Some Impossible Facts

WARNING!

The ensuing work is a serious attempt to while away an idle hour. The best criticism that the author received of "Her Ladyship's Elephant" was from an old lady who wrote him that it had made her forget a toothache; the most discouraging, from a critic who approached the book as *serious literature* and treated it according to the standards of *the higher criticism*.

The author takes this occasion to state that he has never been guilty of writing literature, serious or otherwise, and that if any one considers this book a fit subject for the application of the higher criticism, he will treat it as a just ground for an action for libel.

If the *minimum opus* possesses an intrinsic value, it lies in the explanation of the whereabouts of a Spanish gunboat, which, during our late unpleasantness with Spain, the yellow journalists insisted was patrolling the English Channel, in spite of the fact

that the U. S. Board of Strategy knew that every available ship belonging to that nation was better employed somewhere else.

Should this *exposé* ruffle another English see, so much the worse for the Bishop.

PART I. *AMERICA*

CHAPTER I. **IN WHICH CECIL BANBOROUGH** **ACHIEVES FAME AND THE** **"DAILY LEADER" A "SCOOP."**

Cecil Banborough stood at one of the front windows of a club which faced on Fifth Avenue, his hands in his pockets, and a cigarette in his mouth, idly watching the varied life of the great thoroughfare. He had returned to the city that morning after a two weeks' absence in the South, and, having finished his lunch, was wondering how he could manage to put in the time till the 4:30 express left for Meadowbrook. 2 p. m., he reflected ruefully, was an hour when New York had no use and no resources for men of leisure like himself.

Yet even for a mere onlooker the panorama of the street was of unusual interest. The avenue was ablaze with bunting, which hurrying thousands pointed out to their companions, while every street-corner had its little group of citizens, discussing with feverish energy and gestures of ill-concealed disquietude the

situation of which the gay flags were the outward and visible sign. For in these latter days of April, 1898, a first-class Republic had, from purely philanthropic motives, announced its intention of licking a third-rate Monarchy into the way it should go. Whereat the good citizens had flung broadcast their national emblem to express a patriotic enthusiasm they did not feel, while the wiser heads among them were already whispering that the war was not merely unjustifiable, but might be expensive.

All these matters, important as they doubtless were, did not interest Cecil Banborough, and indeed were quite dwarfed by the fact that this uncalled-for war had diverted the press from its natural functions, and for the time being had thrown utterly into the shade his new sensational novel, "The Purple Kangaroo." His meditations were, however, interrupted by the sound of voices using perfectly good English, but with an accent which bespoke a European parentage.

"The Purple Kangaroo," said one. "It is sufficiently striking—*Si, Señor?*"

"It serves the purpose well, *mi amigo*," replied the other. "It is, as you say, striking; indeed nothing better could be devised; while its reputation—" And the voices died away.

Cecil swung rapidly round. Two gentlemen, slight, swarthy, and evidently of a Latin race, were moving slowly down the long drawing-room. They were foreigners certainly, Spaniards possibly, but they had spoken of his book in no modified terms of praise. He drew a little sigh of satisfied contentment and turned

again to the street. Ah, if his father, the Bishop of Blandford, could have heard!

The two foreigners had meanwhile continued their conversation, though out of earshot. The elder was speaking.

"As you say, its reputation is so slight," he said, "one of those ephemeral productions that are forgotten in a day, that it will serve our purpose well. We must have a password – the less noticeable the better. When do you return to Washington?"

"The Legation may be closed at any moment now," replied the younger, seating himself carelessly on the arm of a Morris chair, "and I may be wanted. I go this afternoon, *a dios y a ventura*."

"Softly; not so loud."

"There's no one to hear. Keep us informed, I say. I'll see to the rest. We've our secret lines of communication nearly complete. They may turn us out of their capital, but – we shall know what passes. *Carramba!* What is that?" For, in leaning back, the speaker had come against an unresisting body.

Springing up and turning quickly round, he saw that the chair on the arm of which he had been sitting was already occupied by the slumbering form of a youngish man with clear-cut features and a voluminous golden moustache.

"*Madre de Dios!* Could he have heard?" exclaimed the younger man, moving away.

"*Malhaya!* No!" replied the other. "These pigs of Americanos who sleep at noonday hear nothing! Come!" And, casting a glance of concentrated contempt at the huddled-up figure, he put

his arm through that of his companion, and together they left the room.

A moment later the sleeper sat up, flicked a speck of dust off his coat-sleeve, and, diving into a pocket, produced a note-book and blue pencil and began to write rapidly. Evidently his occupation was a pleasant one, for a broad smile illumined his face.

"Ah, Marchmont," said Banborough, coming towards him, "didn't know you'd waked up."

"Was I asleep?"

"Rather. Don't suppose you saw those Spanish Dons who went out just now?"

"Spaniards?" queried Marchmont, with a preoccupied air. "What about 'em?"

"Oh, nothing in particular, only I supposed that a Spaniard to a yellow journalist was like a red rag to a bull. You should make them into copy – 'Conspiracy in a Fifth Avenue Club,' etc."

"Thanks," said the other, "so I might. Valuable suggestion." And he returned his note-book to his pocket.

"They did me a good turn, anyway," resumed Banborough. "They were talking about my book – thought it would serve its purpose, was very striking, said nothing better could be devised; and they were foreigners, too. I tell you what it is, Marchmont, the public will wake up to the merits of 'The Purple Kangaroo' some day. Why doesn't the *Daily Leader* notice it?"

"My dear Cecil, give me the space and I'll write a critique the

fulsome flattery of which will come up to even your exacting demands. But just at present we're so busy arousing popular enthusiasm that we really haven't time."

"You never do have time," replied Banborough, a trifle petulantly, "except for sleeping after lunch."

"Ah, that's all in the day's work. But tell me. You're an Englishman; why didn't you publish your book in your own country?"

"I may be green, but I don't impart confidences to an American journalist."

"Nonsense! I never betray my friends' confidences when it's not worth – I should say, out of business hours."

The Englishman laughed.

"Oh, if you don't think it worth while," he said, "I suppose there's no danger, so I'll confess that my literary exile is purely to oblige my father."

"The Bishop of Blanford?"

"The Bishop of Blanford, who has the bad taste to disapprove of 'The Purple Kangaroo.'"

"Has he ever read it?"

"Of course not; the ecclesiastical mind is nothing if not dogmatic."

"My dear fellow, I was only trying to assign a reason."

"Chaff away, but it's principally my Aunt Matilda."

"The Bishop, I remember, is a widower."

"Rather. My aunt keeps house for him."

"Ah, these aunts!" exclaimed the journalist. "They make no end of trouble – and copy."

"It's not so bad as that," said Cecil; "but she rules the governor with a rod of iron, and she kicked up such a row about my book that I dropped the whole show."

"Don't correspond with 'em?"

"Not on my side. I receive occasional sermons from Blanford."

"Which remain unanswered?"

Cecil nodded, and changed the subject.

"You know my father's cathedral?" he asked.

"Oh, yes. The verger prevented my chipping off a bit of the high altar as a memento the last time I was over. You English are so beastly conservative. Not that the Bishop had anything to do with it."

Banborough laughed, and returned to the charge.

"So I came abroad," he continued, "and approached the most respectable and conservative firm of publishers I could find in New York."

"Was that out of consideration for the Bishop?"

"I thought it might sweeten the pill. But somehow the book doesn't sell."

"Advertising, my boy – that's the word."

"The traditions of the firm forbid it," objected Banborough.

"Traditions! What's any country less than a thousand years old got to do with traditions?" spluttered Marchmont. "I knew a Chicago author who got a divorce every time he produced a new

novel. They sold like hot cakes."

"And the wives?"

"Received ten per cent. of the profits as alimony."

"Talk sense, and say something scandalous about me in the *Leader*. What possessed you, anyway, to join such a disgraceful sheet?"

"If I'd an entailed estate and an hereditary bishopric, I wouldn't. As it is, it pays."

"The bishopric isn't hereditary," said Cecil. "I wish it were. Then I might have a chance of spending my life in the odour of sanctity and idleness, and the entail is – a dream."

"So you write novels," retorted Marchmont, "that are neither indecent nor political, and expect 'em to succeed. Callow youth! Well, I must be off to the office. I've some copy up my sleeve, and if it's a go it'll give your book the biggest boom a novel ever had."

"Are you speaking the truth?" said the Englishman. "I beg your pardon. I forgot it was out of professional hours."

"Wait and see," replied the journalist, as he strolled out of the club.

"Hi, Marchmont, I've got a detail for you!" called the editor, making the last correction on a belated form and attempting to revivify a cigar that had long gone out.

"Yes?" queried Marchmont, slipping off his coat and slipping on a pair of straw cuffs, which was the chief reason why he always sported immaculate linen.

"We're on the track of a big thing. Perhaps you don't know that the President has delivered an ultimatum, and that our Minister at Madrid has received his passports?"

"Saw it on the bulletin-board as I came in," said his subordinate laconically.

"Well, it's a foregone conclusion that the Spanish Legation will establish a secret service in this country, and the paper that shows it up will achieve the biggest scoop on record."

"Naturally. But what then?"

"Why, I give the detail to you. You don't seem to appreciate the situation, man. It's the chance of a lifetime."

"Quite so," replied Marchmont, lighting a cigarette.

"But you can't lose a minute."

"Oh, yes, I can – two or three. Time for a smoke, and then I'll write you a first-column article that'll call for the biggest caps you have in stock."

"But I – What the – Say, you know something!"

"I know that the secret service has been organised, I know the organisers, and I know the password."

Here Marchmont's chief became unquotable, lapsing into unlimited profanity from sheer joy and exultation.

"I'll give you a rise if you pull this off!" he exclaimed, after hearing the recital of the events at the club. "May I be" – several things – "if I don't! Now what are you going to do about it?"

"Suppose we inform the nearest police station, have the crowd arrested, and take all the glory ourselves."

"Suppose we shut up shop and take a holiday," suggested the chief, with a wealth of scorn.

"Well, what have you to propose?"

"We must work the whole thing through our detective agency."

"But we haven't a detective agency," objected Marchmont.

"But we will have before sunset," said the chief. "There's O'Brien –"

"Yes. Chucked from Pinkerton's force for habitual drunkenness," interjected his subordinate.

"Just so," said the editor, "and anxious to get a job in consequence. He'll be only too glad to run the whole show for us. The city shall be watched, and the first time 'The Purple Kangaroo' is used in a suspicious sense we'll arrest the offenders, discover the plot, and the *Daily Leader*, as the defender of the nation and the people's bulwark, will increase its circulation a hundred thousand copies! It makes me dizzy to think of it! I tell you what it is, Marchmont, that subeditorship is still vacant, and if you put this through, the place is yours."

The reporter grasped his chief's hand.

"That's white of you, boss," he said, "and I'll do it no matter what it costs or who gets hurt in the process."

"Right you are!" cried his employer. "The man who edits this paper has got to hustle. Now don't let the grass grow under your feet, and we'll have a drink to celebrate."

When the chief offers to set up a *sub* it means business, and

Marchmont was elated accordingly.

At the Club the Bishop's son still contemplated the Avenue from the vantage-point of the most comfortable armchair the room possessed. Praise, he reflected, which was not intended for the author's ear was praise indeed. No man could tell to what it might lead. No one indeed, Cecil Banborough least of all, though he was destined to find out before he was many hours older; for down in the editorial sanctum of the *Daily Leader* O'Brien was being instructed:

"And if you touch a drop during the next week," reiterated the chief, "I'll put a head on you!"

"But supposin' this dago conspiracy should turn out to be a fake?" objected the Irishman.

"Then," said the reporter with determination, "you'll have to hatch one yourself, and I'll discover it. But two things are certain. Something's got to be exposed, and I've got to get that editorship."

CHAPTER II. IN WHICH CECIL BANBOROUGH ATTEMPTS TO DRIVE PUBLIC OPINION

It is a trifle chilly in the early morning, even by the first of May, and Cecil shivered slightly as he paced the rustic platform at Meadowbrook with his publisher and host of the night before.

"You see," the great man was saying, "there's an etiquette about all these things. We can't advertise our publications in the elevated trains like tomato catsup or the latest thing in corsets. It's not dignified. The book must succeed, if at all, through the recognised channels of criticism and on its own merits. Of course it's a bad season. But once the war's well under way, people will give up newspapers and return to literature."

"Meantime it wants a boom," contended the young Englishman, with an insistence that apparently jarred on his hearer, who answered shortly:

"And that, Mr. Banborough, it is not in my power to give your book, or any other man's."

There was an element of finality about this remark which seemed to preclude further conversation, and Cecil took refuge in the morning paper till the train pulled into the Grand Central Station, when the two men shook hands and parted hurriedly, the

host on his daily rush to the office, the guest to saunter slowly up the long platform, turning over in his mind the problems suggested by his recent conversation.

The busy life of the great terminus grated upon him, and that is perhaps the reason why his eye rested with a sense of relief on a little group of people who, like himself, seemed to have nothing particular to do. They were six in number, two ladies and four gentlemen, and stood quietly discussing some interesting problem, apparently unconscious of the hurrying crowds which were surging about them.

Cecil approached them slowly, and was about to pass on when his attention and footsteps were suddenly arrested by hearing the younger of the two ladies remark in a plaintive voice:

"But that doesn't help us to get any breakfast, Alvy."

"No, or dinner either," added the elder lady.

"Well," rejoined the gentleman addressed as "Alvy," who, in contrast to the frock coats and smart tailor-made gowns of his three companions, wore an outing suit, a short overcoat of box-cloth, a light, soft hat, and a rather pronounced four-in-hand tie. "Well, I'm hungry myself, as far as that goes."

Banborough was astonished. These fashionably dressed people in need of a meal? Impossible! And yet – he turned to look at them again. No, they were not quite gentlefolk. There was *something* – He stumbled and nearly fell over a dress-suit case, evidently belonging to one of the party, and marked in large letters, "H. Tybalt Smith. A. B. C. Company."

Actors, of course. That explained the situation – and the clothes. Another company gone to pieces, and its members landed penniless and in their costumes. It was too bad, and the young woman was so very good-looking. If only he had some legitimate excuse for going to their assistance.

Suddenly he stood motionless, petrified. An idea had occurred to him, the boldness and originality of which fairly took his breath away. "The Purple Kangaroo" wanted advertising, and his publishers refused to help him. Well, why should he not advertise it himself? To think was to act. Already the company were starting in a listless, dispirited way towards the door. The Englishman summoned all his resolution to his aid, and, overcoming his insular reticence, approached the leader of the party, asking if he were Mr. Smith.

"H. Tybalt Smith, at your service, sir," replied that portly and imposing individual.

Cecil Banborough bowed low.

"I hope you'll not think me intrusive," he said, "but I judge that you're not now engaged, and as I'm at present in want of the services of a first-class theatrical company, I ventured to address you."

"The manager skipped last evening," remarked the man in mufti.

"Alvy," corrected Mr. Smith, "I will conduct these negotiations. As Mr. Spotts says, sir," he continued, indicating the last speaker, "with a colloquialism that is his distinguishing

characteristic, our manager is not forthcoming, and – a – er – temporary embarrassment has resulted, so that we should gladly accept the engagement you offer, provided it is not inconsistent with the demands of art."

"Oh, cut it short, Tyb," again interrupted the ingenuous Spotts.

Mr. Smith cast a crushing glance at the youth, and, laying one hand across his ample chest, prepared to launch a withering denunciation at him, when Cecil came to the rescue.

"I was about to suggest," he said, "that if you've not yet breakfasted you would all do so with me, and we can then discuss this matter at length."

Mr. Smith's denunciation died upon his lips, and a smile of ineffable contentment lighted up his face.

"Sir," he said, "we are obliged – vastly obliged. I speak collectively." And he waved one flabby hand towards his companions. "I have not, however, the honour of knowing your name."

Cecil handed him his card.

"Ah, thanks. Mr. Banborough. Exactly. Permit me to introduce myself: H. Tybalt Smith, Esq., tragedian of the A. B. C. Company. My companions are Mr. Kerrington, the heavy villain; Mr. Mill, the leading serious. Our juvenile, Mr. G. Alvarado Spotts, has already sufficiently introduced himself. The ladies are Mrs. Mackintosh, our senior legitimate," indicating the elder of the two, who smilingly acknowledged the introduction in such a good-natured, hearty manner that for the moment her

plain, almost rugged New England countenance was lighted up and she became nearly handsome. "And," continued Mr. Smith, "our leading lady, the Leopard – I mean Miss Violet Arminster," pointing to the bewitching young person in the tailor-made gown.

Each of the members bowed as his or her name was spoken, and the tragedian continued:

"Ladies and gentlemen of the A. B. C. Company, I have much pleasure in introducing to you – my friend – Mr. Cecil Banborough, who has kindly invited you to breakfast at – the Murray Hill? Shall we say the Murray Hill? Yes."

The ensuing hour having been given up to the serious pursuit of satisfying healthy appetites, the members of the A. B. C. Company heaved sighs of pleasurable repletion, and prepared to listen to their host's proposition in a highly optimistic mood. Banborough, who had already sufficiently breakfasted, employed the interval of the meal in talking to Miss Arminster and in studying his guests. Mrs. Mackintosh, who seemed to take a motherly interest in the charming Violet, and whose honest frankness had appealed to him from the first, appeared to be the good genius of the little company. As he came to know her better during the next few days, under the sharp spur of adversity, he realised more and more how much goodness and strength of character lay hidden under the rough exterior and the sharp tongue, and his liking changed into an honest admiration. Mr. Smith was ponderous and egotistical to the last degree, while Spotts seemed hail-fellow-well-met, the jolliest, brightest,

most good-looking and resourceful youth that Cecil had met for many a long day. The other two men were the most reserved of the company, saying little, and devoting themselves to their meal. But it was to Miss Arminster that he found himself especially attracted. From the first moment that he saw her she had exercised a fascination over him, and even his desire for the success of his book gave way to his anxiety for her comfort and happiness. She was by no means difficult to approach; they soon were chatting gaily together, and by the time the repast was finished were quite on the footing of old friends – so much so, indeed, that Cecil ventured to ask her a question which had been uppermost in his mind for some time.

"Why did Mr. Smith call you the Leopard when he introduced you to me at the station?" he said.

"Oh," she answered, laughing, "that's generally the last bit of information my friends get about me. It has terminated my acquaintance with a lot of gentlemen. Do you think you'd better ask it, just when we are beginning to know one another?"

"Are you another Lohengrin," he said, "and will a white swan come and carry you off as soon as you've told me?"

"More probably a cable-car," she replied, "seeing we're in New York."

"Then I shall defer the evil day as long as possible," he answered.

"You seem to forget," she returned, "that I don't know as yet what our business relations are to be."

"And you seem to forget," he replied, "that there are still some strawberries left on that dish."

She sighed regretfully, saying:

"I'm afraid they must go till next time – if there's to be a next time."

Banborough vowed to himself that instead of confining the advertisement of his book to the city alone, he would extend it to Harlem and Brooklyn – yes, and to all New York State, if need be, rather than forego the delight of her society.

"Isn't your father an English bishop?" continued Miss Arminster, interrupting his reverie.

"Now how on earth did you know that?" exclaimed Cecil.

The little actress laughed.

"Oh, I know a lot of things," she said. "But I was merely going to suggest that we call you 'Bishop' for short. Banborough's much too long a name for ordinary use. What do you say, boys?" turning to the men of the company.

A chorus of acclamation greeted this sally, and to the members of the A. B. C. Company Cecil Banborough was 'the Bishop' from that hour.

"And now," said the Englishman, "that you've christened me, suppose we come to the business in hand?"

Every one was at once intently silent.

"I am," he continued, "the author of 'The Purple Kangaroo.'"

The silence became deeper. The audience were politely impressed, and the heavy villain did a bit of dumb show with the

leading serious, which only needed to have been a trifle better to have proved convincing.

"Yet," continued the author, "owing to the popular interest in an imminent war and a lack of energy on the part of my publishers, the book doesn't sell."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Mr. Smith. "Impossible! Why, I was saying only the other day to Henry Irving, 'Hen,' I said – I call him 'Hen' for short, – 'that book –'"

"What you say doesn't cut any ice," broke in Spotts. "What were you saying, sir?"

"I was about to remark," continued Banborough, "that what the novel needs is advertising. For an author to make the round of the shops is so old an artifice that any tradesman would see through it."

"It is," interjected the tragedian. "I have more than once demanded the lower right-hand box when I was playing the leading rôle."

"And always got it," added Spotts. The silence was appalling, and Cecil rushed into the breach, saying:

"It's occurred to me, however, that if a number of people, apparently in different walks of life, were to call at the various bookshops and department stores of the city, demanding copies of 'The Purple Kangaroo,' and refusing to be satisfied with excuses, it might create a market for the book."

"A first-rate idea!" cried Spotts heartily.

"But supposing it was in stock?" suggested the more cautious

duenna.

"I shall of course see you're provided with funds for such an emergency," the author hastened to add; "and if you ladies and gentlemen feel that you could canvass the city thoroughly in my interests at – ten dollars a day and car-fares?" he ventured, fearing he had offered too little.

"I should rather think we do," said Spotts emphatically. "Ten dollars a day and car-fares is downright luxury compared with one-night stands and a salary that doesn't get paid. You're a mighty good fellow, Mr. Banborough," continued the young actor, "and Violet and I and the rest of the company will do our best to make your book a howling success." And as he spoke he laid his hand familiarly on the little actress's shoulder, an action which did not altogether please Cecil, and made him realise that in the attractive young comedian he had found a strong rival for Miss Arminster's favour.

"Well, then, we'll consider it settled," he said; whereat the company arose and clasped his hands silently. Their satisfaction was too deep for words. Spotts was the first to rouse himself to action.

"Come," he said, "we mustn't lose any time. Your interests are ours now, Mr. Banborough, and the sooner we get to work the more thoroughly we'll earn our salary," and touching a bell, he said to the answering messenger:

"Bring me a New York directory," thereby showing an honest activity which was much appreciated by his employer.

An hour later, the company, fully primed, departed joyfully on their mission.

Banborough, rich in the comforting sense of a good morning's work well accomplished, retired to his club to dream of the success of his book. In spirit he visited the book-stalls, noting the growing concern of the clerks as they were obliged to turn away customer after customer who clamoured for "The Purple Kangaroo.". He saw the hurried consultations with the heads of firms, who at length realised their blind stupidity in neglecting to stock their shelves with the success of the season. He saw the dozens of orders which poured into the publishing house, and heard in fancy that sweetest of all announcements that can fall upon an author's ears: "My dear sir, we have just achieved another edition."

So dreaming, he was rudely awakened by a slap on the shoulder, and the cheerful voice of Marchmont, saying:

"Who's asleep this time?"

"Not I," replied his friend, "only dreaming."

"Of the success of 'The Purple Kangaroo'?" asked the journalist. "Well, you'll have it, old man – see if you don't – and live to bless the name of Marchmont and the *Daily Leader*. Why, thousands will be reading your book before the week's out."

"What do you mean?" gasped the Englishman. "Surely you don't know – ?" For he feared the discovery of his little plot.

"Know!" replied the journalist. "I know that your book has leaped at one bound from fiction to the exalted sphere of politics.

Now don't you breathe a word of this, for it's professional, but the Spanish secret-service agents have taken the title of your novel as their password. The city is watched by our own special corps of detectives, and the instant 'The Purple Kangaroo' is used in a suspicious sense we arrest the spies and unravel the plot."

"But, good heavens, man! You don't understand – " began Banborough.

"I understand it all. I tell you the *Daily Leader* will not shrink from its duty. It'll leave no stone unturned to hound the offenders down. I dare say they may be making arrests even now, and once started, we'll never pause till every Spanish sympathiser who has knowledge of the plot is under lock and key."

"Stop! Stop!" cried Cecil. "You don't know what you're doing!"

"Oh, trust me for that, and think of the boom your book'll get. I'll make it my special care. I tell you 'The Purple Kangaroo' will be all the rage."

"But you're making a ghastly mistake," insisted the author. "You must listen to me – "

"Can't!" cried Marchmont, springing up as the sound of shouts and clanging bells fell upon his ear. "There's a fire! See you later!" and he dashed out of the club and was gone.

Cecil sank back in his chair fairly paralysed.

"Good heavens! Suppose any of the company should be suspected or arrested! Supposing – "

"A gentleman to see you, sir," said a page at his elbow.

"Show him in!" cried Banborough, fearing the worst, as he read Tybalt Smith's name on the card.

There was no need to have given the message. The actor was at the page's heels, dishevelled, distraught.

"Do you know we're taken for Spanish spies?" he gasped.

"Yes, yes; I've just heard – "

"But they've arrested – "

"Not one of your companions – Spotts, Kerrington, or Mill?"

"No," said the tragedian, shaking his head, "they've arrested Miss Arminster."

CHAPTER III.

IN WHICH CECIL BANBOROUGH DRIVES A BLACK MARIA

Cecil Banborough's feelings can be better imagined than described at the announcement of the calamity which had befallen Miss Arminster. The winsome ways of the charming Violet had impressed the young man more deeply than he knew until he was brought face to face with a realisation of the miseries to which his own folly had exposed her.

"Where have they taken her?" he demanded of Smith as soon as his consternation could find expression.

"She's at the police station round the corner from here."

"Where did this occur?" asked Banborough.

"On Fourteenth Street," replied Smith, "Spotts and I met Miss Arminster, and she called out as she passed me, 'Don't forget 'The Purple Kangaroo!'" A minute later the police arrested her, and when the crowd heard that she was a Spanish spy, I swear I think they'd have torn her in pieces if the officers hadn't put her in a prison van and got her away."

The tragedian paused, shivering from his recent agitation, and Cecil, seeing his condition, rang for some brandy.

"But what does it all mean?" asked the actor, tossing off his drink.

"I know what it means," cried Banborough, "but there's no time to talk now. We've not a moment to lose!" and he rushed downstairs.

Spotts met them at the doorway, and, as they walked rapidly along, the young Englishman poured into his companions' ears an account of what he had learned from Marchmont of the Spanish plot and the unforeseen use which had been made of the title of his book, while the tragedian rehearsed again the story of Miss Arminster's arrest, of his own hair-breadth escape from the clutches of the law, of his prodigies of valour in connection with Spotts, whom he had met in his headlong flight, and who, it seemed, had prevailed on his more timid companion to follow the prisoner in a hansom.

"It's a bad business," admitted Cecil; "but what's to be done?"

"Done!" exclaimed Smith in tragic tones. "Why, rescue the lady instantly and leave the city without delay. In the present excited state of the public no amount of explanation will avail. We may all be arrested as confederates. We must act!"

"You're talking sense for once," said Spotts. "Heroic measures are the only ones worth considering, and if you" – turning to Banborough – "will stand by us, we may come out on top after all."

"You can depend on me to any extent," declared the young author. "I've got you into this scrape, and I'll do my best to get you out of it."

"That's just what I expected of you, Bishop!" exclaimed

Spotts, grasping his hand. "We can't waste time in talking. You must go and find the other members of the company, Tyb, and warn them of their danger. Now where can we rendezvous outside the city? Speak quickly, some one!"

"The leading hotel in Yonkers," said Smith.

"Right you are," replied Spotts. "Get there as soon as possible and wait for us to turn up. How about funds?"

"I've plenty of ready money with me," volunteered Cecil, "and very fortunately a draft to my credit arrived to-day, which I've not yet cashed."

"Good!" said Spotts. "We're in luck. Give Tyb fifty."

Banborough whipped out a roll of bills and handed the desired amount to the tragedian without demur.

"Now, off you go," cried his brother actor, "and keep your wits about you."

Smith nodded and hailed a passing cab.

"Come," said Spotts to the author, "we've no time to lose."

"What's your plan?" asked Cecil as they swung round the corner and sighted the police station.

"Haven't got any as yet. We'll see how the land lies first. The Black Maria's still before the door. That's lucky!"

Sure enough, there it was, looking gloomily like an undertaker's wagon, minus the plate glass.

"Must be hot inside," commented the actor, directing a glance at the two little grated slits high up in the folding doors at the back, which apparently formed the only means of ventilation.

Cecil shuddered as he thought of the discomforts which the girl must be enduring, and longed to throw himself upon the vehicle and batter it to pieces. But calmer judgment prevailed, and controlling himself he approached the police station, saying:

"Let me go first. You might be recognised. I'll try and find out where she's to be taken."

He accordingly went up to the driver of the Black Maria, who, cap in hand, was wiping his perspiring forehead.

"A fine pair of horses that," he said, indicating the mettlesome bays attached to the vehicle, which, in spite of their brisk run, were tossing their heads and fretting to be off.

"Oh, they're good enough," was the curt reply. "A trifle fresh, but we need that in our business."

"Something interesting on to-day?" queried Cecil.

"Who the devil are you, anyway?" asked the driver abruptly. And the Englishman, lying boldly, replied:

"I'm the new reporter on the *Daily Leader*. I was here last week with Mr. Marchmont on a burglary case."

"Oh, the New Rochelle robbery," suggested the driver.

Cecil acquiesced, drawing a quiet sigh of relief that his random shot had hit the mark.

"Yes," he said, "that's it. I was introduced round, but I don't remember meeting you."

"Might have been the other driver, Jim?"

"Now I come to think of it, it was Jim."

"Jus' so. Well, there's copy for you in this case."

"So I imagined. It's your first political arrest, isn't it?"

"That's where the hitch comes in," said the man. "I don't know where to deliver the prisoner. When the court's made up its mind they'll let me know, and I'll drive on. Now in the Civil War we sent them politicals to Fort Wadsworth."

"So you have to wait till they decide?"

"You bet I have. And there ain't no superfluity of shade on the sunny side of this street neither," replied the driver, as he slipped off his coat and hung it with his cap on a peg beside the box seat of the Black Maria.

"Suppose you were to run into the court and see how they're getting on," suggested Banborough, slipping a coin into his hand. "I want a word with the police when they've finished. Mention the *Daily Leader*. I'll watch your horses."

"Oh, they'll stand quiet enough," said the man. Then, suspiciously, jerking his thumb over his shoulder towards Spotts, he asked: "Who's yer pal?"

"Just a green hand whom I'm initiating into the business."

"You're pretty green yourself or you wouldn't have set me up," said the driver. "But if you'll mind them horses I'll just run across to McCafferty's saloon and have a schooner of beer, and then drop into court for you."

"All right," responded Cecil. "Only don't be all day; I've got another detail."

"Say," rejoined the man, "I can put beer down quicker than you can wink." And he ran across the street.

"Well, what's to be done?" demanded Banborough, as the man left them.

"That's easily answered," replied Spotts. "When he's in court we'll jump on the box, drive for all we're worth till we've eluded pursuit, then rescue Miss Arminster and be off to Yonkers."

"But that's laying ourselves open to arrest," expostulated the Englishman.

"We've done that already," said his friend.

"But they'll know we're not officials: we've no uniform."

"What, not when the driver has obligingly left his hat and coat?" said Spotts. "Slip them on. You've dark trousers, and no one will suspect."

"But driving fast – ?" protested the author.

"Well, we're going to a 'hurry call,' of course. You've no invention, man! And besides, I can't drive."

"Oh, that doesn't matter," said Banborough. "I understand all about horses."

"So I supposed, as you're an Englishman."

"I don't care much for this business, you know," remonstrated the unfortunate author.

"Neither do I," replied the actor. "But we might as well be killed for a sheep as a lamb, and we've a good chance of winning. Here comes the driver; give him a bluff."

"I ain't lost much time," panted that individual as he passed them, wiping the foam from his moustache with the back of his hand, and adding: "I'll run right into court and be out again in

a jiffy!"

"Stay long enough to see how things are going," called Cecil.

"All right! Guess the horses'll stand," he replied, and disappeared within the building.

"Now, Bishop!" cried Spotts. And before the Englishman could think, his coat and hat had been whipped off and thrown on the box seat along with a small handbag which the actor carried, and he was being helped into the very hot and unsavoury clothes of the driver.

"Lucky they fit you," said his friend. "Lead the horses carefully to the corner, and see they don't make more noise than necessary. If the driver should come out, you let 'em go; otherwise wait for me. Know where to drive?"

"Along the park?"

"No," said Spotts. "Double several times, then try one of the avenues to the Harlem River. There are plenty of bridges. Now, careful!" And as Cecil moved slowly off, leading the horses towards the upper corner, the actor lounged up to the entrance of the court, blocking the doorway with his athletic figure.

After what seemed an eternity, Banborough achieved the corner of the block, and, mounting the box, turned the horses' heads down the side street, keeping an eagle eye upon the entrance of the court-room, within which his companion had now disappeared. Perhaps three minutes had elapsed when the actor came out, running quietly towards him so as not to attract attention. The street was well-nigh deserted, and no one seemed

to have noticed the movements of the Black Maria.

"Walk slowly till we're round the corner, and then drive for all you're worth!" gasped Spotts, springing on to the seat beside him.

Cecil followed his directions implicitly, and a moment later they went tearing down the side street, and swung round the corner into an avenue, nearly colliding with a cable-car in the process, and causing a wild scatteration of passengers and pedestrians.

"Here, that won't do!" cried the actor above the rattle occasioned by their rapid progress over the cobblestones. "Ring the bell, or we'll be arrested!"

"Where?" called Banborough.

"That knob under your feet. Press it!"

The Englishman did as directed, and instantly the most hideous clamour arose beneath the carriage. The horses, which had been flying before, excited by the noise, put down their heads and tore blindly forward. The vehicle rocked and swayed, and the avenue and its occupants swept by in an indistinguishable blur.

"They'll surely track us by the noise!" screamed Cecil, trying to make himself heard above the horrible din.

"We're too far off by this time," returned Spotts. "Can you manage the horses?"

"Oh, they're all right so long as we've a clear road!" yelled Banborough in reply.

They were now well under way, the traffic ahead of them swerving wildly to right and left at the insistent clamour of the

bell. They rushed forward by leaps and bounds, an occasional stretch of asphalt giving them an instant's respite from the dreadful shaking of the cobblestones. They spoke but little, excitement keeping them quiet, but the Englishman suffered keenly in spirit at the thought of what the delicate girl, shut up in that dark stifling prison behind them, must be undergoing.

Suddenly in front of them loomed up the helmeted figure of a policeman, swinging his club and gesticulating wildly.

"Run him down!" howled Spotts; and Cecil, who had caught some of the madness of their wild flight, lashed the horses afresh and hurled the Black Maria straight at the officer of the law.

The constable, still gesticulating, made a hasty leap to one side, and they swept by a huge express-wagon which was coming up the cross-street, nearly grazing the noses of the rearing horses, and catching a glimpse of the driver's startled face.

So they ran on and on, faster and faster as the traffic became less, and the pair of bays settled down in earnest to the race. Suddenly the street narrowed, and a confused mass of carts and horses seemed to block up the farther end. Banborough put on the brake, and with considerable difficulty succeeded in bringing his team to a standstill on the outer edge of the throng.

"It's the Harlem River," cried Spotts, "and the drawbridge is up, curse the luck!"

There was nothing for it but wait, and Cecil, jumping down, patted the horses and examined the harness to make sure that everything was all right.

"You seem in a rush," said a neighbouring driver.

"Hurry call to Harlem," replied Banborough brusquely.

"Whereabouts?"

"Oh, police station."

"What station?"

The Englishman grunted an inaudible reply as a forward movement of the crowd betokened that the bridge was again in position. A moment later they were trotting towards freedom and the open country, Cecil making the horses go slower now, wishing to reserve their strength for any unforeseen emergency.

As the buildings grew more scattered, and patches of woodland appeared here and there, the actor began to discuss with his companion their plan of campaign.

"The sooner we get Violet out of her prison," he said, "and leave this confounded vehicle behind, the better."

"It's rather too well populated about here to suit me," replied Banborough. "But the police haven't been idle since we started, and our flight has probably been telegraphed all over the countryside. Perhaps we'd better run the risk, for if we're caught red-handed with the Black Maria we'll find some difficulty in proving our innocence."

"Besides which, I'm anxious to get Miss Arminster out of durance vile as soon as possible, for I think the Leopard's been caged long enough," said Spotts, laughing.

"Why do you people insist on calling Miss Arminster the Leopard?" asked Banborough.

"Oh," said his companion, "I think I'd better let you find that out for yourself. It would hardly be fair to Violet, and besides – " Then, breaking off suddenly as they entered a strip of woodland, he changed the conversation abruptly, saying: "Here's as good a place as we're likely to find – no houses in sight, and a clear view of the road in either direction." And as Cecil drew up the horses he jumped off the box.

"How are you going to open the confounded thing?" asked the author.

"Well," replied his companion, "I should think a key would be as good a method as any other."

"The best, provided you've got the key."

"I imagine you'll find it in the right-hand outside pocket of the driver's coat," said Spotts. "I thought I heard something jingle as I was helping you on with it."

"Right you are," said the Englishman. "Here it is!" producing two nickel-plated keys on a ring. "Now we'll have her out in no time." And running round to the back of the vehicle, he unlocked the folding doors and threw them wide open, crying:

"My dear Miss Arminster, accept your freedom and a thousand pardons for such rough treatment. What the – !" And he stopped short, too surprised to finish; for, instead of the petite form of the fascinating Violet, there shambled out on to the road the slouching figure of a disreputable tramp, clothed in nondescript garments of uncertain age and colour, terminating in a pair of broken boots, out of which protruded sockless feet. He

had a rough shock of hair, surmounted by a soft hat full of holes, and a fat German face, whose ugliness was further enhanced by the red stubbly growth of a week's beard.

"I guess youse gents has rescued me unbeknownst, and I'm much obleeged, though I don't know but what I'd rather break stones up to Sing Sing than be chucked round the way I has been for the last hour."

"Who are you?" demanded Banborough.

"Me?" said the figure. "Oh, I'm a anarchist."

CHAPTER IV.

IN WHICH THE BLACK MARIA RECEIVES A NEW INMATE

At the sight of this astonishing and utterly unlooked-for personage, the actor and the Englishman stood for a moment gaping at each other in surprised silence. Then, as the full force of what they had done occurred to them, and they realised that, at great risk of life, limb, and freedom, they had rescued from the clutches of the law an utterly worthless tramp, they burst into peals of uncontrollable laughter.

"But where's Violet?" gasped Spotts, who was the first to recover himself.

"Oh, there's a lady in there, if you mean *her*," said the tramp, indicating the cavernous depths of the Black Maria.

"Yes, I'm here all right," came the welcome tones of the little actress's voice. "I'll be out in just a moment, as soon as I've put myself straight. You're the most reckless drivers I ever saw."

"I'm awfully sorry," said Banborough, approaching the door to help her out. "But circumstances didn't leave us much choice."

"Apparently not," she replied, and a moment later stood in their midst, looking even more bewitching than usual in her dishevelled condition. Then as she drew a long breath, inhaling the fresh woodland air, and realising all the joy of her restored

freedom, the eternal feminine reasserted itself, and, seizing both of Spotts's hands, she cried impetuously: "Look at me, Alvy, and tell me if my hat is straight."

They all laughed, which broke the tension of the situation.

"I don't know what you must think of us," said Banborough.

"I thought I was being run away with at first," she said; "but when I heard Alvy's voice on the box I knew it must be all right."

"Of course," continued Cecil, "we hadn't the least idea there was anybody else in the van."

"Oh, I didn't mind so much," she said. "He was quite nice and respectful, and very soft to fall on. I guess he must be all black and blue from the number of times I hit him."

"Well, you're safe, and that's the main thing," said Spotts.

"But what does it all mean?" she demanded.

"Oh, there's time enough for explanations later on," returned the actor. "We're not out of the woods yet."

"Of course we aren't, stupid! Any one can see that."

"Metaphorically, he means," said Cecil. "But, joking apart, this Black Maria is, so to speak *particeps criminis*, and the sooner we lose it the better."

"Which way shall we go?" she asked.

"Oh, that's been all arranged beforehand with the other members of the party," said Spotts, purposely omitting to mention their destination in the presence of their undesirable companion. "It can't be more than a mile or two across country to the Hudson River Railroad, and we'd better make for the nearest

station. Do you feel up to walking?"

"Do I feel up to walking!" she exclaimed. "Well, if you'd been chucked round for an hour without being consulted, I guess you'd feel like doing a little locomotion on your own account." And without another word the three turned to get their belongings.

"Say," interjected the tramp, "where do I come in?"

"Oh, but you don't," said Spotts. "We're going to leave you this beautiful carriage and pair with our blessing. Better take a drive in the country and enjoy the fresh air."

"Yah!" snarled the disreputable one in reply. "That don't go! It's too thin! Why, look here, boss," he continued, addressing Banborough, "you went and 'scaped with me without so much as sayin' by your leave, and now, when you've gone and laid me open to extra time for evadin' of my penalty, you've got the cheek to propose to leave me alone in a cold world with *that!*" And he pointed expressively at the Black Maria.

"It is rather hard lines," admitted Cecil. "But, you see, it would never do to have you with us, my man. Why, your clothes would give us away directly."

"And I'll give yer away directly to the cops if you don't take me along."

Banborough and Spotts looked at each other in redoubled perplexity.

"You see," continued the anarchist, "I don't go for to blow on no blokes as has stood by me as youse has, but it's sink or swim together. Besides, you'd get lost in this country in no time, while

I knows it well. Why, I burgled here as a boy."

"What's to be done?" asked Cecil.

"Oh, I suppose we've got to take him along," replied the actor. "We're all in the same boat, if it comes to that."

"Now if youse gents," suggested the tramp, "could find an extra pair of pants between you, this coat and hat would suit me down to the ground." And he laid a dirty paw on Banborough's discarded garments.

"No you don't!" cried that gentleman, hastily recovering his possessions. "Haven't you got any clothes in that bag of yours, Spotts?"

"Well, I *have* got a costume, Bishop, and that's a fact," replied the actor; "but it's hardly in his line, I should think."

"What is it?" asked the Englishman. "You seem about of a size."

"It's a Quaker outfit. I used it in a curtain-raiser we were playing."

"That would do very well," said Cecil, "if it isn't too pronounced."

"Oh, it's tame enough," replied the actor, who exercised a restraint in his art for which those who met him casually did not give him credit. Indeed, among the many admirable qualities which led people to predict a brilliant future for Spotts was the fact that he never overdid anything.

"Huh!" grunted the tramp, "I dunno but what I'd as lieve sport a shovel hat as the suit of bedticking they give yer up the river.

I used to work round Philidelpy some, and I guess I could do the lingo."

"Give them to him," said Banborough. "I'll make it good to you."

"Well, take them, then," replied Spotts regretfully, handing their unwelcome companion the outfit which he produced from his bag, adding as he pointed to the woods: "Get in there and change quickly. We ought to be moving."

The tramp made one step towards the underbrush, and then, pausing doubtfully, said:

"You don't happen to have a razor and a bit of looking-glass about yer, do yer? I see there's a brook here, and there ain't nothin' Quakery about my beard."

The actor's face was a study.

"I'm afraid there's no escape from it, old man," remarked Cecil. "If you've your shaving materials with you, let him have them."

"There they are. You needn't trouble to return them."

Their recipient grinned appreciatively, and as the last rustle of his retirement into privacy died away, Miss Arminster turned to Banborough and demanded:

"Now tell me what I was arrested for, why you two ran away with me, and where I'm being taken."

"I can answer the first of those questions," broke in Spotts. "You're a Spanish sympathiser and a political spy."

"I'm nothing of the sort, as you know very well!" she replied,

colouring violently. "I'm the leading lady of the A. B. C. Company."

"Of course *we* know it," returned the actor; "but the police have chosen to take a different view of the matter."

"Why is he chaffing me like this?" she said, appealing to Cecil.

"I'm afraid it's a grim reality," he replied. "You see, when the Spanish officials were turned out of Washington, they'd the impertinence to take the title of my book as their password."

"Well, then," she said, "they did what they'd no right to do."

"I suppose that would be a question of international copyright," he replied. "But 'The Purple Kangaroo' has proved itself a most troublesome animal, and as I thought you wouldn't care for quarters down the bay till the war was over, I took the liberty of running off with you."

"I'm very much obliged to you, I'm sure; but what next?"

"We're all to rendezvous at Yonkers."

"And then?"

"Well, unless the situation improves, I'm afraid it'll become a question of seeking a refuge in another country."

"If you think," she cried, "that I'm going to spend the rest of my existence in the forests of Yucatan or on the plains of Patagonia, you're mightily mistaken!"

"Oh," he said, laughing, "it isn't as bad as all that. Ours is only a political crime, and Canada will afford a safe harbour from the extradition laws."

"But the war won't be finished in a day," she contended, her

eyes beginning to fill with tears.

"Won't you trust me?" asked Cecil, taking both her hands. "Won't you let me prove my repentance by guarding your welfare? Won't you – "

Indeed there is no knowing to what he might have committed himself in the face of such beauty and sorrow had not Spotts broken in with a cry of:

"It's all up now! We're done for, and no mistake!" And he pointed to the figure of a short, fat, red-faced man, very much out of breath, who was bustling down the road, waving his hands at them and shouting "Hi!"

"You'd better go and warn the tramp," said Banborough; and the actor plunged into the woods.

A moment later the stranger came up to them, and panted out:

"I arrest you both, in the name of the law!"

Neither said anything, but Banborough took one of Miss Arminster's tiny gloved hands in his own and gave it a little squeeze just by way of reassuring her.

"Well," said the new arrival, as soon as he had recovered his breath, "what have you got to say for yourselves?"

"I don't know that we've anything to say," replied Cecil sheepishly.

"I should think not!" said the other. "Here, take off that coat!" And he stripped the official garment from the Englishman's shoulders. "The cap, too!"

Banborough handed it to him, saying as he did so:

"You're a police official, I suppose?"

"I'm the Justice of the Peace from the next town. They just missed catching you at the last place you drove through, and telegraphed on to me. Knowing there was a cross-road here, I wasn't going to take any chance of losing you. I left the police to follow. They'll be along in a minute. Now what do you mean by it?"

"I don't suppose any explanations of mine would persuade you that you're making a mistake," said Banborough.

"No, I don't suppose they would. Now you put on that coat accidentally, didn't you? Just absent-mindedly – "

"I don't know you," broke in the Englishman, "and I don't – "

"That'll do," said the Justice of the Peace. "I don't know you either, and – yes, I do know the woman." Then turning to Miss Arminster, he continued: "Didn't I perform the marriage ceremony over you the year before last?"

"Yes," she said softly. And Cecil relinquished her hand. This, he considered, was worse than being arrested.

"I thought I did," went on the magistrate. "I don't often forget a face, and I'm sorry to see you in such bad company."

The young girl began to show signs of breaking down, and the situation was fast becoming acute, when the unexpected tones of an unctuous voice suddenly diverted everybody's attention.

"Why is thee so violent, friend?" said some one behind them. And turning quickly, they perceived the sleek, clean-shaven, well-groomed figure of a Quaker, dressed in a shad-bellied

brown coat, a low black silk hat with a curved brim, and square shoes.

"Who the devil – !" began the officer.

"Fie! fie!" said the stranger. "Abstain from cursings and revilings in thy speech. But I am glad thee hast come, for verily I feared the workers of iniquity were abroad."

"Oh, you know something about it, do you?" asked the Justice of the Peace.

"I was returning from a meeting of the Friends," continued the Quaker blandly, "when I came upon these two misguided souls. As my counsellings were not heeded, and I am a man of peace, I had retired into the woods to pursue my way uninterrupted, when I heard thee approach."

"Well, I'll be glad of your assistance, though I daresay I could have managed them until the police came. They're a dangerous pair.

"And what will thee do with the other prisoner, friend?"

"Eh? What other prisoner?"

"The one that lies in a debauched sleep at the farther end of the van. I have striven to arouse him, but in vain."

"Where is he?" said the magistrate, peering into the black depths of the waggon.

"In the far corner. Thee canst not see him from here."

"I'll have him out in no time!" exclaimed the officer, springing into the van, with the driver's hat and coat still in his hand.

"Not if I knows it, you old bloke!" cried the sometime Quaker,

slamming the door and turning the key with vicious enjoyment, while his three companions, for Spotts had emerged from the wood, executed a war-dance round the vehicle out of sheer joy and exultation. From within proceeded a variety of curses and imprecations, while the Black Maria bounced upon its springs as if a young elephant had gone mad inside.

Suddenly the Quaker laid a detaining hand upon Banborough's shoulder, saying:

"Take care, boss; here come the cops! I'll play the leading rôle, and you follow the cues."

They all paused and stood listening, while the rapid beat of a horse's hoofs came to their ears, and a second later a Concord waggon, loaded down with policemen, swung into view round the corner of the road, and presently drew up beside them.

"Thee hast come in good time, friend," said the Quaker to the chief officer. "We have watched thy prisoners overlong already."

"Where's the boss?" demanded the official.

"Dost thee mean the worldly man with the red face, much given to profane speaking?"

"I guess that's him," laughed one of the subordinates.

"As I was returning from a meeting of the Friends with these good people," pursued the Quaker, indicating his companions, "we came upon this vehicle standing in the road, the horses being held by two men, who, when they saw us, ran into the woods towards the river."

"How were they dressed?" asked the chief officer.

"One of them had garments like thine, friend."

"That's our man, sure!"

"Very presently," resumed the Quaker, "came thy master, using much unseemly language, who, having heard our story, followed the men in the direction we indicated, begging that we guard this carriage till you came, and bidding us tell you to return with it to the town."

"Well, I guess the boss knows his own business best," said the leader of the party; "so we'd better be getting back to the station. I suppose you'll come and give your evidence."

"I am a man of peace," said the Quaker; "but if my testimony is required I and my friends will walk behind thee to the next town and give it."

"It's only half a mile from here, a straight road – you can't miss it. You'll be there as soon as we want you."

The Quaker nodded.

"Then we'd better be moving," said the chief officer. "I'll drive Maria, and you fellows go ahead in the cart."

The remarks which were now proceeding from the interior of that vehicle were much too dreadful to record. But as it was about to start, the man of peace, lifting his hands, checked the driver and said:

"I will, with thy permission, approach the grating and speak a word of counsel." And going to the door, he said in a loud voice:

"Peace, friend. Remember what the good Benjamin Franklin has said: 'He that speaks much is much mistaken.'"

The reply elicited by these remarks was of such a nature that Miss Arminster was obliged to put her hands over her ears, and the police drove off with loud guffaws, enjoying immensely the good Quaker's confusion.

"That bloke," remarked the tramp, as the Black Maria disappeared in a cloud of dust, "give me three months once, an' I feels better."

And without another word he led the party across the road and into the woods in the direction of the river.

CHAPTER V. IN WHICH THE PARTY RECEIVES A NEW IMPETUS

An hour later, when the little party of four, weary and dusty, walked up to the hotel at Yonkers, they perceived Tybalt Smith in his shirt-sleeves, with his hat tipped over his eyes as a protection from the rays of the declining sun, lying fast asleep in a large garden chair which was tilted back on its hind legs against the side of the house. Spotts lost no time in poking him in the ribs with his cane, whereupon the tragedian, rousing himself from slumber, hastily assumed a more upright position, bringing the chair down on its front legs with a bang. Having thus been fully awakened, he became at once the master of the situation.

"We are here," he said.

"So I see," replied Spotts, "and a pretty show you've made of yourself. There's nothing private or retiring about your methods. Now where are the rest of the party?"

Mr. Smith at once assumed an air of mysterious solemnity.

"Mrs. Mackintosh," he said in a stage whisper, "is above. I reserved an apartment for her and the Leap – Miss Arminster, I mean, and a private sitting-room for us all. Mrs. Mackintosh is disturbed. Mrs. Mackintosh requires an explanation. Mrs. Mackintosh," turning to Banborough, "is a woman of great

character, of great force, and she requires an explanation of *you!*"

"Ha!" said Spotts, casting a look of mock commiseration at the Englishman.

"Perhaps it might be better," suggested the tragedian, "if Miss Arminster saw her first."

"Perhaps it might," acquiesced Spotts.

"All right, I'll go," said Violet; adding to Cecil, as she passed him: "Don't be frightened; her bark's worse than her bite." And she entered the house laughing.

"But where are the others?" asked the author.

"Sh!" whispered the tragedian, casting a suspicious glance at the Quaker. "We're not alone."

"Yes," said Spotts, "the Bishop's got a new convert."

"Oh," returned Banborough, "I forgot you hadn't met this gentleman. We inadvertently rescued him, and since then he's done us a similar service twice over. I really don't know what he's called. The clothes belong to Spotts."

"I thought I recognised the costume," said Smith. Then, turning to the stranger, he demanded, abruptly: "What's your name?"

"I have been known by many," came the suave tones of the Quaker, "but for the purposes of our brief acquaintance thee mayst call me Friend Othniel."

The tragedian gave a grunt of disapproval.

"I think he can be trusted," remarked Spotts. "He's certainly stood by us well, so far. Now tell us about Kerrington and Mill."

"Yes, I'm most anxious to know what's become of them," said the Englishman. And the three drew nearer together, while the Quaker, turning to the road, stood basking in the sunshine, his broad flabby hands clasped complacently before him.

Tybalt Smith, after casting another furtive glance in Friend Othniel's direction, murmured the words:

"Shoe-strings and a sandwich!"

"Eh? What?" queried Banborough.

"Our two friends," continued the tragedian, "through the powerful aid of a member of our fraternity, whose merits the public have hitherto failed to recognise, have sought refuge in the more humble walks of life to escape the undesirable publicity forced upon them by *you*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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