

ALL WRONG

RICHARD CONNELL

HE had four names, all good ones, dating back Heaven knows how many years, — Talbot Debenham Arbuthnot Marchbanks. His was an English county family with more than one crusader in it, and more than one poet. There was rather more poet than crusader in T. D. A. Marchbanks; he had a poet's hair-trigger imagination, a poet's quick suggestibility. He looked a bit like a poet, too. One could see sonnets in the cerulean blue of his eyes, lyrics in the curve of his lips; he had a nose made for madrigals, and dithyrambic ears. His cheeks had the pink of health, his step the spring of youth.

He stood on the sun-sprayed steps of the Custom House in New York in the fresh fall air and his eyes, just then, were not for Manhattan's tall buildings and beautiful women, phenomena discovered afresh by prominent visiting Englishmen, with a little judicious guidance from the ship news reporters. T. D. A. Marchbanks, as a matter of fact, was examining a handful of American coins, and endeavoring to identify a nickel that he might pay his fare for the first subway ride of his life.

No one had interviewed him when his boat docked an hour before, and he was glad of it. He was not prominent, and, oddly enough, had no wish to be. He was but twenty-two and his literary reputation did not extend beyond The Croft, Wicking Village, Upper Debenham, Hants, which was his home and from the bucolic seclusion of which he was now issuing for the first time in order, — this was his parents' idea, — that he might broaden himself by a visit to his uncle who had done rather well in Wall Street and maintained a large apartment on Riverside Drive near 116th Street.

His uncle, broadened by twenty-five years in America, had met him with brisk cordiality at the pier, had hustled him into a taxicab and had deposited him at the Custom House on the tip of Manhattan Island, and had left him there with a hasty, "Sorry, m'boy, but I must rush back to my office. Bears are hammering Mex. Pete, y'see. When you finish at the Custom House, jump into the subway, grab an express, ride half an hour, hop out at

Columbia University — 116th Street and toddle west to Riverside Drive. You know my number. Your aunt will give you tea. I'll see you at dinner. G'bye."

Young Mr. Marchbanks, a neat, quietly clad figure, was nerving himself to jump, grab, ride, hop, and toddle, according to his uncle's directions. He would have preferred to take a taxicab, but one look at the fearsome pirates who drove the cabs made him abandon that idea; his was not a robust soul. It was indeed a sensitive soul, so sensitive that it seemed nude. Some babies are born sneering; they become critics; others are born shrinking; they become aesthetes or underpaid clerks; T. D. A. Marchbanks had been a shrinking baby. Compared to him the lamented Alice Ben Bolt, who wept with delight when you gave her a smile and trembled with fear at a frown, had the assurance of a book agent. He was almost morbidly introspective. He was forever peering into his soul, applying his eyes to the microscope and studying himself as if he were an amoeba. He had small occasion to shudder at what he saw inside him; he was a good young man.

He was wondering what impression he was making on the throng of New Yorkers scurrying past like hungry rats toward a new-spiced cheese, as he left the steps and made his way to the subway entrance to which he had been directed by the thumb-jerk and growl of a policeman.

"He thinks me a fool," thought young Mr. Marchbanks.

A subway guard rebuked him acridly for trying to enter the wrong gate.

"Am I a fool?" wondered T. D. A. Marchbanks, as, a trifle intimidated, he settled into a seat for his thirty minute ride. The sudden spasmodic plunge of the train into the black gullet of the tunnel made him think of a sick elephant bolting a biggish pill. Across the aisle from him was a stone wall of New York faces; their eyes were blobs of ice set in concrete. To stare at them would be rude, he knew, so he raised his eyes to the advertising cards that ran round the car like a multicolored moulding.

The very first card young Mr. Marchbanks saw consisted of a hand with a forefinger pointing straight at him. Under the hand, in letters of pulsing scarlet, were the words,

DID YOU LOOK AT YOUR GARTERS THIS MORNING ?

"My word!" exclaimed Marchbanks, nervously, "I didn't." Obviously it was too late to look, now. In smaller but no less intense letters the card cried.

Be Sure You Are Wearing
GOFF'S GRAB-TITES
GENTLEMEN WEAR NOTHING ELSE!

"Oh, I say," murmured Marchbanks. "That is a bit steep, you know. Trousers, surely ——"

A thought began to harass him. Without an examination, which under the circumstances would be out of the question, he could not be sure of his own garters. A grave doubt began to pick at his brain. Suppose his were not Goff's Grab-Tites? Suppose they were what a pitiless memory kept telling him they were: distinctly dilapidated garters of no particular ancestry? At that very second they might traitorously break and expose to those icy eyes across the aisle the dubiousness of his gentility. He shuddered.

He moved his eyes on to the next card and saw on its blackness a flaming orange question mark. Eye-compelling orange type flung at him the interrogation,

DO YOU REALIZE
That If You Are Not Wearing a
SNUG-HUG CAMEL'S HAIR UNION SUIT
You Are Probably Catching Your Death
of Pneumonia?

Involuntarily, Marchbanks shivered. Till that moment he had not felt cold; the air in the car had, in fact, struck him as stuffy. Now he perceived that his warmth must have been the fever that precedes a violent illness, for it was impossible for him to deny that his innermost garments were not Snug-Hugs; so far as he knew they were anonymous. With anxious eyes he reread the sign. His teeth began to chatter. The train rushed on.

More than a little worried, he turned his attention to the next card. The heads of ten people were shown there in a row. Two of them were smiling in a way that displayed astonishingly dazzling teeth. The other eight were frowning, their mouths tight shut. In bold letters the card asseverated,

Eight Out of Every Ten People
WILL LOSE THEIR TEETH

Because
They Have Not Used
Piggot's Pulverized Pazooka

The alarmed hand of T. D. A. Marchbanks went swiftly to his own mouth. To his surprise and relief he found his teeth still there. His pleasure at this was totally erased however by the thought, "They won't be there long. The odds are all against me. I never was lucky, anyhow. Oh, why didn't I hear of Pazooka before? Why didn't my parents tell me?"

He bent over, opened his mouth, shook his head, and then scanned the floor. While none of his teeth fell out then and there, he distinctly felt them rattle. It was but a question of time, now.

The train was roaring onward. He sought to still his fears by gazing at another card. It was a plain white card with a border of small, ferocious, insect-like objects, with large eyes and many legs. It drew his eyes as if it were a cobra and he a chickadee. The card read,

A MILLION BACILLI JUMP ON YOU
EVERY DAY!

The ONE Soap That Will Kill Them
is

Horowitz's Carbolic-Lilac
"Your Pores' Playmate"

A faint cry of distress escaped from the paling lips of T. D. A. Marchbanks. His pores had never known such a playmate. The words danced on his brain like witches about a hell-broth. He tried to think of something else besides bacilli, pneumonia, and vanishing teeth. He'd think of garters. Why did he think of garters? He knew. It was the voice of conscience. He had neglected to look at his that day.

When the train reached 96th street, the nerves of T. D. A. Marchbanks were taut and tremulous, like piano wires. One segment in the human stone wall across the aisle left the car, and Marchbanks tottered over to the vacant seat. He must get away from those soul-devastating cards.

He raised his eyes to the new row of cards. The first one showed a ragged old man with famished eyes, and it bore the inscription,

*Will YOU, Too, Be a BEGGAR at 65?
Most Men Are. The Men Who Aren't Are The Men
Who Saved Their Money And Put It Into
GULICK'S Gold-Rimmed, Double Debenture Bonds*

Marchbanks, who had aged twenty years in as many minutes, laughed hollowly. Poverty at sixty-five had no terrors for him, now. A man with vulgar garters, pneumonia underwear, no teeth, and bacilli beyond the possibilities of computation, need not concern himself with what he'd be at sixty-five. Marchbanks was perspiring and cold at the same time, like a pitcher of ice water in August. The train thundered along its appointed path.

Another card jerked Marchbank's eyes to it. This card bore a photograph of a young man who reminded Marchbanks of himself. This young man's countenance was pitiful to behold, so lined it was by care, so creased by chagrin, so twisted by humiliation. In large, readable script the hag-ridden young man on the card made public his shame:

"I was many times a best man, but never a bridegroom."

"Poor chap," said Marchbanks, and read on.

"Why was I shunned?" continued the distressed youth on the card. *"My best friends would not tell me. YOURS WON'T EITHER! Ask them, IF YOU DARE!"*

If it is possible for absolute paleness to grow more pale, the face of T. D. A. Marchbanks did so. The card concluded,

*"Solve Your Oral Problem With
Jipp's Violet-Scented Vitriol Drops"*

"Good Lord," groaned Marchbanks. "I, too, have never been a bridegroom. I've never even known I had an oral problem."

With the fatal lucidity of memory that introspective persons have, he reviewed rapidly his brief life. A crowd of suspicious cases pressed in upon him. He glanced around, guiltily. He thought he saw the other passengers recoil from him; he thought he saw them blench. At the 110th Street station the man next to Marchbanks got up and left the train hurriedly. To the fevered

mind of Marchbanks the man's action bore but one crushing interpretation. He felt hot all over, then cold, then hot, then cold, in flashes. Was it the pneumonia or the bacilli? What did it matter?

His eyes darted round the car like the eyes of a trapped faun, and ran full tilt into a sign adorned by a pair of bare feet, with the soles upward, and poised above them a thick, menacing cudgel. Vermillion letters screamed at him,

DON'T BASTINADO YOURSELF TO DEATH!

Think Of Your Poor Spine!

It Has To Stand 5000 Farring Wallops Each Day.

Wear Peg Woffington Rubberized Heels or

You Will WEAR OUT YOUR SPINE!

Marchbanks trembled like a wasp's wings. One look at his own feet confirmed his worst fears; his heels were not Peg Woffingtons; they were not rubber at all, but hard, hard leather, studded with harder nails. He'd always worn that kind. No wonder he was weak; he'd been bastinadoed for twenty years. By now his spine could not be much more than a frayed thread, ready to snap any minute beneath his load of bacilli.

"I'm all wrong," moaned young Mr. Marchbanks. "All wrong."

A guard bawled "Columbia University — 116th Street."

By sheer will power, Marchbanks got to his feet; his eyes were wild, glassy; his knees were like mayonnaise; his legs no stronger than lettuce leaves; he managed to stagger out to the station platform.

There is a large pink and purple sign there warning the public that if it doesn't eat Meagrim's Smashed Oaties Every Day it must take the consequences. It was in front of this sign that Talbot Debenham Arbuthnot Marchbanks collapsed like a snapped reed; it was there his body was found.



The Sleeping Beauty

JOHN ERSKINE

Drawing by Robert P. Tristram Coffin

*"So that's the way you woke her, with a kiss?"
Said Paulus to the Prince. "And the whole house
Likewise no doubt woke up? And did you then
Restore her to her parents? Discreet, I'd say,
Public-spirited, as it were, and yet —*

*"I, too, once wakened beauty with a kiss;
Long ago in my youth I loved her so,
That faun-like girl, the smooth and ivory,
With eyelids drooping — but no heart at all,
Or none for me. I found her in her room,
Unclothed for summer coolness, fallen asleep,
One ankle drawn beneath the other knee,
Her black hair sideways on a straight white arm;
What I had begged in vain for, then I had."*