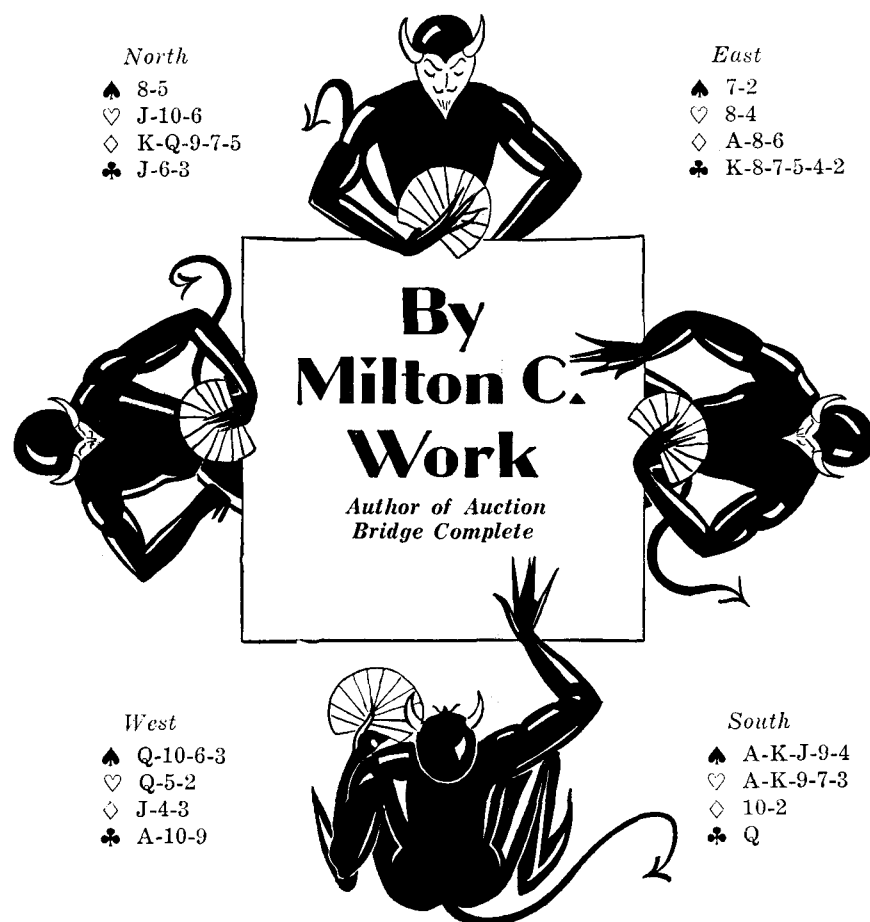


How would You play it?



THE above Auction Bridge hand was given in last week's Collier's; the description follows:

South, with a Major two-suiter, naturally opened the bidding with one Spade, choosing the higher-valued suit first.

West, with ample justification for assuming that he had the Spades stopped twice, could safely have bid No Trump had the remainder of his hand justified it; but the hand looked too weak.

North, with only two small Spades and five Diamonds headed by King-Queen, bid two Diamonds in an obviously sound denial of South's Spades. Nothing in the auction is more important than picturing the hand for a partner who has bid a Major by denying that Major and showing where the strength lies.

East passed, though some would have bid three Clubs on the six-carder; but the Clubs really were very weak and the rest of the hand had only one possible trick. West had not been able to bid in the position in which a light follower is justified.

South was delighted to have North's denial give him the opportunity of showing his second Major suit, and shifted to two Hearts. West, although not pleased with South's shift, could do nothing to improve the situation.

North, being perfectly satisfied, passed, for the announcement that South had a Major two-suiter was sweet music to his ears; his hand had real assistance for the holding South's second bid had shown.

East now had a chance that rarely turns up—viz., a second opportunity to make the same bid (three Clubs)—but good judgment told him to pass.

The Play

West properly led his Ace of Clubs, and when it won, South's Queen dropping upon it and East playing an encouragement card, West continued with the Ten of Clubs, thus making Dummy's Jack useless. South ruffed the trick, but did not fall into the error of immediately leading trumps or of trying to put Dummy in with a Dia-

mond for that purpose. It was advisable first to establish the Spades and to ruff one or more Spades in Dummy. Consequently to tricks 3 and 4 South led the Ace and King of Spades; and to trick 5 a small Spade which West covered with the Ten. The Declarer did not make the mistake of "sending a boy to market" but ruffed with the Ten of Hearts in Dummy. This play accomplished its purpose and shut out the over-ruff which East would have had if Dummy had ruffed with his smallest Heart—the Six. East's failure to win the trick marked the Queen of Hearts in the West hand and made the balance of the play easy for Declarer.

His next move was to lead the Six of Hearts from Dummy, taking it in the Closed Hand with the Ace; and then to lead a Spade for the fourth time. West, of course, played his last Spade—the Queen—leaving South with a thirteener, and Dummy ruffed with the Jack of Hearts, once again shutting out a ruff by East.

To trick 8 Declarer led the King of Diamonds from Dummy, which East won. East, who was without an advantageous lead, then forced the Closed Hand by leading a Club, after which Declarer led his King of Trumps, exhausting all the adverse trumps except the Queen, which had always been a sure trick taker. The adversaries having taken their two Aces, and the Queen of trumps being a winner—tricks which the Declarer could not possibly capture—Declarer won all the others and went game.

Next week's hand is given below; make up your mind how you would bid and play it before you read next week's description.

North	East
S. J-8-5	S. Q-9-7-3-2
H. 4-2	H. Q-J-10-8
D. 9-8-5-3-2	D. J-7-4
C. J-10-4	C. 7
South	West
S. A-4	S. K-10-6
H. A-5-3	H. K-9-7-6
D. A-K-Q	D. 10-6
C. A-K-8-6-5	C. Q-9-3-2

Giant Killer

Continued from page 13

"I'm sure the general understands how we feel," said Bathsheba suavely. "But, darling, you interrupted me just as I was telling him about that Amalekite shawl I bought in Giloh. What a pity I didn't wear it tonight! I know the general would like to see it—"

"I can go home and get it," Uriah volunteered. And when Joab protested, in obscure uneasiness: "Why, it isn't five minutes' walk, sir! And that shawl is really a beautiful thing. Where is it, dear?"

"In the chest at the head of the bed," said Bathsheba. "I put it there this morning. Unless the maid has been moving things around—"

HE WAS off, eager and earnest. . . . Bathsheba relaxed in her cushioned chair, her amber eyes looking up from beneath the drooping lashes with a faintly sardonic flicker.

"As a matter of fact," she said, "that shawl is hidden away downstairs, under lock and key; and the maid is off for the evening. He'll never find it. But he'll look for it very thoroughly. Uriah is nothing if not thorough. . . . Well?"

For a while he could not speak; he could only stare at her in tremendous stupefaction. Her eyes smiled at him—clear, happy, tender.

"You too?" she said at last. "But then, why did you stay away so long?"

"I had to think things through. You see," she said, "I hadn't expected—this." And as he half rose—"Wait! I think I'd rather tell you about it first." She drew a deep, happy sigh. "I think you and I can always afford to be honest with each other, my dear."

He sank back in a stupor of content. He could afford to wait; desire was only a part of what had drawn them together. . . . Together.

"You see—" she laughed a little. "Well, at first I simply set out to get you. . . . I'm an ambitious woman, Joab; I want to make something of my life. Uriah—" She shrugged. "He'll be a general some day, I suppose, but he'll always be a fool. I'm too good for a fool. So when I met you, the second man in Israel—" (So Tirzah had been right! . . . And what of it?)

"Oh, I'd have given you value!" she said proudly. "I'm a clever wife. And I'd be faithful to my second man; I made up my mind to that. I was only eighteen when they married me to Uriah; but the man I deliberately chose, mature and open-eyed—I'd be faithful to him, because he'd be worth it. . . . Oh, I knew what I wanted! You couldn't have had me for a night or a week. I wanted to bind my life with a man worth living with, a man who'd do the things that needed doing—and whom I could help."

She smiled now, with a deeply tender amusement.

"So that was my plan. Rather clever, wasn't it?—a cool, intelligent plan that would give us both exactly what we needed. . . . And then I fell in love with you." Her eyes evaded his; a deep tremor ran through her. "I was going away, anyway, to—well, to make you miss me. But when I knew what was happening—then I had to go and stay till I was sure. . . . Because this makes it so incredibly beautiful! Now—"

"Now?" he repeated hoarsely. While she talked a hundred inner voices had been calling for his attention, trying to remind him of something; he would not listen, but he could not silence them.

"You know," she said, "I'm the woman you've needed all your life; you need me now and will always need me, as

desperately as I need you. . . . We belong to each other, Joab." Now he was on his feet, looking down at her.

"Yes," he said. "But— Your husband!"

She shrugged, indifferent. Slowly he realized that she was leaving that to him. . . . Well, it could be managed; a wife could not divorce her husband in Israel, but a husband could divorce a wife; he must divorce her if the second man in the kingdom wanted her. But the general in whom the army trusted—and a battalion commander's wife—

"Of course," she said with a faintly derisory smile, "you're a gentleman of the old school. You probably don't like what you probably call the modern attitude toward marriage. . . . But this isn't a modern attitude; this is you and me. This is the most important thing that will ever happen to either of us. Does a husband count?"

"I wasn't thinking of a husband," said the general. "I was thinking of a soldier."

Her eyes darkened.

"I know. The commander in chief taking a battalion commander's wife—it seems unfair. It is unfair; we might as well admit it. . . . But does that count either?"

"It must count for me," said the man who had made the army—the army that had made the nation.

She frowned in perplexity.

"But don't tell me," she said, "that you can't distinguish between the essential and the fortuitous. . . . Nothing counts, besides this!"

"The army. . . . It has been my life; it is the life of the nation still. The army has opened the way to the Promised Land! . . . I made the army. I can't betray it."

"But—" She was hopelessly bewildered. "I can't see how you'd be betraying the army. If I leave a man I despise to come to the man I love—"

"You leave a subordinate officer—a naturalized immigrant—to come to the commander in chief, the nephew of the King. . . . They're the best men in the army, these foreign officers, the prop of Israel. The Promised Land means more to them than it can ever mean to us, for they've left their homes, given up their own people, lost faith in their own gods—they come to serve Israel's God and Israel's king. And they must be able to trust Israel's general. . . . If I took you, I should be taking the wife of every foreigner in the army. The army could never trust us again—nor could we, David and I, trust the army. It would be as bad as if the King took you himself!"

SHE was standing beside him now; her tortured eyes held his.

"But this—!" she said desperately. "What you say might be true if—I were only an ambitious woman who had set out to catch a prince; if you were only a man who needed a clever wife. . . . But we're in love!"

She stood within reach of his hand; he knew that under the soft stuff of her gown her body was a pillar of fire; if he touched her now, if she touched him, it would all be over.

"I've been sick for you!" she gasped. "Those nights at Giloh—spring nights when I lay alone, thinking of you—And then I came back to Uriah! . . . Men and women have such different scales of value. To you it seems wrong to weaken the army. To me it seems wicked to deny this! What are we to do?"

"Once before," he recalled, "a woman

asked me that, and presently we did what might have been expected. But then only my self-respect was at stake. Now it is something more important than myself—my work, the thing outside of me that I have built."

"Yes," she said, "I can see that. . . . But I've built nothing, Joab! I'm pleading for my chance to build—to help you build something that we both desire."

He sat down in a sudden despairing exhaustion. She came and sat beside him; remotely he heard her talking in a murmuring undertone; but everything had been said, and he knew there was no answer. There was nothing more that he could say; nothing presently that she could say. They both sat silent; it was a relief to him and to her when the knocking at the gate announced the returning Uriah.

"I COULDN'T find that shawl anywhere, dear!" He was breathlessly apologetic. "I looked all over the house, but I'm afraid you must have made a mistake."

"Yes," said Bathsheba. "Perhaps I did."

And her amber eyes began to smolder with far-reaching, incalculable speculation.

She breakfasted in bed next morning, and after breakfast she lay relaxed and pensive, staring out of the window at the houses that were going up in this growing neighborhood; reflecting on the fact that she had lost the man she loved—the last man, she suspected, whom she would ever love . . . lost him by talking, too, when if she had simply taken him in her arms— She made a mental note; hereafter she would let the man do the talking. She writhed.

Hereafter—But—yes, there would be a hereafter. She had lost ecstasy and lost it irrevocably, but there would be a hereafter. . . . Also she had lost the second man in the kingdom. The true King. . . . But Joab had said that when David cared to act—

Uriah came in just then, briskly smiling.

"How do you feel, darling? Still a little tired? . . . I don't wonder, after the trip back from Giloh. You must stay in bed as long as you like and rest yourself."

"You're so good to me!" she murmured languidly, reaching up her hand for him to kiss. . . . She turned over, staring once more out of the window. "They're so ugly," she said, "all those new houses; our lovely view is all shut off. Really, Uriah, this neighborhood is running down. If we had an offer for the house—"

"I had one last week," he said. "Quite a good offer. . . . But, after all, it's our home—"

She sat up in bed, her eyes smoldering. "But it's too small for us, darling—you know that. You're almost certain to come back from this campaign a brigade commander; we'll have to do a good deal more entertaining next winter. I'd take that offer."

"Sell the house? But where would we go?"

"Listen, dear! I heard yesterday of a house for sale in the royal city—where Prince Shammah used to live. Next door to the palace!"

"That house?" Uriah gasped. "We could never afford it!"

"The money we'd get for this one would be as much as we need to pay down. As for the rest—" Her hands clasped over her knees; she smiled at him. "The army is sure to capture Rabbah this year. A rich city—all sorts of plunder. With your share of that we can finish paying for the house. . . . See! Your clever wife has it all figured out."

He bent over and kissed her avidly. "Whatever I may become," he said,

"I'll owe to you. . . . But I've been in that house, dear. It's old-fashioned—no bathroom—"

"Oh, we can remodel it after we're settled."

It needed a little more coaxing and petting to bring him to the point, but at last he hurried off, properly elated at the prospect of becoming the King's next-door neighbor. And Bathsheba lay back in bed, her eyes cool and thoughtful, looking forward. . . . She dared not look back. . . .

Uriah, once started, acted with his usual enthusiastic promptitude; they were settled in the house next door to the palace before the day of mobilization. There was a tiny back yard, shut off by the blank wall of the palace; a yard paved with flagstones, a single date palm springing out of them. Not so good in truth as the house they had sold, but next door to the palace.

. . . So once more Bathsheba kissed her husband good-by and sent him off to the wars. With pomp and parade Joab's regulars marched out of Jerusalem, picked up the mobilized militia at Gilgal, and crossed the Jordan. Within a week news came back that the Ammonites had been utterly routed; the remnant of their army was shut up in Rabbah; the long siege had already begun. . . . When Bathsheba heard that she told the maid she could have the rest of the afternoon off.

"You'll probably want to celebrate with your friends," she said generously. "But before you go just set that portable bathtub on the flagstones in the back yard. It's so warm today I think I'll bathe out there. With all those walls around, nobody will see me."

. . . And it came to pass at evening that David rose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the palace; and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon. And David sent messengers, and took her; and afterward she returned to her house.

And the woman conceived; and she sent and told David.

THE siege of Rabbah was a slow job; and the militia officers, who owed their appointments to family or political influence, made Joab's life a burden by begging him to settle it quickly by storming the west wall, where a neck of land gave the only real approach to the isolated hill. But always he rebuffed them grimly; no use wasting two or three thousand lives. The key to Rabbah was the City of Waters, the fortifications around the springs that bubbled out at the foot of the hill. Higher up there were no wells, few cisterns; if the City of Waters fell, the rest of the town must presently surrender or die of thirst. So Joab steadily pressed the attack on the City of Waters, with mining and embankments; and around the hill the army sat, letting no one go in and out, and waited.

Without a war, he thought, he might have gone crazy that summer; he worked all day long; exposed himself with a recklessness that drove Abishai to continual protest—anything to forget that dull bitter ache that still could never be forgotten. He had done the right thing; he was irrevocably convinced of that. But at night, when he could busy himself with no more work, that reflection brought little consolation.

And again and again a thought kept coming back to him. Uriah was a soldier. He might always be killed in the war. And the foreign officers would be flattered, elated, if the commander in chief married a foreign officer's widow. . . . But when Joab realized where that speculation might lead him he shut down on it grimly. Joab meant to take no chances with his own integrity, so

(Continued on page 46)

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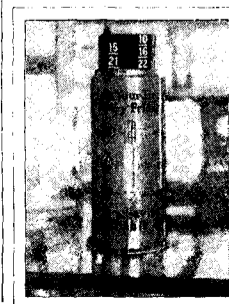
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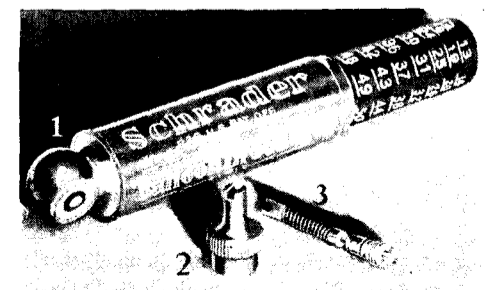
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Uriah's battalion, the Second Battalion of Mighty Men, was kept on a hill to the westward where it might guard the lines of communication, and great was the men's disgust.

Then, one day, at the end of one of the letters that came down from the King—a dictated letter dealing with routine business—there was a postscript in the King's own hand:

"By the way—you mentioned a young officer named Uriah the Hittite. He sent me a memorandum about cavalry. I'd like to form a personal impression of him before I take any action; so send him up, will you?"

JOAB read that in the door of his tent and wondered. If the King happened to take a liking to Uriah, he would rise fast; he would become a general sooner or later, anyway. And then perhaps Bathsheba would be resigned—No! Nothing would suit Bathsheba—nothing would suit Joab—but what they dared not take. . . . Joab turned to his adjutant, inside.

"Detail Uriah the Hittite to take today's dispatch up to the King," he commanded. "Who's second in command of his battalion?" The adjutant fumbled among his rolls of papyrus.

"Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada," he reported. "A valiant man of Kabzeel. He has done mighty deeds."

Joab nodded. "Yes, I know him. He'll obey orders and stay where he is till Uriah comes back."

So Uriah went, and for a week Joab's torment was hotter than ever. Uriah would see Bathsheba. . . . Technically, of course, he shouldn't; neither wine nor women till the campaign was over—that was a statute and an ordinance in Israel.

A week later Uriah reported at the general's tent, very much in his consecrated mood after his interview with the King.

"His Majesty sent you his greetings, sir," he announced. "And a personal letter." He handed it over, sealed. Joab put it aside. "I—I had two interviews with him, sir, and the second time he asked me to stay to dinner. I feel very highly privileged."

"Well, well!" said Joab. It rather surprised him, but every now and then David took some unaccountable fancy to someone and raised him to sudden favor. It didn't always last. "Did he say anything about your cavalry memorandum?" he asked. Uriah looked rather depressed.

"No, sir; he didn't bring that up. But he talked to me quite at length about the campaign. And"—he smiled shyly—"he seemed to like me, sir. The night he had me to dinner he sent down for some special wine—the vintage of the twelfth year of King Saul."

"As God lives!" said Joab. "That was a compliment. I know that vintage. It's rather powerful." Uriah grinned respectfully.

"Yes, sir. I'm afraid I was a little unsteady when I left. His Majesty was quite generous—didn't seem to mind it."

"Well!" said Joab. He swallowed two or three times, but this question had to get itself asked: "How did you find your wife?"

"I didn't see her, sir," Uriah's face wore a look of exaltation. "I didn't go home at all. Even His Majesty urged me to go home, but"—he grinned gallantly—"against the rules, sir."

Joab couldn't help feeling a stinging relief.

"Yes, so it is." He laughed curtly. "I don't think that many men could

have been trusted to remember that."

As Uriah disappeared Joab slit open the letter he had brought—and stared at it dumfounded. It was unsigned, but he knew David's hand:

"Set Uriah the Hittite in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire from him, so that he may be killed."

"The poor devil!" was Joab's first thought. The poor devil! He must have asked too many questions about what became of the memorandum. . . .

And then: "He's a good officer. Stupid of the King to waste such material because of some dislike he's taken to him. . . ."

And then: "Bathsheba will be a widow!"

Joab sat for a long time, his beard clutched in his hands. . . . Could he do it? . . . If he disobeyed the King on some personal matter like this, there would be trouble.

Joab turned to the adjutant.

"I think we'll let the Second Battalion of Mighty Men see a little action tomorrow," he announced. "They can make a demonstration along the neck toward the west wall, to cover the starting of that new embankment against the City of Waters. . . . Who did you say is the second in command? Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada? Yes, I remember him. He always obeys orders. Send him to me, will you? I want to see him privately."

And the next afternoon Joab watched from a hilltop while Uriah's battalion made a sudden rush toward the west wall. The Ammonites, cooped up and restless, sallied out to meet them when they saw it was only a single battalion; there was some brisk fighting, and then the Ammonites were running, the Mighty Men pursuing at their heels, clear up to the wall. Then a trumpet blast; the battalion began to fall back. One man did not fall back; he stood still before the gate, his arms waving. It was all beyond earshot, but Joab knew he was demanding who had given that order for retreat. . . . And then the waving arms dropped, the figure crumpled; he fell, full of arrows.

Bathsheba was a widow. And Joab felt rather proud of himself that all that evening he could not think of what that might eventually mean to him; he could only think, "What a pity! What a waste!"

THEY took the City of Waters at last; hot with eagerness for the plunder, they waited none the less for the city on the hill to surrender, parched with thirst. They were enthusiastic now, regulars and volunteers too, whenever Joab showed himself—Joab whose craft would win the city almost without loss of life.

So he sent for David to come down from Jerusalem in state and receive the surrender of the Ammonites, their capital and their king. For Joab had no ambition to have cities called by his name, to stir up David's jealousy still further. He had done his work. Israel's last enemy had fallen; he could hang up his sword at last, content with his service to his country, and retire to his ranch, a country gentleman, to beget sons and daughters.

For Bathsheba was a widow. . . . All through the last weeks of the siege that fact had been incessantly in his mind; Bathsheba was a widow. So all that he had rejected—and rightly rejected, he knew—it would all come true at last!

So David went to Rabbah and fought against it and took it, and he took the crown of gold off the head of Milcom,

the god of the Ammonites, and set its jewels in his own crown. And he brought forth the loot of the city, exceeding much. And he brought out the people that were in the city, and put them under saws and under harrows of iron and under axes of iron and made them pass through the brick kiln.

Joab protested in vain against these wholesale horrible tortures, and protested again when he sat in the King's tent and listened to the agonized screaming of men and women gasping their lives out in the valley below.

"David, that's barbarous, indecent, unworthy. . . . And unnecessary."

"It will teach them a lesson," the King told him, lounging back comfortably, his ear cocked to catch a renewed outburst of shrieking. "It will teach all nations that my ambassadors are not to be insulted—and that your army is irresistible! . . . Think of that, old man!" He clapped Joab on the back. "We've beaten them all, beaten them down, one by one. No one dares threaten us now!"

"YES," said Joab. His work was done. He was trying to find words for this curiously incredible thing he was going to say—that he wanted to resign from the service and settle down.

"Oh, by the way!" said David. "I've married again. Bathsheba, the widow of Uriah the Hittite."

"Bathsheba—" Joab's voice died in his throat.

The King laughed.

"That ought to make a good impression on the naturalized immigrants, don't you think? The widow of one of them taken as my wife—the favorite wife too, just now, and for some time to come, I suspect. A most fascinating woman."

Joab stared at him, black and murderous. . . . David didn't know. Bathsheba would never have told him; she was too clever. . . . But David had had her husband killed—no, had made Joab have her husband killed, for the royal convenience. . . . And if anyone ever found out about it, that Joab had had Uriah killed, Joab must take the blame.

"Yes," said David. "A fascinating woman. And we hope," he added piously, "that the Lord may send us increase. About the beginning of winter."

About the beginning of winter. . . . Joab counted the months on his fingers, from Uriah's trip back to Jerusalem. . . . Yes! . . . The King had brought Uriah back, had tried to send him to his wife; and Uriah had refused because law observance was the particular duty of the naturalized immigrant, his acknowledgment of his high privilege. And now the naturalized immigrants were flattered by the news that the King had married Uriah's widow. . . .

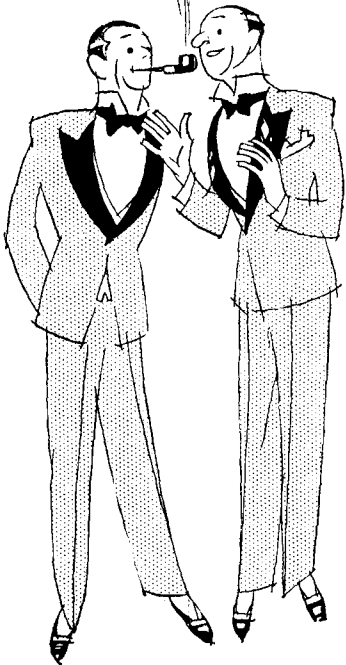
David, in the doorway of the tent, smiled comfortably down at Joab; he was growing portly now, but he was august, majestic; the sunlight flamed in his beard, turned his hair into a fiery crown. And though Joab, in that moment, hated him with a black bitterness such as he had never known, he could not lift a hand against him.

For David was the King—beyond argument, the King. . . . And a phrase from one of David's own poems came back to Joab—like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season, or even out of season; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.

(To be continued next week)

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The Unbearable Touch

Continued from page 17

him. He was kinda pitiful, talking in a loud voice, giving me orders, while all the time he was a bust, if you get me. You know, he hadn't made good. O' course, it wasn't his fault that his lamps were bad, but there's excuses for every failure, I guess.

"All right," I said.

With that, right in front of everybody, he grabbed me and kissed me. Gentle, and sort of half-afraid—you know, like a kid playing at being grown-up and getting ashamed when the old folks happen in on him. Started off like a million dollars and petered down to a dime. I just shrugged my shoulders and broke the clench.

"I—I'm sorry," he said. "I didn't mean—right in front of everybody—"

"All right," I said, and went upstairs. I went into Mr. Roberts' private office. "I'm quitting," I said.

"Why?" he asked.

"Because Tim Stevens wants me to," I said.

"So I won't see you again?" he asked.

"No, you won't see me again," I said.

WITH that he grabbed me. I put my hands up in front of my face, and he grabbed both wrists in one hand like I was a kid. Then he kissed me. Well, I've done a little necking, but I never seen no fireworks bust right in my face before.

"My God," I said, when I finally broke away, "do you know them girls in the outer office are looking at us?"

"Well," he said, "let's give them a good show."

With that he grabbed me again.

Started like a dime, you know, and rolled right up into a million. In about ten minutes or ten years, or ten centuries, the telephone rang. He answered it.

"It's for you," he said.

I took the telephone. It was Tim.

"When are you coming downstairs?" he asked.

"I'm never coming downstairs," I told him.

When I went home that night, Bland went with me. I introduced him to Ma and Pa and Sister Jennie.

"This is the man I'm going to marry," I said.

"You mean," said Bland, "that I'm the man that's going to marry you."

Just like that. Boss, you know. He didn't ask me; he told me.

Ma got me outside in the kitchen a while later when the excitement sort of simmered down.

"Minnie darling, I thought you was stuck on Tim," she said.

"So did I," I said.

"What made you find out you wasn't?" she asked.

"I found out I couldn't bear to have him touch me," I said.

"You won't have to wash no dishes," said Ma.

"No, I won't have to wash any dishes," I said. "But look here," I said. "I didn't toss Tim because I was afraid of washing dishes. It—it was sort of because—well, he—he wasn't afraid to let me wash dishes, if you get me."

"You sound like you'd like to wash dishes," said Ma.

"Well, I would like to wash dishes for Bland," I said.

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Master of Sinister House

Continued from page 7

There was a look of suffering in his face, as though he were ill, and he leaned upon a stick. He was dressed in reasonable clothing, but his hair was unkempt, his collar crumpled, and one of his shoe laces undone. I judged that he had come from some adventure, for there was an air of exhaustion about him, and in his eyes there was fear. Holding to his arm was a girl—a little Jewess, she seemed to me—small, with an exquisite cameolike face, dark-brown eyes and hair and brilliantly red lips. She looked defiantly at Martin Hews.

"I was expecting you, Jim Donkin—but the young lady—"

The man sank into the fixed chair, with a little groan of relief.

"You'll have to look after her, guv'nor," he declared. "If she can't come with me, you'll have to keep her safe. You know what happened last night?"

"I know that you committed a murder," Martin Hews observed calmly. "You are trying me very high, Donkin. You were on your own last night, you must remember, and it is not an easy thing to protect a murderer. Tell me about the girl."

"You know who she is. This is Rachel. 'Tain't her fault, but it was because of her the row began last night. The newspapers haven't got half of it yet. After the races there were a hundred of us fighting down in the mews, back of the Bethnal Green Road, and Phil Abrahams wasn't the only one who got his. We were obeying orders too, you know, guv'nor. The cops were getting too inquisitive about what we were really out for. You wanted a real hooligan fight, and we bloody well had it."

"There isn't a great deal of time to waste if I am to get you away," Martin Hews warned him. "Why have you brought the girl with you? It is quite true that I am willing to undertake the task of looking after her, but I did not intend to have her here."

"Where could I leave her in London?" the man demanded. "Abrahams took her from me, as he had sworn to Joseph that he would, but he was a dying man, bleeding to death in Aldgate Passage before he could hand her over. We're pretty well wiped out now, though. They'll get her if I leave her in London."

"Half a dozen of 'em," the girl intervened, "half a dozen of 'em who reckon I never ought to have left Joseph, and who mean to get me back if they can. Mind you, they'll soon forget it," she went on, "and I don't know that I'm so scared as it is. Joseph would have something to say if they turned ugly, but Jim here, he's all for me lying low. You're afraid Joseph will get me again, ain't you, Jim?" she asked, with a mocking laugh.

"I'd come back from the dead, blast you, if you went back to him," the man growled. "What about me, Chief?"

MARTIN HEWS leaned forward in his chair and contemplated the two. His face was unclouded, his smile almost benevolent. "I grasp the position," he said at last. "Everything is arranged so far as you are concerned, Donkin. You must be prepared to leave here in five minutes. A car is waiting for you now. As for the young lady, I shall offer her, at any rate, temporary shelter."

"What, here?" she demanded, with a grimace.

"Certainly. You will be safer under this roof than anywhere else. The housekeeper will look after you. As for you, Donkin, please follow my servant

downstairs now. I shall keep my word and get you out of this, but you have disappointed me. I wanted Joseph's gang crushed. I wanted Joseph removed. You have failed me."

"If I get over this," Donkin muttered, a spasm of pain suddenly contorting his face, "I'll get Joseph as soon as I can sneak back to the country."

"That is your own affair," Martin Hews said equably. "I shall probably have settled with him myself before that can happen. In the meantime, kindly follow my servant downstairs. You will be provided with ample funds, and I wish you well; at the same time, in the struggle between you and Joseph, you are up to now the loser, and I have no use for the second best."

HE DISMISSED them with an imperative little wave of the hand, and they disappeared, ushered out by the butler, who had entered without any visible or audible means of summons. The panels glided open in front of me, and I stepped out. Martin Hews looked at me thoughtfully.

"You can drive a car?" he asked.

"I can," I answered, with a sudden return of hope.

"You can fight, I know," he continued. "Do your best to get Donkin away. If you come up against the police, you had better offer no resistance and be sure that my name is not mentioned. If any members of Joseph's gang try to intercept you, that will be a different matter. Fight if you have any chance at all. They will kill Donkin if they get him. . . . Here!"

He opened a drawer, and handed me a flat-handed automatic, of the latest type, fully charged. Behind me was standing once more that ubiquitous butler, waiting to show me downstairs.

Five minutes afterward we were swinging down the straight, muddy

road leading toward the river, in a large open touring car, built apparently for speed. Donkin was by my side, muffled up in an overcoat and groaning every now and then in pain. A dark-complexioned chauffeur in the front crouched over his wheel.

We drew up, after a ghastly six-mile drive at the end of what was little better than a rough cart track leading down to the river. My companion, with a final groan, stepped heavily out, and looked with anxious eyes first along the road by which we had come and afterward at the motor launch moored a score of yards out in the sluggish stream. He stepped into the dinghy which was waiting under the bank, and for the first time the strained look of apprehension seemed to pass from his face.

"He's a rum little devil, but he's kept his word," he muttered as I helped him in. "I knew if anyone could get me away, he could. Tell Rachel I'm safe."

There was no other word of farewell. He clambered up on the motor launch, the dinghy was drawn up, and the former swung round and started off seaward, the spray already breaking over her as she crept into speed. I watched her for several moments until she disappeared into the gray, drifting mist. Then, just as I was turning around, the chauffeur touched me on the shoulder. He pointed along the road by which we had come, and I saw a motor car approaching, furiously driven.

"This road don't lead anywhere, sir," he confided. "There's no room to pass, and the dikes are full. I am thinking it means a bit of trouble for us."

THE car rushed toward us, swaying from side to side, splashing the water lying in the sunken pools of the road high into the air, more than once only just avoiding a dangerous skid. When at last, with grinding of brakes and

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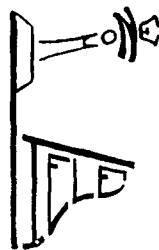
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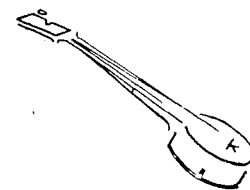
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