

# McBride's

MAGAZINE

September  
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Love -  
Desert island -  
Two women - One  
man - Adventure  
- Romance -

*in*

Double Eve

*eye reader*  
a novelette by Henry P. Dowst

Menaces to American Peace

Astonishing Revelations of our National Situation

by Edward Lyell Fox

An unusual story by James Oppenheim





# MCBRIDE'S



M A G A Z I N E

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# PRO HONORIA

BY JAMES BRANCH CABELL

*"But that sense of negation, of theoretic insecurity, which was in the air, conspiring with what was of like tendency in himself, made of Lord Ufford a central type of disillusion . . . He had been amiable because the general bêtise of humanity did not in his opinion greatly matter, after all; and in reading these Satires it is well-nigh painful to witness the blind and naked forces of nature and circumstance surprising him in the uncontrollable movements of his own so carefully guarded heart."*

IN the early winter of 1761 the Earl of Bute, then Secretary of State, gave vent to an outburst of unaccustomed profanity. Mr. Robert Calverley, who represented England at the Court of St. Petersburg, had resigned his office without prelude or any word of explanation. This infuriated Bute, since his pet scheme was to make peace with Russia and thereby end the Continental War. Now all was to do again; the minister raged, shrugged, furnished a new emissary with credentials, and marked Calverley's name for punishment.

As much, indeed, was written to Calverley by Lord Ufford, the poet, diarist, musician and virtuoso:

Our Scottish Mortimer, it appears, is unwilling to have the map of Europe altered because Mr. Robert Calverley has taken a whim to go into Italy. He is angrier than I have ever known him to be. He swears that with a pen's flourish you have imperilled the well-being of England, and raves in the same breath of the preferment he had designed for you. Beware of him. For my own part, I shrug and acquiesce, because I am familiar with your pranks. I merely venture to counsel that you do not crown the Pelion of abuse, which our statesmen are heaping upon you, with the Ossa of physical as well as political suicide. Hasten on your Italian jaunt, for Umfraville, who is now with me at Carberry Hill, has publicly declared that if you dare reappear in England he will have your life. In consequence, I would most earnestly advise—

Mr. Calverley read no further, but

came straightway into England. He had not been in England since his elopement, three years before that spring, with the Marquis of Umfraville's betrothed, Lord Radnor's daughter, whom Calverley had married at Calais. Mr. Calverley and his wife were presently at Carberry Hill, Lord Ufford's home, where, arriving about moonrise, they found a ball in progress.

Their advent caused a momentary check to merriment. The fiddlers ceased, because Lord Ufford had signaled them. The fine guests paused in their stately dance. Lord Ufford, in a richly figured suit, came hastily to Lady Honoria Calverley, his high heels tapping audibly upon the floor, and with gallantry lifted her hand toward his lips. Her husband he embraced, and the two men kissed each other, as was the custom of the age. Chatter and laughter rose on every side as pert and merry as the noises of a brook in spring-time.

"I fear that as Lord Umfraville's host," young Calverley at once began, "you cannot with decorum convey to the ignoramus my opinion as to his ability to conjugate the verb 'to dare.'"

"Why, but no! You naturally demand a duel," the poet-earl returned. "It is very like you. I lament your decision, but I will attempt to arrange



the meeting for to-morrow morning."

Lord Ufford smiled and signaled the musicians. He finished the dance to admiration, as this lean, dandified young man did everything—"assiduous to win each fool's applause," as his own verses scornfully phrase it. Then Ufford went about his errand of death and conversed for a long time with Umfraville.

Afterward Lord Ufford beckoned to Calverley, who shrugged and returned Mr. Erwyn's snuff-box, which Calverley had been admiring. He followed the earl into a side room which opened upon the Venetian Chamber, wherein the fête was. Ufford closed the door. He had put away the exterior of mirth that hospitality demanded of him, and perturbation showed in the lean countenance which was by ordinary so proud and so amiably peevish.

"Robin, you have performed many mad actions in your life!" he said; "but this return into the three kingdoms out-Herods all! Did I not warn you against Umfraville?"

"Why, certainly you did," returned Mr. Calverley. "You informed me—which was your duty as a friend—of this curmudgeon's boast that he would have my life if I dared venture into England. You will readily conceive that any gentleman of self-respect cannot permit such comedies to be enacted without appending a gladiatorial epilogue. Well! what are the conditions of this duel?"

"Oh, fool that I have been!" cried Ufford, who was enabled now by virtue of their seclusion to manifest his emotion. "I, who have known you all your life—!"

He paced the room. Pleading music tinged the silence almost insensibly.

"Heh, Fate has an imperial taste in humor!" the poet said. "Robin, we have been more than brothers.

And it is I, I of all persons living, who have drawn you into this imbroglio!"

"That is not proven yet," said Calverley; "and threatened men live long."

My lord of Ufford went on: "There is no question of a duel. It is as well to spare you what Lord Umfraville replied to my challenge. Let it suffice that we do not get sugar from the snake. Besides, the man has his grievance. Robin, have you forgot that necklace you and Pevensy took from Umfraville some three years ago—before you went into Russia?"

Calverley laughed. The question recalled an old hot-headed time when, exalted to a frolicsome zone by the discovery of Lady Honoria Pomfret's love for him, he planned the famous jest which he and the mad Earl of Pevensy perpetrated upon Umfraville. This masquerade won quick applause. Persons of *ton* guffawed like ploughboys over the discomfiture of an old hunk thus divertingly stripped of his bride, all his betrothal gifts, and of the very clothes he wore. An anonymous scribbler had detected in the occurrence a dénouement suited to the stage and had constructed a comedy around it, which, when produced by the Duke's company, had won acclaim from hilarious auditors.

So Calverley laughed heartily. "Gad, what a jest that was! This Umfraville comes to marry Honoria. And highwaymen attack his coach! I would give fifty pounds to have witnessed this usurer's arrival at Denton Manor in his underclothes! and to have seen his monkey-like grimaces when he learned that Honoria and I were already across the Channel!"

"You robbed him, though—"

"Indeed, for amateurs we did not do so badly. We robbed him and



his valet of everything in the coach, including their breeches. You do not mean that Pevensey has detained the poor man's wedding trousers? If so, it is unfortunate, because this loud-mouthed miser has need of them in order that he may be handsomely interred."

"Lord Umfraville's wedding-suit was stuffed with straw, hung on a pole and paraded through London by Pevensey, March, Selwyn and some dozen other madcaps, while six musicians marched before them. The clothes were thus conveyed to Umfraville's house. I think none of us would have relished a joke like that were he the butt of it."

Now the poet's lean countenance was turned upon young Calverley, and as always, Ufford evoked that nobility in Calverley which follies veiled but had not ever killed.

"Egad," said Robert Calverley, "I grant you that all this was infamously done. I never authorized it. I shall kill Pevensey. Indeed, I will do more," he added, with a flourish. "For I will apologize to Umfraville, and this very night."

But Ufford was not disposed to levity. "Let us come to the point," he sadly said. "Pevensey returned everything except the necklace which Umfraville had intended to be his bridal gift. Pevensey conceded the jest, in fine; and denied all knowledge of any necklace."

It was an age of accommodating morality. Calverley sketched a whistle, and showed no other trace of astonishment.

"I see. The fool confided in the spendthrift. My dear, I understand. In nature Pevensey gave the gems to some nymph of Sadler's Wells or Covent Garden. For I was out of England. And so he capped his knavery with insolence. It is an additional reason why Pevensey should not live to scratch a gray head. It

is, however, an affront to me that Umfraville should have believed him. I doubt if I may overlook that, Horace?"

"I question if he did believe. But, then, what help had he? This Pevensey is an earl. His person as a peer of England is inviolable. No statute touches him directly, because he may not be confined except by the King's personal order. And it is tolerably notorious that Pevensey is in Lord Bute's pay, and that our Scottish Mortimer, to do him justice, does not permit his spies to be injured."

Now Mr. Calverley took snuff. The music without was now more audible, and it had shifted to a merrier tune.

"I think I comprehend. Pevensey and I—whatever were our motives—have committed a robbery. Pevensey, as the law runs, is safe. I, too, was safe as long as I kept out of England. As matters stand, Lord Umfraville intends to press a charge of theft against me. And I am in disgrace with Bute, who is quite content to beat offenders with a crooked stick. This confluence of two-penny accidents is annoying."

"It is worse than you know," my lord of Ufford returned. He opened the door which led to the Venetian Chamber. A surge of music, of laughter, and of many lights invaded the room wherein they stood. "D'ye see those persons, just past Umfraville, so inadequately disguised as gentlemen? They are from Bow Street. Lord Umfraville intends to apprehend you to-night."

"He has an eye for the picturesque," drawled Calverley. "My tragedy, to do him justice, could not be staged more strikingly. Those additional alcoves have improved the room beyond belief. I must apologize for not having rendered my compliments a trifle earlier."



Internally he outstormed Terma-gaunt. It was infamous enough to be arrested, in all conscience, but to have half the world of fashion as witnesses of one's discomfiture was perfectly intolerable. He recognized the excellent chance he had of being the most prominent figure upon some scaffold before long, but that contingency did not greatly trouble Calverley, as set against the certainty of being made ridiculous within the next five minutes.

In consequence, he frowned and rearranged the fall of his shirt-frill a whit the more becomingly.

"Yes, for hate sharpens every faculty," the earl went on, "Even Umfraville understands that you do not fear death. So he means to have you tried like any common thief while all your quondam friends sit by and snigger. And you will be convicted—"

"Why, necessarily, since I am not as Pevensey. Of course, I must confess I took the necklace."

"And Pevensey must stick to the tale that he knows nothing of any necklace. Dear Robin, this means Newgate. Accident deals very hardly with us. Robin, for this means Tyburn Hill."

"Yes; I suppose it means my death," young Calverley assented. "Well! I have feasted with the world and found its viands excellent. The banquet ended, I must not grumble with my host because I find his choice of cordials not altogether to my liking." Thus speaking, he was aware of nothing save that the fiddlers were now about an air to which he had often danced with his dear wife.

"I have a trick yet left to save our honor,—" Lord Ufford turned to a table where wine and glasses were set ready. "I propose a toast. Let us drink—for the last time—to the honor of the Calverleys."

"It is an invitation I may not decorously refuse. And yet—it may be that I do not understand you?"

My lord of Ufford poured wine into two glasses. These glasses were from among the curios he collected so industriously—tall, fragile things, of Seventeenth Century make, very intricately cut with roses and thistles, and in the bottom of each glass a three-penny piece was embedded. Lord Ufford took a tiny vial from his pocket and emptied its contents into the glass which stood the nearer to Mr. Calverley.

"This is Florence water. We dabblers in science are experimenting with it at Gresham College. A taste of it means death—a painless, quick and honorable death. You will have died of heart failure. Come, Robin, let us drink to the honor of the Calverleys."

The poet-earl paused for a little while. Now he was like some seer of supernal things.

"For look you," said Lord Ufford, "we come of honorable blood. We two are gentlemen. We have our code, and we may not infringe upon it. Our code does not invariably square with reason, and I doubt if Scripture would afford a dependable foundation. So be it! We have our code and we may not infringe upon it. There have been many Calverleys who did not fear their God, but there was never anyone of them who did not fear dishonor. I am the head of no less proud a house. As such, I counsel you to drink and die within the moment. It is not possible a Calverley survive dishonor. Oh, God!" the poet cried, and his voice broke; "and what is honor to this clamor within me! Robin, I love you better than I do this talk of honor! For, Robin, I have loved you long! so long that what we do to-night will always make life hideous to me!"



Calverley was not unmoved, but he replied in the tone of daily intercourse. "It is undoubtedly absurd to perish here, like some unreasonable adversary of the Borgias. Still, I can understand that it is preferable to having fat and greasy fellows squander a shilling for the privilege of perching upon a box while I am being hanged. And I think I shall accept your toast—"

"I will avenge you," Ufford said, simply.

"My dear, as if I ever questioned that! Of course, you will kill Pevensey first and Umfraville afterward. Only I want to live. For I was meant to play a joyous rôle whole-heartedly in the big comedy of life. So many people find the world a dreary residence," Mr. Calverley sighed, "that it is really a pity some one of these long-faced stolidities cannot die now instead of me. For I have found life wonderful throughout."

The brows of Ufford knit. "Would you consent to live as a transported felon? I have much money. I need not tell you the last penny is at your disposal. It might be possible to bribe. Indeed, Lord Bute is all powerful to-day and he would perhaps procure a pardon for you at my entreaty. He is so kind as to admire my scribblings. . . . Or you might live among your fellow-convicts somewhere over sea for a while longer. I had not thought that such would be your choice—" Here Ufford shrugged, restrained by courtesy. "Besides, Lord Bute is greatly angered with you, because you have endangered his Russian alliance. However, if you wish it, I will try—"

"Oh, for that matter, I do not much fear Lord Bute, because I bring him the most welcome news he has had in many a day. I may tell you, since it will be public to-morrow. The

Tzaritska Elizabeth, our implacable enemy, died very suddenly three weeks ago. Peter of Holstein-Gottrop reigns to-day in Russia, and I have made terms with him. I came to tell Lord Bute the Cossack troops have been recalled from Prussia. The war is at an end." Young Calverley meditated and gave his customary boyish smile. "Yes, I discharged my Russian mission after all—even after I had formally relinquished it—because I was so opportunely aided by the accident of the Tzaritska's death. And Bute cares only for results. So I would explain to him that I resigned my mission simply because in Russia my wife could not have lived out another year—"

The earl exclaimed, "Then Honoria is ill!" Mr. Calverley did not attend, but stood looking out into the Venetian Chamber.

"See, Horace, she is dancing with Anchester while I wait here so near to death. She dances well. But Honoria does everything adorably! I cannot tell you—oh, not even you!—how happy these three years have been with her. Eh, well! the gods are jealous of such happiness. You will remember how her mother died? It appears that Honoria is threatened with a slow consumption, and a death such as her mother's was. She does not know. There was no need to frighten her. For although the rigors of another Russian winter, as all physicians tell me, would inevitably prove fatal to her, there is no reason why my dearest dear should not continue to laugh—just as she always does—for a long, bright and happy while in some warm climate such as Italy's. In nature I resigned my appointment. I did not consider England, or my own trivial future, or anything of that sort. I considered only Honoria."



He gazed for many moments upon the woman whom he loved. His speech took on an old simplicity.

"Oh, yes, I think that Bute would endeavor to procure a pardon for me. But not even Bute can override the laws of England. I would have to be tried first, and have ballads made concerning me, and be condemned, and so on. That would detain Honoria in England, because she is sufficiently misguided to love me. I could never persuade her to leave me with my life in peril. She could not possibly survive an English winter." Here Calverley evinced unbridled mirth. "The irony of events is magnificent. There is probably no question of hanging or even of transportation. It is merely certain that if I venture from this room I bring about Honoria's death as incontestably as if I strangled her with these two hands. So I choose my own death in preference. It will grieve Honoria—" His voice was not completely steady. "But she is young. She will forget me, for she forgets easily, and she will be happy. I look to you to see—even before you have killed Pevensey—that Honoria goes into Italy. For she loves you, almost as much as I do, Horace, and she will readily be guided by you—"

He cried my lord of Ufford's given name some two or three times, for young Calverley had turned, and he had seen Ufford's face.

The earl moistened his lips. "You are a fool," he said, with a thin voice. "Why do you trouble me by being better than I? Or do you only posture for my benefit? Do you deal honestly with me, Robert Calverley?—then swear it—" He laughed here, very horribly. "Ah, no, when did you ever lie! You do not lie—not you!"

He waited for a while. "But I am otherwise. I dare to lie when

the occasion promises. I have desired Honoria since the first moment wherein I saw her. I may tell you now. I think that you do not remember. We gathered cherries. I ate two of them which had just lain upon her knee—"

His hands had clenched each other, and his lips were drawn back so that you saw his exquisite teeth, which were ground together. He stood thus for a little, silent.

Then Ufford began again: "I planned all this. I plotted this with Umfraville. I wrote you such a letter as would inevitably draw you to your death. I wished your death. For Honoria would then be freed of you. I would condole with her. She is readily comforted, impatient of sorrow, incapable of it, I dare say. She would have married me. . . . Why must I tell you this? Oh, I am Fate's buffoon! For I have won, I have won! and there is that in me which will not accept the stake I cheated for."

"And you," said Calverley—"this thing is you!"

"A helpless reptile now," said Ufford. "I have not the power to check Lord Umfraville in his vengeance. You must be publicly disgraced, and must, I think, be hanged even now when it will not benefit me at all. It may be I shall weep for that some day! Or else Honoria must die, because an archangel could not persuade her to desert you in your peril. For she loves you—loves you to the full extent of her merry and shallow nature. Oh, I know that, as you will never know it. I shall have killed Honoria! I shall not weep when Honoria dies. Harkee, Robin! they are dancing yonder. It is odd to think that I shall never dance again."

"Horace!" the younger man cried, like a frightened child. He seemed to choke. He gave a frantic



gesture. "Oh, I have loved you. I have loved nothing as I have loved you."

"And yet you chatter of your passion for Honoria!" Lord Ufford returned, with a snarl. "I ask what proof is there of this?—Why, that you have surrendered your well-being in this world through love of her. But I gave what is vital. I was an honorable gentleman without any act in all my life for which I had need to blush. I loved you as I loved no other being in the universe." He spread his hands, which now twitched horribly. "You will never understand. It does not matter I desired Honoria. To-day through my desire of her, I am that monstrous thing which you alone know me to be. I think I gave up much. *Pro honoria!*" he chuckled. "The Latin halts, but, none the less, the jest is excellent."

"You have given more than I would dare to give," said Calverley. He shuddered.

"And to no end!" cried Ufford. "Ah, fate, the devil and that code I mocked are all in league to cheat me!"

Said Calverley: "The man whom I loved most is dead. Oh, had the world been searched between the sunrise and the sunsetting there had not been found his equal. And now, poor fool, I know that there was never any man like this!"

"Nay, there was such a man," the poet said, "in an old time which I almost forget. To-day he is quite dead. There is only a poor wretch who has been faithless in all things, who has not even served the devil faithfully."

"Why, then, you lackey with a lackey's soul, attend to what I say. Can you make any terms with Umfraville?"

"I can do nothing," Ufford replied. "You have robbed him—as

me—of what he most desired. You have made him the laughing-stock of England. He does not pardon any more than I would pardon."

"And as God lives and reigns, I do not greatly blame him," said young Calverley. "This man at least was wronged. Concerning you I do not speak because of a false dream I had once very long ago. Yet Umfraville was treated infamously. I dare concede what I could not permit another man to say and live, now that I drink a toast which I must drink alone. For I drink to the honor of the Calverleys. I have not ever lied to any person in this world, and so I may not drink with you."

"Oh, but you drink because you know your death to be the one event which can insure her happiness," cried Ufford. "We are not much unlike. And I dare say it is only an imaginary Honoria we love, after all. Yet, look, my fellow-Ixion! for to the eye at least is she not perfect?"

The two men gazed for a long while. Amid that coterie of exquisites, wherein allusion to whatever might be ugly in the world was tacitly allowed to be unmentionable, Lady Honoria glitteringly went about the moment's mirthful business with lovely ardor. You saw now unmistakably that "Light Queen of Elfdom, dead Titania's heir" of whom Ufford writes in the fourth *Satire*. Honoria's prettiness, rouged, frail, and modishly enhanced, allured the eye from all less elfin brilliancies; and as she laughed among so many other relishers of life her charms became the more instant, just as a painting quickens in every tint when set in an appropriate frame.

"There is no other way," her husband said. He drank and toasted what was dearest in the world, smiling to think how familiar was the taste of death. "I drink to the most



lovely of created ladies! and to her happiness!"

He snapped the glass and tossed it joyously aside.

"Assuredly, there is no other way," said Ufford. "And armored by that knowledge, even I may drink as honorable people do. *Pro honoria!*" Then this man also flung away an emptied glass.

"How long have I to live?" said Calverley, and took snuff.

"Why, thirty years, I think, unless you duel too immoderately," replied Lord Ufford—"since while you looked at Honoria I changed our glasses. No! no! a thing done has an end. Besides, it is not unworthy of me. So go boldly to the Earl of Bute and tell him all. You are my cousin and my successor. Yes, very soon you, too, will be a peer of England and as safe from molestation as is Lord Pevensey. I am the first to tender my congratulations. Now I make certain that they are not premature."

The poet laughed at this moment as a man may laugh in hell. He reeled. His lean face momentarily writhed, and afterward the poet died.

"I am Lord Ufford," said Calverley aloud. "The person of a peer

is inviolable—" He presently looked downward from rapt gazing at his wife.

Fresh from this horrible half-hour, he faced a future so alluring as by its beauty to intimidate him. Youth, love, long years of happiness, and (by this capricious turn) now even opulence, were the ingredients of a captivating vista. And yet he needs must pause a while to think of the dear comrade he had lost—of that loved boy, his pattern in the time of their common youthfulness which gleamed in memory as bright and misty as a legend, and of the perfect chevalier who had been like a touchstone to Robert Calverley a bare half-hour ago. He knelt, touched lightly the fallen jaw, and lightly kissed the cheek of this poor wreckage; and was aware that the caress was given with more tenderness than Robert Calverley had shown in the same act a bare half-hour ago.

Meanwhile the music of a country dance urged the new Earl of Ufford to come and frolic where everyone was laughing; and to partake with gusto of the benefits which chance had provided; and to be forthwith as merry as was decorous in a peer of England.

*Perhaps it may be said of Lord Ufford (as of other men who have acted in an ill moment) that, dying well, he redeemed all. So, no blame to him; for it is not given to all men to make a light thing of such an hazard of the soul. There was another man, whose merriment has lived long in printed books, in whom wit and spirit were so excellently blended, that no such moment dare threaten him. Of him we shall shortly read in "The Irresistible Ogle."*

