



# THE ELUGE

By DAVID GRAHAM PHILLIPS, Author of 'THE COXSWAIN' Copyright 1925 by the ROSS-STEINDEL COMPANY

XV.  
**TRAPPED AND TRIMMED.**  
 There are two kinds of dangerous temptations—those that tempt us and those that don't. Those that don't give us a false notion of our resisting power, and so make us easy victims of the others. I thought I knew myself pretty thoroughly, and I believed there was nothing that could tempt me to neglect my business. With this delusion of my strength firmly in mind, when Anita became a temptation to neglect business, I said to myself: "To go up town during business hours for long lunches, to spend the mornings selecting flowers and presents for her—these things look like neglect of business, and would be so in some men. But I wouldn't neglect my business, I do these because my affairs are so well ordered that a few hours of absence now and then make no difference—probably send me back fresher and clearer."

When I left the office at half-past twelve on that fatal Wednesday in June, my business was never in better shape. Textile common had dropped a point and a quarter in two days—evidently it was just on its way slowly down toward where I could free myself and take profits. As for the coal enterprise nothing could possibly happen to disturb it; it was ready for the July announcement and boom. Never did I have a lighter heart than when I joined Anita and her friends at Sherry's. It seemed to me her friendliness was less perfidious, less a matter of appearance, conscious, my health perfect. It took all the strength of all the straps Monson had put on my natural spirits to keep me from being exuberant.

I had finally intended to be back at my office half an hour before the exchange closed—this in addition to the obvious precaution of leaving orders that they were to telephone me if anything should occur about which they had the least doubt. But so comfortable did my vanity make me that I forgot to look at my watch until a quarter to three. I had a momentary qualm; then, reassured, I asked Anita to take a walk with me. Before we set out I telephoned my right-hand man and partner, Bill. As I had thought, everything with textile slough and down a quarter. Anita and I took a car to the park.

We walked for an hour, talking with less constraint and more freedom than ever before, and when I left her for the first time, felt that I had left a good impression.

When I entered my office, I, from force of habit, mechanically went direct to the ticker—and dropped all at once from the pinnacle of heaven into a boiling inferno. For the ticker was just spilling out these words: "Mowbray Langdon, president of the Textile association, called unexpectedly on the Kaiser Wilhelm at noon. A 2 per cent raise of the dividend rate of textile common, from the present 4 per cent to 6 has been determined upon."

And I had staked up to, perhaps beyond my limit of safety that textile would fall!

Hall was watching narrowly for some sign that the news at once had been felt. But it cost me no effort to keep my face expressionless; I was like a man who has been killed by lightning and lies dead with the look on his face that had had just before the bolt struck him.

"Why didn't you tell me this," said I to Hall, "when I had you on the phone?" My tone was quiet enough, but the very question ought to have shown him that my brain was like a schooner in a cyclone.

"We heard it just after you were rang off," was his reply. "We've been trying to get you ever since. We've gone everywhere after textile stock. Very few will sell, or even lend, and we ask—the best price was ten points above to-day's closing. A strong tip about that 'textiles are to be rocketed.'"

Ten points up already—no more to be had! Already ten dollars to pay on every share I was "short"—and I short more than two hundred thousand! I felt the claws of the fiend Ruin sink into the flesh of my shoulders. "Hall doesn't know how I'm fixed," I remember I thought, "and he mustn't know."

I lit a cigar with a steady hand and waited for Joe's next words.

"I went to see Jenkin's at once," he went on. Jenkin's was then first vice-president of the textile trust. "He's all cut up because the news got out—says Langdon and he were the only ones who knew, so he supposed—the announcement was meant to have been made for a month—not till Langdon returned. He has had to unfill it, though. That was the only way to free his crowd from suspicion of intending to rig the market."

"All right," said I.

"Have you seen the afternoon paper?" he asked. As he held it out to me, my eye caught big textile headlines, then flashed to some other something about my going to marry Miss Ellery.

"All right," said I, and with the paper in my hand, went to my outside office. I kept on toward my inner office, saying over my shoulder—to the stenographer—"Don't let anybody in, locked up." Behind the closed and locked door my face ventured to come to life again and my face to reflect as much as it could of the chaos that was heaving in me like ten thousand warring evils.

Three months before, in the same situation, my gambler's instinct would probably have helped me out. For I had not been gambling in the great American Monte Carlo all those years without getting used to the downs as well as to the ups. I had not—and have not—anything of the business man in my composition. To me, it was wholly finance, wholly a game, with excitement the chief factor and the sure winning, whether the little ball rolled my way or not. I was the banker, the gambler, and the adventurer; and that had been my principal asset. For, the man who wins in the long run at any of the great games of life—and they are all alike—is the man with the cool head; and the only man whose head is cool is he who plays for the game's sake, not caring

XVI.  
**A GENTLE "HOLD-UP."**  
 In my childhood at home, my father was often away for a week or longer, working or looking for work. My mother had a notion that a boy should be punished only by his father; so, whenever she caught me in what she regarded as a serious transgression, she used to say: "You will get a good whipping for this, when your father comes home." At first I used to wait passively, suffering the torments of ten thrashings before the "good whipping" came to pass. But soon my

fung myself down again, and dumbly and helplessly inspected the ruins of my projects—or, rather, the ruin of the one project upon which I had my heart set. I had known I cared for her, but it had seemed to me that I simply one more, the latest, of the objects on which I was in the habit of fixing my will from time to time to make the game more deeply interesting. I now saw that never before had I really been in earnest about anything, that on winning her I had staked myself, and that myself was a wholly different person from what I had been imagining. In a word, I sat face to face with that unfathomable mystery of serenity that every man laughs at and mocks another man for believing in, until he has himself felt it drawing him against will, against reason, and sense, and interest, over the brink of destruction yawning before his eyes—drawing him as the magnet-mountain drew Sindbad and his ship.

But—it is not in me to despair. There never yet was an impenetrable sledge line; to escape, it is only necessary by craft or by chance to hit upon the moment and the spot for the sortie. "Halted!" I said aloud. "Trapped and trimmed like the sturdiest sucker that ever wandered into Wall street! A dead one, no doubt; but I'll see it that they don't enjoy my funeral."

XVII.  
**A GENTLE "HOLD-UP."**  
 In my childhood at home, my father was often away for a week or longer, working or looking for work. My mother had a notion that a boy should be punished only by his father; so, whenever she caught me in what she regarded as a serious transgression, she used to say: "You will get a good whipping for this, when your father comes home." At first I used to wait passively, suffering the torments of ten thrashings before the "good whipping" came to pass. But soon my

greatly whether he wins or loses on any one play, because he feels that if he wins to-day, he will lose to-morrow. But now a new factor had come into the game. I spread out the paper and stared at the headlines: "Black Matt To Wed Society Belle—The Bucket-Shop King Will Lead Anita Ellery To The Altar." I tried to read the vulgar article under whose vulgar lines, but I could not. I was sick, sick in body and in mind. My "nerve" was gone, I was no longer the free lance; I had responsibilities.

That thought dragged another in its train, a petty, grating, imp that leered at the end and sneered: "But she won't have you now!"

"She will! She must!" I cried aloud, staring up. And then the storm burst—I raged up and down the place, shedding my clenched fists, gnashing my teeth, muttering all kinds of furious commands and threats—a truly ridiculous exhibition of impotent rage. For through it all I saw clearly enough that she wouldn't have me, that all these people I'd been trying to climb up among would kick loose my clinging hands and laugh as they watched me disappear. They who were none too gentle and slow in disengaging themselves from those of their own lifelong associates who had reversed of fortune—what consideration could "Black Matt" expect from them? And also—the necessity and the ability to deceive myself had gone, now that I could not pay the purchase price for her. The full consciousness of my bargain for her dropped its veil and stood naked before me.

At last, disgusted and exhausted, I

"I've come to suggest, Mr. Roebuck," said I, "that you let my house—Blacklock and company—announce the coal reorganization plan. It would give me a great lift, and Melville and his bank wouldn't need prestige. My daily letters to the public investment men have, as you know, got me a big following that would help me make the flotation an even bigger success than it's bound to be, no matter who announces it and invites subscription."

As I thus proposed that I be in a jiffy caught up from an extremely humble level of so-called pocket-shop dealer into the higher heaven of high finance, that I be made the official spokesman of the financial gods, his expression was so ludicrous that I almost lost my gravity. I suspect, for a moment, he thought I had gone mad. His manner, when he recovered himself sufficiently to speak, was certainly not unlike what it would have been had he found himself alone before a lunatic who was armed with a bomb.

"You know how anxious I am to help you, to further your interests, Matthew," said he wheedlingly. "I know no man who has a brighter future. But not so fast, not so fast, young man. Of course, you will appear as one of the reorganizing committee—but we could not afford to have the announcement come through an less strong or an established house than the National Industrial Bank."

"At least, you can make me joint announcer with them," I urged.

"Perhaps you're partly right," he said soothingly. "There is plenty of time."

"Plenty of time," I assented, as if quite content. "I only wanted to put that matter before you." And I arose to go.

"Have you heard the news of textile common?" he asked.

"Yes," I said carelessly. Then, all in an instant, I plan to shape in my mind. "I own a good deal of the stock, and I must say, I don't like this raise."

"Why?" he inquired.

"Because I'm sure it's a stock-jobbing scheme," replied I boldly. "I know the dividend wasn't earned. I don't like that sort of thing, Mr. Roebuck. Not because it's unlawful—the law is so clumsy that the practical man often must disregard them. But because it is tampering with the reputation and the stability of a great enterprise for the sake of a few millions of dishonest profit. I'm surprised at Langdon."

"I hope you're wrong, Matthew," was Roebuck's only comment. He questioned me no further, and I went away, confident that, when the crash came in the morning, it would be there would be no more astonished man in Wall street than Henry J. Roebuck. How he must have laughed; or, rather, would have laughed, if his sort of humor knew how to express its emotions in the human way.

From him, straight to my lawyers, Whitehouse & Fisher, in the Mills building.

"I want you to send for the newspaper reporters at once," said I to Fisher, "and tell them that in my behalf you are going to apply for an injunction against the textile trust, forbidding them to take any further steps toward that increase of dividend. Tell them, too, as a large stockholder, and representing a group of large stockholders, purpose to stop the paying of unearned dividends."

Fisher knew how closely connected my house and the textile trust had been; but he showed, and probably felt no astonishment. He was too experienced in the ways of finance and financiers. It was a matter of no difference to him whether I was trying to assassinate my friend and ally, or was felating at Langdon, to lure the public within reach so that we might, together, fall upon it and make a battue.

Not without some regret did I thus arrange to attack my friend in his absence. "Well," I reasoned, "my blundering, blundering, blundering person with his secret in the cause of my peril—and I'll not have to justify myself to him for trying to save myself. What effect my injunction would have could not tell. Certainly it could not save me from the stock market, but, possibly, it might check the upward course of the stock long enough to enable me to snatch myself from ruin, and to cling to firm ground until the coal deal drew me up to safety."

My next call was at the Interstate Trust company. I found Corney waiting for me in a most uneasy state of mind.

"Is there any truth in this story about you?" was the question he plumped at me.

"What story?" said I, and a hard fight I had to keep my countenance and alarm from the surface. For, apparently, my secret was out.

"That you're on the wrong side of the textile."

"So it was out!" "Some truth," I admitted, since denial would have been useless here. "And I've come to you for the white to tide me over."

He grew white, a sickly white, and his eyes came a horrible, drowning look.

(To be Continued.)

The Life of Bella.  
 Comparatively few people know that ringing a bell ruins it. That is, a bell has a definite length of life, and after so many blows will break. I had a 1,000 pound bell, 17 1/2 feet of pure steel, broke after 11,000 blows. A 4,000 pound bell broke after 18,000 blows of 350 foot pounds force. A steel composition bell weighed 1,000 pounds, broke after 24,000 blows of 150 foot pounds force. The maker said it was calculated for a lighter blow.

# MT. VERNON AS IT IS TO-DAY



Mount Vernon as it now appears.



Mount Vernon as it now appears. To come upon Mount Vernon when the sunlight floods the long-tiled gallery, and the guards lazily stretch their legs and yawn at your approach; to watch the blue smoke curling from the chimneys, and the barn-yard fowls cluck noisily about and then flap their wings and run, is almost to see the old place as when Washington met his friends half way down the drive, or saluted them from afar. This is as you find it when you are set down like a duck in a puddle, right on the edge of the most historic spot in America.

Conventional cheer that went around the festive board through the medium of the ponderous punch bowl, or the quantity cut champagne glasses. Many a trifle that tells of the love of feminine fiery fills another case—rare bits of lace, miniatures, silver and china—a delicious bit of feminine folly woven indelibly into the meshes of all time.

It does seem a bit ghastly to turn in with the ghosts of the great, upon the bed where Washington died, but, it has been done; and, too, where Lafayette rested. On the quaint little dressing case, where reposed his august cue, now, each springtime, lies a riotous mass of modern hairpins and feminine furberles. The sitting room of Nellie Custis, that of Martha Washington, the family dining room and the library, each with its wealth of heirlooms, tells of the painstaking care and research of many years. In these rooms the Regents sleep, and work, and live, and imbue themselves with the spirit of the Washingtons.

The attendants, for the most part, are more replete with new forms than historical information, but there is reason for knowing that it was in the dear old library that Washington received the official announcement of his election as president of the United States. There are 17 closets in three sides of this room—curious little closets within closets, none perceptible



Tomb of Washington in Summer Time.

his front door, and prepare to salute the shades of his greatness, a man with a camera and a "talking" expression whirls into view, and before you know it yours is one of the strange faces that looks out from the gallery, as if wondering, even though he knows, what he is going to do. But it's no use to fret. Like trouble, he is ever with you—thicker than dandelions on a summer green. If he divides the honors with any one, it's with the woman who waxes a souvenir of General Washington.

to the passing traveler, but cleverly concealed as a part of the walls and woodwork.

You must wade knee deep through cherry tokens to reach the old conservatory, with the quaint, rambling servant quarters tucked away under the eaves on each side, while sloping roofs and whitewashed walls remind one somehow of Bobbie Burns.

It is curious how the American traveler prefers to pilfer his historic treasures rather than to pay a trifle for them. The old gardener thinks this is the case, and it is only by the greatest vigilance that he has for so many years preserved the historic outline of the garden as originally planted and laid off by Washington. Again, Mrs. Leiter's generosity and fine judgment are shown, for she is chairman of the committee on grounds and shrubs, and as well as interested in the garden and greenhouse. Many a plant finds its way to Mount Vernon through her efforts. The gardens are maintained at an expense of over \$2,000, but between \$600 and \$700 of this amount is realized from the sale of plants. Mrs. Phoebe Hearst is a model farmer, and spends her money and talent freely. She has preserved and beautified the wharf at an expense of more than \$10,000. She directs the superintendent as to the vegetable garden that supplies the table maintained for the attendants, advises about the deer park that hangs on the hill's edge over the Potomac, and otherwise acts as a beneficent power all about the premises. She took a practical view of the herd of Jersey cattle that browsed around, and when they failed to keep the old-fashioned milkhouse, she well supplied as necessary she had them sold and a pretty herd of Guernseys driven in.

In the spacious old kitchen where things run riot, the traveler buys either a glass of milk or a picture to carry away as a souvenir. Somehow, one can't help but feel that even the kite belonged to Washington, because they browse on his plantation.