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DRAWN BY EDWARD PENFIELD

Some Fishing Pretenses and Affectations

By Former President Grover Cleveland

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THE EAGLE'S SHADOW

By James Branch Cabell



CROUCHED IN THE
CORNER OF THE ROOM,
HER FACE BURIED
IN AN ARMCHAIR

XXV

AT THE height of this particularly mischancy posture of affairs the meddling Fates had elected to dispatch Cock-eye Flinks to serve as our *deus ex machina*. And just as in the comedy the police turn up in the nick of time to fetch Tartuffe to prison, or in the tragedy Friar John manages to be detained on his journey to Mantua and thus bring about that lamentable business in the tomb of the Capulets, so Mr. Flinks now happens inopportunely to arrive upon our lesser stage.

Faithfully to narrate how Cock-eye Flinks chanced to be at Selwoode were a task of magnitude. That gentleman traveled very quietly; and, for the most part, he journeyed incognito under a variety of aliases suggested partly by a fertile imagination and in part by prudential motives, for his notions of proprietary rights were deplorably vague, and his acquaintance with the police, in consequence, extensive. And, finally, that he was now at Selwoode was not in the least his fault, but all the doing of an N. & O. brakesman who had, in uncultured argument, reinforced by a coupling-pin, persuaded Mr. Flinks to disembark from the Northern freight on the night previous.

Mr. Flinks, then, sat leaning against a tree in the gardens of Selwoode, some thirty feet from the wall that stands between Selwoode and Gridlington, and nursed his pride and foot, both injured in that high debate of last evening, and with a jack-knife rounded off the top of a substantial staff designed to alleviate his present lameness. Meanwhile, he tempered his solitude with music, whistling melodiously the air of a song that pertained to the sacredness of home and of a white-haired mother.

Subsequently to Cock-eye Flinks (as the playbill has it) enter a vision in violet ruffles.

Wide-eyed, she came upon him in her misery, steadily trudging toward an unknown goal. I think he startled her a bit. Indeed, it must be admitted that Mr. Flinks, though a man of undoubted talent in his particular line of business, was, like many of your great geniuses, in outward aspect unprepossessing and misleading; for whereas he looked like a very shiftless and very dirty tramp, he was, as a matter of fact, as vile a rascal as ever pawned a swinish soul for whisky.

"What are you doing here?" said Margaret sharply. "Don't you know this is private property?"

To his feet rose Cock-eye Flinks. "Lady," said he with humbleness, "you wouldn't be hard on a poor workingman, would you? It ain't my fault I'm here, lady—at least, it ain't rightly my fault. I just climbed over the wall to rest a minute—just a minute, lady, in the shade of these beautiful trees. I ain't a-hurting nobody by that, lady, I hope."

"Well, you had no business to do it," Miss Hugonin pointed out, "and you can just climb right back." Then she regarded him more intently, and her face softened somewhat. "What's the matter with your foot?" she demanded.

"Brakesman," said Mr. Flinks briefly. "Threw me off a train. He struck me cruel hard, he did, and me a poor workingman trying to make my way to New York, lady, where my poor old mother's dying, lady, and me out of a job.

Ah, it's a hard, hard world, lady—and me her only son—and he struck me cruel, cruel hard, he did, but I forgive him for it, lady. Ah, lady, you're so beautiful I know you've got a kind, good heart, lady. Can't you do something for a poor workingman, lady, with a poor, dying mother—and a poor, sick wife?" Mr. Flinks added as a dolorous afterthought, and drew nearer to her and held out one hand appealingly.

Mr. Petheridge Jukesbury had at divers times pointed out to her the evils of promiscuous charity, and these dicta Margaret parroted glibly enough, to do her justice, so long as there was no immediate question of dispensing alms. But for all that the next whining beggar would move her tender heart, his glib inventions playing upon it like a fiddle, and she would give as recklessly as though there were no such things in the whole wide world as soup-kitchens and organized charities and common-sense. "Because, you know," she would afterward salve her conscience, "I couldn't be sure he didn't need it, whereas I was quite sure I didn't."

Now she wavered for a moment. "You didn't say you had a wife before," she suggested.

"An invalid," sighed Mr. Flinks—"a helpless invalid, lady. And six small children probably crying for bread at this very moment. Ah, lady, think what my feelings must be to hear 'em cry in vain—think what I must suffer to know that I summoned them cherubs out of Heaven into this here hard, hard world, lady, and now can't do by 'em properly!" And Cock-eye Flinks brushed away a tear which I, for one, am inclined to regard as a particularly ambitious flight of his imagination.

Promptly Margaret opened the bag at her waist and took out her purse. "Don't!" she pleaded. "Please don't! I—I'm upset already. Take this, and please—oh, please, don't spend it in getting drunk or gambling or anything horrid," Miss Hugonin implored him. "You all do, and it's so selfish of you and so discouraging."

Mr. Flinks eyed the purse hungrily. Such a fat purse! thought Cock-eye Flinks; and there ain't nobody within a mile of here, neither. You are not to imagine that Mr. Flinks was totally abandoned; his vices were parochial, restrained for the most part by a lively apprehension of the law. But now the spell of the Eagle was strong upon him.

"Lady," said Mr. Flinks, twisting in his grimy hand the bill she had given him—and there, too, the Eagle flaunted in his vigor and heartened him—"Lady, that ain't much for you to give. Can't you do a little better than that by a poor workingman, lady?"

A very unpleasant-looking person, Mr. Cock-eye Flinks—oh, a peculiarly unpleasant-looking person—to be a model son and a loving husband and a tender father! Margaret was filled with a vague alarm.

But she was brave, was Margaret. "No," said she very decidedly, "I sha'n't give you another cent. So you climb right over that wall, and go straight back where you belong."

The methods of Mr. Flinks, I regret to say, were somewhat more crude than those of Mesdames Haggage and Saumarez and Messieurs Kennaston and Jukesbury.

"Cheese it!" said Mr. Flinks, and flung away his staff and drew very near to her. "Gimme that money, do you hear!"

"Don't you dare touch me!" she panted. "Ah, don't you dare!"

"Aw, h—!" said Mr. Flinks disgustedly, and his dirty hands were upon her, and his foul breath reeked in her face.

In her hour of need Margaret's heart spoke.

"Billy!" she wailed; "oh, Billy, Billy!"

He came to her—just as he would have scaled Heaven to come to her, just as he would have come to her in the nethermost pit of hell if she had called. Ah, yes, Billy Woods came to her now in her peril, and I don't think that Mr. Flinks particularly relished the look upon Billy's face as he ran through the gardens, for Billy was furiously moved.

Cock-eye Flinks glanced back at the wall behind him. Ten feet high, and the fellow ain't far off. Cock-eye Flinks caught up his staff, and, as Billy closed upon him, struck him full on the head. Again and again he struck him. It was a sickening business.

Billy had stopped short. For an instant he stood swaying on his feet, a puzzled face showing under the trickling blood. Then he flung out his hands a little, and they flapped loosely at the wrists, like wet clothes hung in the wind to dry, and

Billy seemed to crumple up suddenly, and slid down upon the grass in an untidy heap.

"Ah-h-h!" said Mr.

Flinks. He drew back and stared stupidly at that sprawling flesh which just now had been a man, and was seized with uncontrollable shuddering. "Ah-h-h!" said Mr. Flinks very quietly.

And Margaret went mad. The earth and the sky dissolved in many floating specks and then went red—red like that heap yonder. The veneer of civilization peeled, fell from her like snow from a shaken garment. The primal beast woke and flicked aside the centuries' work. She was the Cave-woman who had seen the death of her mate—the brute who had been robbed of her mate.

"Damn you!" she screamed, her voice high, flat, quite unhuman; she fell upon the man who had killed Billy, and her violet fripperies fluttered, her impotent little hands beat at him, tore at him. She was fearless, shameless, insane. She only knew that Billy was dead.

With an oath the man flung her from him and turned on his heel. She fell to coaxing the heap in the grass to tell her that he forgave her—to open his eyes—to stop bloodying her dress—to come to luncheon.

A fly settled on Billy's face and came in his zigzag course to the red stream trickling from his nostrils, and stopped short. She brushed the carrion thing away, but it crawled back drunkenly. She touched it with her finger, and the fly would not move. On a sudden every nerve in her body began to shake and jerk like a flag snapping in the wind.

XXVI

SOME ten minutes afterward, as the members of the house-party sat chatting on the terrace before Selwoode, there came among them a mad woman in violet trappings that were splotted with blood.

"Did you know that Billy was dead?" she queried smilingly. "Oh, yes, a man killed Billy just now. Wasn't it too bad? Billy was such a nice boy, you know. I—I think it's very sad. I think it's the saddest thing I ever knew of."

Kathleen Saumarez was the first to reach her. But she drew back quickly.

"No, ah, no!" she said, with a little shudder. "You didn't love Billy. He loved you, and you didn't love him. Oh, Kathleen, Kathleen, how could you help loving Billy? He was such a nice boy. I—I'm rather sorry he's dead."



THEN CAME MARTIN JEAL—A WISP OF A MAN

Then she stood silent, picking at her dress thoughtfully, and still smiling. Afterward, for the first and only time in history, Miss Hugonin fainted—fainted with an anxious smile.

Petheridge Jukesbury caught her as she fell, and began to blubber like a whipped schoolboy as he stood there holding her in his arms.

XXVII

BUT Billy was not dead. There was still a feeble, jerky fluttering in his big chest when Colonel Hugonin found him. His heart still moved, but under the Colonel's hand its stirrings were as vague and aimless as those of a captive butterfly.

The Colonel had seen dead men and dying men before this; and as he bent over the boy he loved he gave a convulsive sob, and afterward buried his face in his hands.

Then—of all unlikely persons in the world—it was Petheridge Jukesbury who rose to meet the occasion.

His suavity and blandness forgotten in the presence of death, he mounted with confident alacrity to the heights of greatness. Masterfully he overrode them all. He poured brandy between Billy's teeth. Then he ordered the ladies off to bed, and recommended to Mr. Kennaston—when he spoke of going for a clergyman—a far more startling destination.

For, "It is far from my intention," said Mr. Jukesbury, "to appear lacking in respect to the cloth, but—er—just at present I am inclined to think we are in somewhat greater need of a mattress and a doctor and—ah—the exercise of a little common-sense. The gentleman is—er—let us hope, in no immediate danger. How dare you suggest such a thing, sir?" thundered Petheridge Jukesbury. "Didn't you see that poor girl's face? I tell you I'll be—— if he dies, sir!"

And I fancy the recording angel heard him, and against a list of wordy cheats registered that oath to his credit.

It was Petheridge Jukesbury, then, who stalked into Mrs. Haggage's apartments and appropriated her mattress as the first at hand, and afterward waddled through the gardens bearing it on his fat shoulders, and still later lifted Billy upon it as gently as a woman could have. But it was the hatless Colonel on his favorite Black Bess—"Motor-cars!" the Colonel was wont to say; "I consider my appearance sufficiently unprepossessing already, sir, without my arriving in Heaven in fragments and stinking of gasoline!"—who in Fairhaven town some quarter of an hour afterward leaped Doctor Jeal's garden fence, and subsequently bundled the doctor into his gig; and again, yet later, it was the Colonel who stood fuming upon the terrace with Doctor Jeal on his way to Selwoode indeed, but still some four miles from the mansion toward which he was urging his staid horse at its liveliest gait.

Kennaston tried to soothe him. But the Colonel clamored to the heavens. Kennaston he qualified in various ways. And as for Doctor Jeal, he would hold him responsible—"personally, sir"—for the consequences of his dawdling in this fashion—"Dash it, sir, like a blanked snail with a wooden leg!"

"I am afraid," said Kennaston gravely, "that the doctor will be of very little use when he does arrive."

There was that in his face which made the Colonel pause in his objurgations.

"Sir," said the Colonel, "what—do you—mean?" He found articulation somewhat difficult.

"In your absence," Kennaston answered, "Mr. Jukesbury, who, it appears, knows something of medicine, has subjected Mr. Woods to an examination. It—it would be unkind to deceive you——"

"Come to the point, sir," the Colonel interrupted him. "What—do you—mean?"

"I mean," said Felix Kennaston sadly, "that—he is afraid—Mr. Woods will never recover consciousness."

Colonel Hugonin stared at him. The skin of his flabby, wrinkled old throat was working convulsively.

Then, "You're wrong, sir," the Colonel said. "Billy *shan't* die. Not for all Jukesbury says! Nor for all any doctor says, either, sir! I put my trust in my God, sir, and not in a box of sugar-pills, sir. And I tell you, sir, *that boy is not going to die!*"

Afterward he turned and went into Selwoode defiantly.

XXVIII

IN THE living-hall the Colonel found Margaret, white as paper, with purple lips that timidly smiled at him.

"Why ain't you in bed?" the old gentleman demanded, with as great an affectation of sternness as he could muster.

To say the truth, it was not much; for Colonel Hugonin, for all his blustering optimism, was sadly shaken now.

"Attractive," said Margaret, "I was, but I couldn't stay there. My—my brain won't stop working, you see," she complained wearily. "There's a thin little whisper in the back of it that keeps telling me about Billy, and what a liar he is, and what nice eyes he has, and how poor Billy is dead. It keeps telling me that, over and over again, attractive. It's such a tiresome, silly little whisper. But he is dead, isn't he? Didn't Mr. Kennaston tell me just now that he was dead?—or was it the whisper, attractive?"

The Colonel coughed. "Kennaston—er—Kennaston's a fool," he declared helplessly. "Always said he was a fool. We'll have Jeal in presently."



BEHIND HIS FAT BACK PETHERIDGE JUKESBURY WAVED A CAUTIONING HAND AT MARGARET, WHO HAD RISEN FROM HER CHAIR

"No—I remember now—Mr. Kennaston said Billy would die very soon. You don't like people to disagree with you, do you, attractive? Of course, he will die, for the man hit him very, very hard. I'm sorry Billy is going to die, though, even if he is such a liar."

"Don't!" said the Colonel hoarsely; "don't, daughter! I don't know what there is between you and Billy, but you're wrong. Oh, you're very hopelessly wrong! Billy's the finest boy I know."

Margaret shook her head in dissent.

"No, he's a very contemptible liar," she said disinterestedly, "and that is what makes it so queer that I should care for him more than I do for anything else in the world. Yes, it's very queer."

Then Margaret went into the room opening into the living-hall, where Billy Woods lay unconscious, pallid, breathing stertorously. And the Colonel stared after her.

"Why couldn't it have been I?" groaned the poor Colonel. "Why couldn't it have been I that ain't wanted any longer? She'd never have grieved like that for me!"

And, indeed, I don't think she would have. For to Margaret there had come, as, God willing, there comes to every clean-souled woman, the time to put away all childish things, and all childish memories, and all childish ties, if

need be, to follow one man only and cleave to him and know his life and hers to be knit up together, past severance, in a love that death itself may not affright nor slay.

XXIX

SHE sat silent in one corner of the darkened room. It was the bedroom that Frederick R. Woods formerly occupied—on the ground floor of Selwoode, opening into the living-hall—to which they had carried Billy.

Jukesbury had done what he could. In the bed lay Billy Woods swathed in hot blankets, with bottles of hot water set to his feet. Jukesbury had washed his face clean of that awful red and had wrapped bandages of cracked ice about his head and propped it high with pillows. It was little short of marvelous to see the puffy old hypocrite going cat-footed about the room on his stealthy ministrations, replenishing the bandages, forcing spirits of ammonia between Billy's teeth, fighting deftly and confidently with death.

Billy still breathed.

The Colonel came and went uneasily. The clock on the mantel ticked, Margaret brooded in a silence that was only accentuated by that horrible wheezing, gurgling, tremulous breathing in the bed yonder. Would the doctor never come!

She was curiously conscious of her absolute lack of emotion.

But always the interminable thin whispering in the back of her head went on and on. "Oh, if he had only died four years ago! Oh, if he had only died the dear, clean-minded, honest boy I used to know! When that noise stops he will be dead. And then, perhaps, I shall be able to cry. Oh, if he had only died four years ago!"

And then *da capo*. On and on ran the interminable thin whispering as Margaret waited for death to come to Billy. Billy looked so old now under his many bandages. Surely, he must be very, very near death.

Suddenly, as Jukesbury wrapped new bandages about his forehead, Billy opened his eyes, and, without further movement, smiled placidly up at him.

"Hello, Jukesbury," said Billy Woods, "where's my armor?"

Jukesbury, too, smiled. "The man is bringing it downstairs now," he answered quietly.

"Because," Billy went on fretfully, "I don't propose to miss the Trojan War. The princes orgulous, their high blood chafed, you know, are all going to be there, and I don't propose to miss it."

Behind his fat back Petheridge Jukesbury waved a cautioning hand at Margaret, who had risen from her chair.

"But it is very absurd," Billy murmured in the mere ghost of a voice, "because men don't propose by mistake except in farces. Somebody told me that, but I can't remember who, because I am a misogynist. That is a Greek word, and I would explain it to Peggy if she would only give me a chance, but she can't because she has those seventeen hundred and fifty thousand children to look after. There must be some way to explain it to her, though, because where there's a will there is always a way, and there were three wills. Uncle Fred should not have left so many wills—who would have thought the old man had so much ink in him? But I will be a very great painter, Uncle Fred, and make her sorry for the way she has treated me, and then Kathleen will understand I was talking about Peggy."

His voice died away, and Margaret sat with wide eyes listening for it again. Would the doctor never come!

Billy was smiling and picking at the sheets.

"But Peggy is so rich," the faint voice presently complained—"so beastly rich! There is gold in her hair, and if you will look very closely you will see that her lashes were pure gold until she dipped them in the inkpot. Besides, she expects me to sit up and beg for lumps of sugar, and I *never* take sugar in my coffee. And Peggy doesn't drink coffee at all, so I think it is very unfair, especially as Teddy Anstruther drinks like a fish, and she is going to marry him. Peggy, why won't you marry me? You know I've always loved you, Peggy, and now I can tell you so because Uncle Fred has left me all his money. You think a great deal about money, Peggy. You said it was the greatest thing in the world. And it must be, because it is the only thing—the *only* thing, Peggy—that has been strong enough to keep us apart. A part is never greater than the whole, Peggy, but I will explain about that when you open that desk. There are sharks in it. Aren't there, Peggy? *aren't* there?"

His voice had risen to a querulous tone. Gently, the old man restrained him.

(Continued on Page 24)



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THE EAGLE'S SHADOW

(Continued from Page 11)

"Yes," said Petheridge Jukesbury; "dear me, yes. Why, dear me, of course."

But his warning hand held Margaret back—Margaret, who stood with big tears trickling down her cheeks.

"Dearer than life itself," Billy assented wearily, "but before God, loving you as I do, I wouldn't marry you now for all the wealth in the world. I forget why, but all the world is a stage, you know, and they don't use stages now, but only railroads. Is that why you rail at me so, Peggy. That is a joke. You ought to laugh at my jokes, because I love you, but I can't ever, ever tell you so because you are rich. A rich man cannot pass through a needle's eye. Oh, Peggy, Peggy, I love your eyes, but they're so big, Peggy!"

So Billy Woods lay still, and babbled ceaselessly. But through all his irrelevant talk, as you may see a tributary stream pulse unsullied in a muddled river, ran the thought of Peggy—of Peggy, and of her cruelty, and of her beauty, and of the money that stood between them.

And Margaret, who could never have believed him in his senses, listened, and knew that in his delirium, the rudder of his thoughts snapped, he could not but speak truth. As she crouched in the corner of the room, her face buried in an armchair, her gold hair half-loosened, her shoulders monotonously heaving, she wept gently, inaudibly, almost happily.

Almost happily. Billy was dying, but she knew now, past any doubting, that he loved her.

The dear, clean-minded, honest boy had come back to her, and she could love him now without shame, and there was only herself to be loathed.

Then the door opened. Then, with Colonel Hugonin, came Martin Jeal—a wisp of a man like a November leaf—and regarded them from under his shaggy white hair with alert eyes.

"Hey, what's this?" said Doctor Jeal. "Eh, yes! Eh—yes!" he meditated slowly. "Most irregular. You must let us have the room, Miss Hugonin."

In the hall she waited. Hope! ah, of course there was no hope! the thin little whisper told her.

By and by, though—after centuries of waiting—the three men came into the hall.

"Miss Hugonin," said Doctor Jeal, with a strange kindness in his voice, "I don't think we shall need you again. I am happy to tell you, though, that the patient is doing nicely—very nicely, indeed."

Margaret clutched his arm. "You—you mean—?"

"I mean," said Doctor Jeal, "that there is no fracture. A slight concussion of the brain, madam, and—so far as I can see—no signs of inflammation. Barring accidents, I think we'll have that young man out of bed in a week. Thanks," he added, "to Mr.—er—Jukesbury here, whose prompt action was, under Heaven, undoubtedly the means of staving off meningitis and probably—indeed, more than probably—the means of saving Mr. Woods' life. It was splendid, sir, splendid! No doctor—why, God bless my soul!"

For Miss Hugonin had thrown her arms about Petheridge Jukesbury's neck and had kissed him vigorously.

"Oh, you beautiful child!" said Miss Hugonin.

"Er—Jukesbury," said the Colonel mysteriously, "there's a little cognac in the cellar that—er—" The Colonel jerked his thumb across the hallway with the air of a conspirator. "Eh?" said the Colonel.

"Why—er—yes," said Mr. Jukesbury. "Why—ah—yes, I think I might."

They went across the hall together. The Colonel's hand rested fraternally on Petheridge Jukesbury's shoulder.

(TO BE CONCLUDED)




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