

The Brantland Heir

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The true story of the kidnapping of a child and how an ice-cream cone led to the solution

"I think I've learned what you want to know," he said quietly



A DROWSY late spring afternoon in the suburbs of a city on the banks of the Schuylkill where a governess sat reading a novel while her charge, an eight-year-old boy, wandered through flower-blown meadows, flying a pig-tailed kite: this peaceful picture became the focal point of a drama that suddenly startled half the world. For when the governess, rapt in the adventures of romantic lovers, paused in her story to find her ward for the return journey to his Germantown home, she searched and called for him in vain.

She hurried to the house by the horse-drawn conveyance which she herself drove on outings with her employer's son. She thought that the child had playfully run away to surprise her on her return. But there was no sign of him, and after a search first anxious, then frantic, she hurried home. The police were notified that Elbert Brantland was lost, stolen or strayed.

The Brantland house became alive with reporters, who rushed to the scene on the heel of late evening editions. County and city detectives scoured the riverside and maintained a febrile watch on the lordly avenue where the Brantlands lived. The governess was riddled with questions and cross-questions, adding nothing to the fact as she had first simply narrated them: that

the child had run away to play alone and had vanished.

The youngster's mother and father, a socially prominent couple, sat for hours with the police in their living-room, emptying their memories for clues to hatreds or enmities that might have led somebody with a grudge to take revenge.

MRS. BRANTLAND, an aristocratic young woman, was roundly abusing the thick-set chief of detectives when Elbert Brantland, the husband's father, motored from his law office. The old man, a wealthy and hard-headed citizen, assumed command the moment he appeared. He instantly ordered the police to confine their attentions to a physical search for his missing grandson, while to the press he announced a reward of \$10,000 for the person who discovered the boy or for information leading to the arrest of whoever was responsible for his disappearance. Then he summoned from New York Thomas Coyle, the head of a private detective agency that had served him in many confidential investigations.

Coyle arrived in Philadelphia, using the journey to acquaint himself with the published reports of the child's disappearance in New York newspapers. In

a cab on the way to the Brantland home he steeled himself against a poignant encounter with the parents. He was surprised to find old Elbert Brantland alone in the study of the Brantland home.

"My son," the old man explained when the gray-haired detective had seated himself behind a closed door, "is at police headquarters waiting for any possible report from the district police station."

"Where's the mother, or is she too ill to come down?" asked Coyle.

"Clare has gone to her people in Kensington," said Brantland. "It so happens that her younger sister is being married tonight, and we urged her to attend so that her mind could be taken off this dreadful business."

Coyle instantly inquired for the governess, who had been the last known person to see the missing child. She was a Miss Aker, a quiet young woman who had been in the service of the family for more than seven years and had had charge of the child since infancy, combining the functions of nurse and governess. She had been upset by continued grilling from the police, and had difficulty in surviving the fresh ordeal to which Coyle subjected her. But although he plied her with questions as to her past life that the police had been too hurried

or too considerate to ask, she could tell him nothing that shed further light on the child's disappearance. Finally Coyle excused her, and she left the room, weeping.

"Of course," said old Brantland, "she's to blame for neglecting to watch the child. But the important thing is to find him, not to find fault with a careless servant."

"Can you call her back?" said Coyle. "I forgot to ask one question."

The old man shook his head. "If you think she's got anything to do with it, say so at once," he rumbled. "We'll swear out charges and put her in prison. I'll take the risk."

"No," said Coyle, "but I'd like to know the name of the book she was reading this afternoon."

"There it is," said Brantland impatiently.

Coyle glanced at its title: "Daniel Deronda," by George Eliot.

"Does that help any?" asked the old man.

"I can't say it does," Coyle mused. Then he subjected the old man to an exhaustive questioning about his own past. Old Brantland, eying the detective under shaggy eyebrows, answered all his questions, frankly admitting that certain litigants he had defeated, through methods best known to himself, might have been inspired to this desperate measure of reprisal.

"That (Continued on page 42)



RING LARDNER

JAMES MONTGOMERY FLAGG

Introduction

ONE of the many names I am called in the appended article is "a stickler for accuracy." If ever I am asked to write an article about the writer of this one, you may rest assured I will not call him that. His anecdote concerning Hugh Fullerton and me is true in every respect except that it happened to two other fellows. And the one about Eddie Collins never taking a drink—well, the answer to that is that the Collins boy lives in Lansdowne, a suburb of Philadelphia, where even Baby's first bottle comes from the Haig Brothers' dairy.

I could go on and point out a dozen other trivial errata, but the article itself seems long enough without being aggravated by a comprehensive introduction. In fact, when she to whom, when we are alone, I refer as Mrs. Lardner for lack of a more poignant name—when she, I say, read the manuscript, she suggested that it would be less of a strain on subscribers if Collier's were to run it serially.

What I will, and do, call Mr. Wheeler is redundant. You take, for example, the sentence where he refers to a "half-stewed comic artist." Aren't there twice as many words there as necessary? Has anyone ever heard of a comic artist who wasn't—but I too am getting verbose.

RING LARDNER.

RING LARDNER scares most of the people who meet him. Usually it is his countenance, of polished Syracuse limestone, Numidian marble, and onyx—one of the finest examples of the early Egyptian dynasties. But sometimes it isn't.

A friend of Ring's collects celebrities. One Sunday afternoon Ring stepped in and was rushed up to the head of the receiving line. The introduction was made.

"This is Prince Jazzbo of Jazzbonia."

"What of it?" replied Lardner, without changing his expression.

Yet I have seen a half-stewed comic

artist scare Lardner, so what match-maker is going to figure that out?

He went to the Mardi Gras in New Orleans not long ago and found himself backed into a corner by a Southerner. This gentleman had climbed hand over hand to the top of his family tree before Ring got a word in edgeways. When he did he began, without haste or passion:

"If you would be interested in my family, I was born in Niles, Mich., of colored parents—"

Houdini never got out quicker.

Lardner was an important member of a quartet which existed and even flourished in the old Cubs, and he wrote

He is a stickler for accuracy always. The second song he mentions was composed in the 1919 world series—the one that had a slight smell about it.

Dear Sir:

On the night of June 30, 1919, the night before the first Volstead law went into "effect," the correspondents who were in Toledo for the Willard-Dempsey "fight" were entertained at the home of Herman Saxon, a Toledo theatre owner. He had a bar and a piano and everything.

That night I made up words and music of a song refrain called Toledo Blues (we were pretty tired of the assignment by that time), and it was learned and sung by a chorus composed of Tad, Tiny Maxwell, Jimmy Isaminger, Harry Witwer, Rube Goldberg and all the rest of the stews. The words were:

*I guess I've got those there Toledo Blues,
About this fight I simply can't enthuse,
I do not care if Dempsey win or lose,
Owing to the fact I've got Toledo Blues.*

But here is another one you may remember, written by me, in collaboration with Jim Crusinberry, Tiny Maxwell, and Nick Flatley, to the tune of "I'm

*That's why I don't care.
I'm forever blowing ball games,
For the gamblers treat me fair.*

Three of the Cincinnati players were in our party and seemed to enjoy the song. R. W. L.

The Ring and the Pug

ONCE a magazine editor requested an article by Lardner on Success, and Ring produced a piece showing how he had undertaken to be a song writer and, figuring his time at fifty cents an hour, had lost something like \$10,000. That is one of the few things Lardner has ever done that got a rejection.

Since his great success as a writer the highbrows have taken up Lardner, and he is invited to all sorts of literary and social functions, some of which he likes and some of which bore him to death. He is a curious mixture of the intellectual and the highly human; many of his best friends have been and are lowbrows, ball players, bartenders and prize fighters, active or retired—the bartenders being most retired.

Maybe you have heard of Ring as a humorist.

Well, if you meet him, don't expect him to grab you by the lapel and begin: "Did you hear the one about the Scot who was learning the Charleston?"

Ring hates funny stories, sincerely and deeply. If you make the mistake of saying to him, "Did you hear the one about—" he will reply, "yes," at that point. It generally stops the story.

He is funny, but you have to listen closely to get it. "Why," I asked, "do you detest funny stories?" And he came back with: "Because most of them are so old and most of them aren't funny and most people are rotten story-tellers."

So many people expected funny stories from Lardner that he worked up a long, rambling story about two little girls named Pat and Mike who had a Lithuanian nurse. In this he was aided and abetted by Joe Farrell, a member of Comiskey's kitchen cabinet. At prearranged places Farrell would burst into roars of laughter and clap people on the back. Ring, without change of expression, would go on with the yarn.

The climax was when the house caught fire; Pat and Mike and the nurse were burned to death. Of course there was at no point anything to laugh at, but the audience always laughed for fear of being considered stupid.

In one of his newspaper articles Lardner was discussing a ham-and-egg fighter loudly touted by his manager as a heavyweight prospect. Ring outlined the fighter's daily routine:

"Young Dorval is in training all the time. From 6 to 7 in the A. M. he does road work for a paving concern. From 7 to 12 he eats his breakfast, usually a wolf or bear and the inevitable sweet (Continued on page 44)



Ring Lardner and she to whom he refers as Mrs. Lardner "when they are alone"

songs. He heard a song called "I'm a Little Prairie Flower" and formed a quartet of White Sox players. They sang it so feelingly on the way back to Chicago in the world series in 1917 that Mrs. Collins thought Eddie was drunk, although she knew he never took a drink.

I asked Ring to tell me something about the songs he has written. In his reply, notice the exact date he gives.

Forever Blowing Bubbles" and sung at a roadhouse in Bellevue, Ky., just outside of Cincinnati, during the 1919 world series:

*I'm forever blowing ball games,
Pretty ball games in the air.
I come from Chi.,
I hardly try,
Just go to bat and fade and die.
Fortune's coming my way,*