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The ADVENTURES of M. D'HARICOT

J. Storer Clouston

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FROM

Edmund Morley Parker

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'Brave, gallant men,'

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ADVENTURES OF D'HARICOT

BY

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ILLUSTRATED BY

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I shall tell you, since the affair is now no secret, and as it hereafter touches my narrative. I was a Royalist, an adherent of the rightful king of France. I am still; I boast it openly. But at that time a demonstration had been premature, a government was alarmed, and I had fled.

Hereafter I shall tell you more of the secret and formidable society of which I was then a young, enthusiastic member—the Une, Deux, Trois League, or U. D. T's, as we styled ourselves in brief, the forlorn hope of royalty in France. At present it is sufficient to say that we had failed.

Baffled hopes, doubt as to the future, fear for the present, were my companions; and they are not gay, these friends.

I felt—I confess it now mirthfully enough—suspicious of the porter of the train, of the guard, of the people who eyed me.

I was young, and "political offender" had a terrible sound. The Bastile, Siberia, St. Helena; were not these places built, created, discovered, for

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I had been so carried away by my thoughts that I had failed to observe the lack of sympathy in my fellow-traveller's countenance.

"Possibly," he remarked, dryly.

"Ah," I said, with a smile, "you do not appreciate. You are English."

"I am," he replied. "And you are French, I suppose?"

At his words, suspicion woke in my heart. It was only as a Frenchman that I ran the risk of arrest.

"No; I am an American."

This was my first attempt to disclaim my nationality, and each time I denied my country I, like St. Peter, suffered for it. Fair France, your lovers should be true! That is the lesson.

"Indeed," was all he said; but I now began to

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I not in "perfidious Albion," and might I not be handed over to the French government in defiance of all treaties, in order to promote the insidious policy of Chamberlain? Yes, I should go, after all, and I drank to the success of my adventure in a bottle of wine that sent me forth to the station in as gay a spirit as any gallant could wish.

I had made cautious inquiries, asking of different servants at the hotel, and I had little difficulty in making my way by train as far as the suburb

in which Mr. Hankey lived. There I encountered the first disquieting circumstance. Inquiring of a policeman, I found there was no such place as George Road, but a St. George's Road was well known to him. If F. 11 had been so inaccurate

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not convert Hankey's misfortune into my advantage?"

With the intention of perhaps obtaining a glimpse into the room, I pushed the pane till, with an alarming crash, a considerable portion fell upon the gravel.

With a start I turned, and there, approaching me from either side, were two men. Hankey had evidently heard me at last.

"Who are you?" said one of them, a stout gentleman, I could see, with a consequential voice.

I came a step towards him.

"For the King," I replied.

He seemed to be staring at me.

"What the devil—?" he exclaimed, in surprise.

My heart began to sink.

"You are Mr. Hankey?" I inquired.

"I am not," he replied, with emphasis.

Here was a delicate predicament!

But I was not yet at the end of my resources.

"May I inquire your name?" I asked, politely.

"My name is Fisher," he said, with a greater air of consequence than ever, but no greater friendliness.

"What, Fisher himself!" I exclaimed, with pretended delight. "This is indeed a fortunate coincidence! How are you, Fisher?"

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faced, gray-whiskered individual, in a black morning-coat and red slippers, staring stolidly at me from a meat-eating eye; name Fisher, but all other facts concerning him unknown. A stiff, uninhabited-looking apartment of considerable size, lit with the electric light, upholstered in light wood

and new red leather, and ornamented by a life-sized portrait of Fisher himself, this picture being as uncompromising and apoplectic as the original. Finally, standing in an artificially easy attitude before a fireplace containing a frilled arrangement of pink paper, picture an exceedingly uncomfortable Frenchman.

"You scarcely expected me?" I begin, with a smile.

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"Half Scotch, half Italian," I reply.

Ah, France, why did I deny you? I was afraid to own you, I blush to confess it. And I was righteously punished.

"Italian?" says he, with more interest. "Ah, indeed!"

He stares more intently, frowns more portentously, and respires more loudly than ever.

Do you mean to pretend you are Scotch?

"A charming country," I say.

"No doubt," says Fisher.

At this moment the door opens behind him and a lady appears. She has a puffy cheek, a pale eye, a comfortable figure, a curled fringe of gray hair, and slightly projecting teeth; in a word, the mate of Fisher. There can be no mistake, and I am quick to seize the chance.

"My dear Mrs. Fisher!" I exclaim, advancing towards her.

With a movement like a hippopotamus wallowing, Fisher places himself between us. Does he think I have come to elope with her?

I assume the indignant rôle.

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Devilish glad to hear it. I say, Dick, you remember that girl I told you of? Well, it's just as I said. I knew, damn it all. What do you want to give?" (This to me.) "You don't care much? That simplifies matters."

In this strain Mr. Lumme entertained us on our way, Shafthead regarding him with a half-amused, half-sardonic grin, of which his relative seemed entirely oblivious, while I enjoyed myself amazingly. I felt like Captain Cook on the gallant *Marchand* palavering with the chiefs of some equatorial state.

"I demand a cold bath and an English servant," I said. "Anything else characteristic you can add, but those are essential."

I do not know whether Lumme quite understood this to be a jest. He took me to three sets of apartments, and at each asked first to be shown the bathroom, and then the servant, after which he inquired the price, and whether a tenant was at liberty to introduce any guest at any hour.

Finally, to end the story of that day, which began in jail and ended so merrily, I found myself the tenant of a highly comfortable set of apartments,

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us," he added, with a deep sigh, and then, as if to quench melancholy reflections, hailed another driver who was passing us in the most hilarious fashion.

"'Old your 'at on, ole man!" he shouted. "Them opera-'ats is getting scarce, you know!"

The other driver, a bottle-nosed man, redeemed only from unusual shabbiness by the head-gear in question, winked, leered, and made some reply about "not 'aving such a fat head underneath it as some people."

My friend turned to me with a confidential air.

"You saw that gentleman as I addressed?" he said, in an impressive voice. "Well, that man was driving 'is own kerridge not five years ago. On the Stock Exchange 'e was, and worth ten thousand a year if 'e was worth a penny; 'ouse in Park Lane, and married to the daughter of a baronite. 'E's told me all that 'isself, so it's true and no 'umbug.

"'Ow did 'e lose 'is money? Hunfortunit speculations and consols goin' down; but you, being a furriner, won't likely understand."

Looking as unsophisticated as possible, I pressed

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my friend for an explanation of these mysteries.

"Well," said he, "it's something like this: If you goes on the Stock Exchange you buys what they calls consols—that's stocks and shares of various sorts and kinds, but principally mines in Australia, and inventions for to make things different from what they is at present. That's what's called makin' a corner, which ain't a corner exactly in the usual sense—not as used in England, that's to say, but a kind o' American variety.

"What, O Bill! Bloomin', thank you. 'Ow's yourself?" (This to another driver passed upon the road.)

"As I was sayin', sir, this 'ere pore friend o' mine speculated in consols, and prices being what they calls up, and then shiftin', he loses and the bank wins. Inside o' twenty-four hours that there gentleman was changed from one of the richest men in the city into a pore cove a-looking out for a job like you and me."

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More'n them whiskers is, hinterfering with the traffic like that.

"Yes, sir, we 'as a rest 'ere for a few minutes; we ain't near at the end yet, though."

I shall leave it to your judgment to guess which of these remarks were addressed to me and which to various of his countrymen in this vortex of wheels and human beings. For a few minutes he now sat at ease in a quieter street (though, my faith! no street in this city of London but would seem busy in most towns), apparently deliberating what topic to enter upon next. I say apparently deliberating, but on further acquaintance with my good "Halfred," as he called himself (the aspirated form of "Alfred" used by the cockney; Alfred being the name of England's famous monarch), I came to the conclusion that his mind never was known to go through any such process. What came first into his head flew straight to his tongue, till by constant use that organ had got into a state of unstable equilibrium, like the tongue of a toy mandarin, that oscillates for five minutes if you move him ever so gently.

In a word, Halfred was an inveterate chatterbox.

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respectable; a felt hat with a flat top, glazed to throw off the rain; a colored scarf around his neck, whether concealing a collar or not I could not say; and something round his knees that might once have been a rug or a horse-cloth, or even a piece of carpet.

"Yus," said Halfred, meditatively, as he cracked his whip and urged his 'bus at headlong speed through a space in the traffic, "it's some rum changes o' luck I've 'ad in my day. My father he give me a surprisin' good eddication for a hembyro 'bus-driver, meaning me to go into the stevedore business in Lime-'ouse basin, same as 'e was 'imself, but my 'ead got swelled a-talkin' to a most superior policeman what 'ad come down in the world, and nothing would satersfy me but mixin' in 'igh life. So our rector 'e gives me a introduction to a bloomin' aunt o' his in the country what wanted a boy in buttons, and into buttons I goes, and I says to myself, says I, 'Halfred, you're goin' to be a credit to your fam'ly, you

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trousers to fold, and a good fire in the servants' 'all, and hinderpendence be blowed!'"

I think it was at this moment that an inspiration came into my head. It was rash, you will doubtless say. It was certainly sudden, but then, as perhaps you have discovered ere now, I am not the most prudent of men. This little, cheerful Halfred had taken my fancy enormously, and my heart was warmed towards him.

"Halfred," I asked, abruptly, "are you still an honest young man?"

"I 'ope so, sir," said he, with becoming modesty and evident surprise.

"And now you are experienced?"

"Well, sir," he said, "you've 'ad threepence worth o' this 'ere 'bus, and you 'aven't seed me scrape off no paint yet."

"But, I mean, you are experienced in folding trousers, in packing shirts, in varnishing boots, in all the niceties of your old profession, are you not? You would do credit to a gentleman if he should engage you?"

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I am happy to say I have never had the opportunity of practising."

I shook my head.

"I am afraid," I said, "that you won't suit me, Mingle. It is my amusement to keep a private omnibus."

"Oh, private," said Mr. Mingle, as though that might make a difference.

But quickly I added:

"It is painted and upholstered just like the others. In fact, I buy them second-hand when beyond repair. Also I take poor people from the work-house for a drive. And you must drive it in all weathers."

That was the end of Mr. Mingle. In fact, I think he was glad to find himself safely out of my room again, and what he thought of my tastes, and even of my sanity, I think I can guess.

That evening my friend Halfred appeared, bringing a testimonial to his honesty and sobriety from the proprietor of the stables, and a brief line of eulogy from the official who collected the pence

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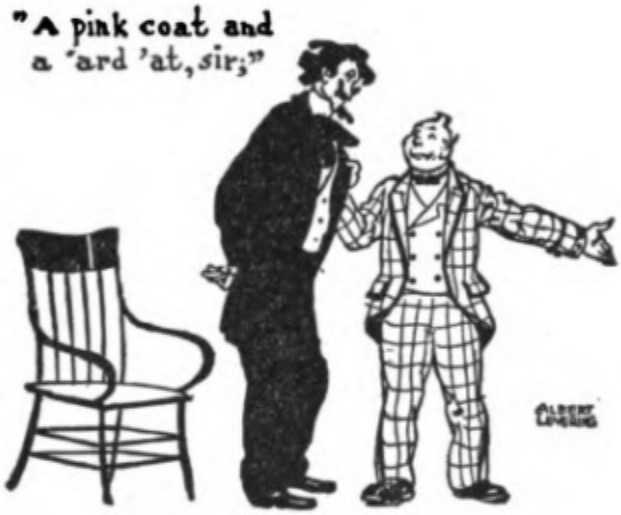
"Not exactly 'unted myself, sir," said he, "but I've seed the 'unt go by, and knowed a lot o' 'unting-men. Then, bein' connected with hosses so much myself I've naterally took a hinterest in the turf and the racin'-stable."

"You are a judge of horses?" I asked.

"Well, sir, I am generally considered to know



something about 'em. In fact, sir, Mr. Widdup—that's the gentleman what give me the testimonial—he's said to me more nor once, 'Halfred,' says he, 'what you don't know about these 'ere hanimals would go into a pill-box comfertable.'"

"Good," I said. "Find me two hunters that I can hire for a week."

The little man looked me up and down with a discriminating eye.

"Something that can carry a bit o' weight, sir,

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to see the theory of this reception. It is an Englishman's idea of making you—and himself—feel at home. You eat as much cake as you please, talk to anybody you please, remain silent as long as

you please, leave the company if you please and smoke a pipe, and you are not interfered with by any one while doing these things. To introduce you to somebody might bore you; you may not be a conversationalist, and may prefer to stand and stare like a surfeited ox. Well, if such are your tastes it would be interfering with the

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