

FORTUNE'S FOOL

(Continued from Page Two)

the alleys that lay behind the Old 'Change, idlers and sharpers from Paul's Walk, with a sprinkling of women, of town-gallants, and of soldiers. And there upon the steps of the portico, stood the magnet that had drawn them in the shape of that black crow of a Jack Presbyterian preaching the City's doom. And his text—recurring like the refrain of a song—was ever the same:

"Ye have defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities, by the iniquity of your traffic."

And yet, from between the Corinthian pillars which served him for his background, has been swept away the milliners' shops that had stood there during the Commonwealth.

Whether some thought of this in the minds of his audience rendered his words humorously inapt, or whether it was merely that a spirit of irresponsible ribaldry was infused into the crowd by a score of young apprentices, loud derision greeted the preacher's utterance. Unshaken by the laughter and mocking cries, the prophet of doom presented a fearless and angry front.

"Repent, ye scoffers!" His voice shrilled to dominate their mirthful turbulence. "Behold ye of whose ye stand! Yet forty days and London shall be destroyed! The pestilence lays siege unto this city of the ungodly! Like a raging lion doth it stalk round, seeking where it may leap upon you. Yet forty days, and . . ."

An egg flung by the hand of a butcher's boy smashed full in his face to crop his period short. He staggered and gasped as the glutinous mass of yolk and white crept sluggishly down his beard and dripped thence to spread upon the rusty black of his coat.

"Deriders! Scoffers!" he screamed, and with arms that thrashed the air in impotent rage, he looked like a wind-tossed scarecrow. "Your doom is at hand. Your . . ."

A roar of laughter provoked by the spectacle he presented drowned his frenzied voice, and a shower of offensive missiles pelted him from every quarter. The last of these was a living cat, which clawed itself against his breast spitting furiously in his terror.

Overwhelmed, the prophet turned, and fled between the pillars into the shelter of Paul's itself, pursued by laughter and insult. But scarcely had he disappeared than with uncanny suddenness that laughter sank from a roar to a splutter. To this succeeded a moment of deadly silence. Then the crowd broke, and parted, its members departing at speed in every direction with cries in which horror had taken now the place that was so lately held by mirth.

Colonel Holles, finding himself suddenly alone, and as yet very far from understanding what had taken place to scatter those men and women in such panic, advanced a step or two into the suddenly emptied space before the cathedral steps. There on the roughly cobbled ground he beheld a writhing man, a well-made, vigorous fellow in the very prime of life, whose dress was that of a tradesman of some prosperity. His round hat lay beside him where he had fallen, and he rolled his head from side to side spasmodically, moaning faintly the while. Of his eyes nothing was visible but the whites, showing under the line of his half-closed lids.

As Holles, perceiving here no more than a sick man, continued his advance, a voice from the re-

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Each 15-cent package of "Diamond Dyes" contains directions so simple any woman can dye or tint skirts, dresses, waists, sweaters, stockings, kimonoes, coats, draperies, coverings—everything new, even if she has never dyed before. Choose any color at drug store! Refuse substitutes!

treating crowd shouted a warning to him.

"Have a care, sir! Have a care! He may be stricken with the plague."

The Colonel checked, involuntarily arrested by the horror that the very word inspired. And then he beheld a stoutish, elderly man in a heavy wig, plainly but scrupulously dressed in black, whose round countenance gathered a singularly owlish expression from a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles, walk calmly forward to the stricken citizen.

A moment he stood beside him looking down; then he turned to beckon a couple of burly fellows who had the appearance and carried the staves of billmen. From his pocket the sturdy gentleman in black produced a kerchief upon which he sprinkled something from a phial. Holding the former to his nostrils with his left hand, he knelt down beside the sufferer, and quietly set himself to unfasten the man's doublet.

Observing him, the Colonel admired his quite courage, and thence took shame at his own fear for his utterly worthless life. Resolutely putting it from him, he went forward to join that little group.

One of the billmen was pointing out to the other a purple tuid patch at the base of the sufferer's throat. His eyes were round, his face grave, and his voice came husked and started.

"See! The tokens!" he said to his companion.

And now the doctor spoke, addressing Holles.

"You would do well not to approach more closely, sir."

"Is it . . . the plague?" quoth Holles in a quiet voice.

The doctor nodded, pointing to the purple patch. "The tokens are very plain to see," he said. "I beg, sir, that you will go." And on that he once more held the handkerchief to his mouth and nostrils, and turned his shoulder upon the Colonel.

Holles withdrew as he was bidden, moving slowly and thoughtfully, stricken by the first sight of the plague at work upon a fellow-creature. As he approached the edge of the crowd, which, keeping its distance, yet stood at gaze as crowds will, he observed that men shrank back from him as if he were himself already tainted.

A single thing beheld impresses us more deeply than twenty such things described to us by others. Hitherto these London citizens had treated lightly this matter of the plague. Not ten minutes ago they had been deriding and pelting one

who had preached repentance and warned them of the anger of Heaven launched upon them. And then suddenly, like a bolt from the blue, had come the stroke that laid one of them low, to freeze their derision and fill their hearts with terror by giving them a sight of this thing which hitherto they had but heard reported.

The Colonel stalked on, reflecting that this event in Paul's Yard had done more proselytizing for the cause of the Commonwealth than a score of advocates could have accomplished. It was very well, he thought. It was a sign. And if anything had been wanting to clinch his decision to throw in his lot with Tucker, this supplied it.

But first to quench the prodigious thirst engendered by his long walk through that sweltering heat, and then on to Cheapside and Tucker to offer his sword to the revolutionaries.

As he entered the common room, Mrs. Quinn turned from a group of citizens with whom she was standing to talk to follow him with her eyes, her lips compressed, as he passed on into his own little parlour, at the back. A moment later she went after him.

"What may be your pleasure, Colonel?" she demanded forbiddingly.

"A draught of ale if I deserve your charity," quoth he.

She went off in silence, and returned with a tankard, which she placed upon the table before him.

"You'll have made your plans to leave my house today as we settled it last night?" said she between question and assertion.

He nodded, pursing his lips a little. "I'll remove myself to the Bird in Hand across the Yard this afternoon," said he.

"The Bird in Hand!" A slight upward inflection of her voice marked her disdain of that hostelry, which, indeed, was but a poor sort of tavern.

There was something portentous in her utterance. She came forward to the table, and leaned heavily forward upon it. Her expression and attitude were calculated to leave him in no doubt that this woman, who had been so tender to him hitherto, was now his declared enemy. "My house," she said, "is a reputable house, and I mean to keep it so. I want no traitors here, no gallow's birds and the like."

"Ye're mad," he said with conviction.

"No, I'm not mad, nor a fool neither, master rebel. A man's to be known by the company he keeps. Birds of a feather flock together, as the saying goes. And how should you be other than a traitor that was friends with traitors?"

He crashed the tankard down upon the board, and came to his feet.

"Death, woman! Will you tell me what you mean?" he roared, his anger fanned by uneasiness. "What traitors have I been close with?"

"What traitors, do you say?" She sneered a little. "What of your friend Danvers, that's a being sought at this moment by the men from Bow Street?"

He was instantly relieved. "Danvers?" he echoed. "My friend Danvers? Why, I have no such friend. I never even heard his name before."

"Indeed!" She was terribly derisive now. "And maybe you've never heard the names of his lieutenants neither—of Tucker and of Rathbone, that was in here with you no later than yesterday as I can swear. Two traitors that was arrested this morning, along of a dozen others, for conspiring to bring back the Commonwealth. Oh, a secondarily plot—to murder the King, seize the Tower, and burn the City, no less."

It was like a blow between the eyes. "Arrested!" he gasped, his jaw fallen, his eyes started.

"Tucker and Rathbone arrested, do you say? Woman, you rave!"

"Do I?" She laughed again, evilly mocking. "Step out into Paul's Yard, and ask the first man you meet of the arrest made in Cheapside just afore noon, and of the hunt that is going on this minute for Danvers, their leader, and for other, who was mixed up in this wicked plot. And I don't want them to come a-hunting here. I don't want my house named for a meeting-place of traitors, as you've made it, taking advantage of me that haven't a man to protest me, and all the while deceiving me with your smooth pleasantness. If it wasn't for that, I'd inform the Justices myself at once. You may be thankful that I want to keep the good name of my house, if I can. And that's the only reason for my silence. But you'll go today or maybe I'll think better of it yet."

She picked up the empty tankard, and reached the door before he could find words in his numbed

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brain to answer her. On the threshold she paused.

"I'll bring you your score presently," she said. "When you've settled that, you may pack and quit."

She went out, slamming the door. The score! It was a small thing compared with that terrible menace of gaol and gallows. Let him be denounced for association with Tucker and Rathbone, and there would be no mercy for the son of Randal Holles the Regicide. His parentage and antecedents would supply the crowning evidence against him. And yet the score, whilst a comparatively negligible evil, was the more immediate, and therefore gave him at the moment the greater preoccupation.

He knew that it would be heavy, and he knew that the balance of his resources was utterly inadequate to meet it. Yet unless it were met he could be assured that Mrs. Quinn would show him no mercy; and this fresh trick of Fate's in bringing him into association with Whitehall, you mean. But you've not sold everything. There's that jewel a-flaunting in your ear that alone would pay me score twice over."

He started, and put a hand to the earring—that ruby given to him as a keepsake by the lovely, unknown royalist boy whose life he had saved on the night after Worcester fight some fifteen years ago. The old superstitions that his fancy had woven about it had placed it outside his realizable assets. Even now, in this desperate pass, when reminded of its value, the notion of selling it was repugnant to him yet perhaps it was against this very dreadful need, perhaps it was that he might save his neck—for she made it clear to him that nothing less was now at stake—that in all these years he had hugged that jewel against every blow of fortune.

His head drooped. "I thank you for the reminder. It shall be sold at once. Your score shall be paid today. I . . . I am sorry that, that . . . Oh, no matter."

He flung out upon the business of finding a Jew who practiced the transmutation of jewels into gold.

(Continued in Our Next Issue)



HE CRASHED THE TANKARD DOWN AND CAME TO HIS FEET.

Here he discovered that there is a world of difference between the treatment offered to a seller and to a buyer.

Ten pounds was all that he could raise on gear for which a few hours ago he had paid close upon thirty.

Back to the Paul's Head went Colonel Holles to find his hostess awaiting him with the score. And the sight of the latter turned him almost sick.

He marvelled at the prodigious amount of Canary and ale that he had consumed during those weeks. Irrelevantly he fell to considering that this very costly thirst of his was the result of a long sojourn in the Netherlands, where the habit of copious drinking is commonplace. Then he came back to the main consideration, which was that the total exceeded twenty pounds. It was a prodigious sum.

He raised eyes that, despite him, were haggard and betrayed from those terrifying figures, and met that baleful glance of the lady who, because she could not be his wife, was now his relentless enemy.

"Mrs. Quinn, I will be frank. My affairs have gone awry through no fault of my own. His Grace of Albemarle, upon whom I had every reason to depend, has failed me. At the moment I am a man . . . hard pressed. I am, almost without resources."

"That nowise troubled you whilst you ate and drank of the best my house could offer. Yours is a tale that has been told afore by many a pitiful rogue . . ."

"Mrs. Quinn?" he thundered. But she went on, undaunted, joying to deal a wound to the pride of this man who had lacerated her pride so terribly.

" . . . and there's a way to deal w't rogues. If you gives me trouble I'll ha' the constable to you, and maybe there'll be more than a matter of this score to settle then. So my advice to you is that you pay your bill without whimpering that won't move me no more than they'll move that wooden table."

"Mrs. Quinn," he answered as steadily as he could. "I have sold my gear that I might pay my debt to you. Yet even so this debt exceeds the amount of my resources."

"Sold your gear, have you?" She uttered a laugh that was like a cough. "Sold the fine clothes you'd bought to impose upon them at Whitehall, you mean. But you've not sold everything. There's that jewel a-flaunting in your ear that alone would pay me score twice over."

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Value

Every man stamps his value on himself. The price we challenge for ourselves is given us. There does not live on earth the man, be his station what it may, that I despise myself compared with him. Man is made great or little by his own will.

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Originally, Absorbine Jr. was sold only as a pain reliever and an embrocation. It was quickly discovered that the liniment was positive death to all forms of germ life, and it is now used as a mouth wash, for wound dressing and for all disinfecting purposes.

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"We have used Dr. Chase's Nerve Food for different members of the family, when recovering from 'flu' and scarlet fever, and it has always helped them."

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