

## CHAPTER XXXIII

Tembarom did not look as though he had slept particularly well, Miss Alicia thought, when they met the next morning; but when she asked him whether he had been disappointed in his last night's experiment, he answered that he had not. The experiment had come out all right, but Strangeways had been a good deal worked up, and had not been able to sleep until daylight. Sir Ormsby Galloway was to arrive in the afternoon, and he'd probably give him some- thing quieting. Had the coming downstairs seemed to help him to recall anything? Miss Alicia naturally inquired. Tembarom thought it had. He drove to Stone Hover and spent the morning with the duke; he even lunched with him. He returned in time to receive Sir Ormsby Galloway, however, and until that great personage left, they were together in Mr. Strangeways' rooms.

"I guess I shall get him up to London to the place where Sir Ormsby wants him," he said rather nervously, after dinner. "I'm not going to miss any chances. If he'll go, I can get him away quietly some time when I can fix it so there's no one about to worry him."

She felt that he had no inclination to go much into detail. He had never had the habit of entering into the details connected with his strange charge. She believed it was because he felt the subject too abnormal not to seem a little awesome to her sympathetic timidity. She

did not ask questions because she was afraid she could not ask them intelligently. In fact, the knowledge that this unknown man was living through his struggle with his lost past in the remote rooms of the west wing, almost as though he were a secret prisoner, did seem a little awesome when one awoke in the middle of the dark night and thought of it.

During the passage of the next few weeks, Tembarom went up to London several times. Once he seemed called there suddenly, as it was only during dinner that he told her he was going to take a late train, and should leave the house after she had gone to bed. She felt as though something important must have happened, and hoped it was nothing disturbing.

When he had said that Captain Palliser would return to visit them, her private impression, despite his laugh, had been that it must surely be some time before this would occur. But a little more than three weeks later he appeared, preceded only half an hour by a telegram asking whether he might not spend a night with them on his way farther north. He could not at all understand why the telegram, which he said he had sent the day before, had been delayed.

A certain fatigued haggardness in his countenance caused Miss Alicia to ask whether he had been ill, and he admitted that he had at least not been well, as a result of long and too hurried journeys, and the strenuousness of extended and profoundly serious interviews with his

capitalist and magnates.

"No man can engineer gigantic schemes to success without feeling the reaction when his load drops from his shoulders," he remarked.

"You've carried it quite through?" inquired Tembarom.

"We have set on foot one of the largest, most substantially capitalized companies in the European business world," Palliser replied, with the composure which is almost indifference.

"Good!" said Tembarom cheerfully.

He watched his guest a good deal during the day. He was a bad color for a man who had just steered clear of all shoals and reached the highest point of success. He had a haggard eye as well as a haggard face. It was a terrified eye when its desperate determination to hide its terrors dropped from it for an instant, as a veil might drop. A certain restlessness was manifest in him, and he talked more than usual. He was going to make a visit in Northumberland to an elderly lady of great possessions. It was to be vaguely gathered that she was somewhat interested in the great company--the Cedric. She was a remarkable old person who found a certain agreeable excitement in dabbling in stocks. She was rich enough to be in a position to regard it as a sort of game, and he had been able on several occasions to afford her entertainment. He would remain a few days, and spend his

time chiefly in telling her the details of the great scheme and the manner in which they were to be developed.

"If she can play with things that way, she'll be sure to want stock in it," Tembarom remarked.

"If she does, she must make up her mind quickly," Palliser smiled, "or she will not be able to get it. It is not easy to lay one's hands on even now."

Tembarom thought of certain speculators of entirely insignificant standing of whom he had chanced to see and hear anecdotes in New York. Most of them were youths of obscure origin who sold newspapers or blacked boots, or "swapped" articles the value of which lay in the desire they could excite in other persons to possess them. A popular method known as "bluff" was their most trusted weapon, and even at twelve and fifteen years of age Tembarom had always regarded it as singularly obvious. He always detested "bluff," whatsoever its disguise, and was rather mystified by its ingenious faith in itself.

"He's got badly stung," was his internal comment as he sucked at his pipe and smiled urbanely at Palliser across the room as they sat together. "He's come here with some sort of deal on that he knows he couldn't work with any one but just such a fool as he thinks I am. I guess," he added in composed reflectiveness, "I don't really know how big a fool I do look."

Whatsoever the deal was, he would be likely to let it be known in time.

"He'll get it off his chest if he's going away to-morrow," decided Tembarom. "If there's anything he's found out, he'll use it. If it doesn't pan out as he thinks it will he'll just float away to his old lady."

He gave Palliser every chance, talking to him and encouraging him to talk, even asking him to let him look over the prospectus of the new company and explain details to him, as he was going to explain them to the old lady in Northumberland. He opened up avenues; but for a time Palliser made no attempt to stroll down them. His walk would be a stroll, Tembarom knew, being familiar with his methods. His aspect would be that of a man but little concerned. He would be capable of a slightly rude coldness if he felt that concern on his part was in any degree counted as a factor. Tembarom was aware, among other things, that innocent persons would feel that it was incumbent upon them to be very careful in their treatment of him. He seemed to be thinking things over before he decided upon the psychological moment at which he would begin, if he began. When a man had a good deal to lose or to win, Tembarom realized that he would be likely to hold back until he felt something like solid ground under him.

After Miss Alicia had left them for the night, perhaps he felt, as a

result of thinking the matter over, that he had reached a foothold of a firmness at least somewhat to be depended upon.

"What a change you have made in that poor woman's life!" he said, walking to the side-table and helping himself to a brandy and soda.

"What a change!"

"It struck me that a change was needed just about the time I dropped in," answered his host.

"All the same," suggested Palliser, tolerantly, "you were immensely generous. She wasn't entitled to expect it, you know."

"She didn't expect anything, not a darned thing," said Tembarom. "That was what hit me."

Palliser smiled a cold, amiable smile. His slim, neatly fitted person looked a little shrunken and less straight than was its habit, and its slackness suggested itself as being part of the hurry and fatigue which made his face and eyes haggard under his pale, smooth hair.

"Do you purpose to provide for the future of all your indigent relatives even to the third and fourth generation, my dear chap?" he inquired.

"I won't refuse till I'm asked, anyhow," was the answer.

"Asked!" Palliser repeated. "I'm one of them, you know, and Lady Mallowe is another. There are lots of us, when we come out of our holes. If it's only a matter of asking, we might all descend on you."

Tembarom, smiling, wondered whether they hadn't descended already, and whether the descent had so far been all that they had anticipated.

Palliser strolled down his opened avenue with an incidental air which was entirely creditable to his training of himself. T. Tembarom acknowledged that much.

"You are too generous," said Palliser. "You are the sort of fellow who will always need all he has, and more. The way you go among the villagers! You think you merely slouch about and keep it quiet, but you don't. You've set an example no other landowner can expect to live up to, or intends to. It's too lavish. It's pernicious, dear chap. I have heard all about the cottage you are doing over for Pearson and his bride. You had better invest in the Cedric."

Tembarom wanted him to go on, if there was anything in it. He made his face look as he knew Palliser hoped it would look when the psychological moment came. Its expression was not a deterrent; in fact, it had a character not unlikely to lead an eager man, or one who was not as wholly experienced as he believed he was, to rush down a steep hill into the sea, after the manner of the swine in the parable.

Heaven knew Palliser did not mean to rush, and was not aware when the rush began; but he had reason to be so much more eager than he professed to be that momentarily he swerved, despite himself, and ceased to be casual.

"It is an enormous opportunity," he said--"timber lands in Mexico, you know. If you had spent your life in England, you would realize that timber has become a desperate necessity, and that the difficulties which exist in the way of supplying the demand are almost insuperable. These forests are virtually boundless, and the company which controls them--"

"That's a good spiel!" broke in Tembarom.

It sounded like the crudely artless interruption of a person whose perceptions left much to be desired. T. Tembarom knew what it sounded like. If Palliser lost his temper, he would get over the ground faster, and he wanted him to get over the ground.

"I'm afraid I don't understand," he replied rather stiffly.

"There was a fellow I knew in New York who used to sell type-writers, and he had a thing to say he used to reel off when any one looked like a customer. He used to call it his 'spiel.'"



Palliser's quick glance at him asked questions, and his stiffness did not relax itself.

"Is this New York chaff?" he inquired coldly.

"No," Tembarom said. "You're not doing it for ten per. He was"

"No, not exactly," said Palliser. "Neither would you be doing it for ten per if you went into it." His voice changed. He became slightly haughty. "Perhaps it was a mistake on my part to think you might care to connect yourself with it. You have not, of course, been in the position to comprehend such matters."

"If I was what I look like, that'd stir me up and make me feel bad," thought T. Tembarom, with cheerful comprehension of this, at least. "I'd have to rush in and try to prove to him that I was as accustomed to big business as he is, and that it didn't rattle me. The way to do it that would come most natural would be to show I was ready to buy as big a block of stock as any other fellow."

But the expression of his face did not change. He only gave a half-awkward sort of laugh.

"I guess I can learn," he said.

Palliser felt the foothold become firmer. The boulder was interested,

but, after a bouncer's fashion, was either nervous or imagined that a show of hesitation looked shrewd. The slight hit made at his inexperience in investment had irritated him and made him feel less cock-sure of himself. A slightly offended manner might be the best weapon to rely upon.

"I thought you might care to have the thing made clear to you," he continued indifferently. "I meant to explain. You may take the chance or leave it, as you like, of course. That is nothing to me at this stage of the game. But, after all, we are as I said, relatives of a sort, and it is a gigantic opportunity. Suppose we change the subject. Is that the Sunday Earth I see by you on the table?" He leaned forward to take the paper, as though the subject really were dropped; but, after a seemingly nervous suck or two at his pipe, Tembarom came to his assistance. It wouldn't do to let him quiet down too much.

"I'm no Van Morganbilt," he said hesitatingly, "but I can see that it's a big opportunity--for some one else. Let's have a look over the prospectus again."

Palliser paused in his unconcerned opening of the copy of the Sunday Earth. His manner somewhat disgustedly implied indecision as to whether it was worth while to allow oneself to be dropped and taken up by turns.

"Do you really mean that?" he asked with a certain chill of voice.

"Yes. I don't mind trying to catch on to what's doing in any big scheme."

Palliser did not lay aside his suggestion of cold semi-reluctance more readily than any man who knew his business would have laid it aside. His manner at the outset was quite perfect. His sole ineptitude lay in his feeling a too great confidence in the exact quality of his companion's type, as he summed it up. He did not calculate on the variations from all type sometimes provided by circumstances.

He produced his papers without too obvious eagerness. He spread them upon the table, and coolly examined them himself before beginning his explanation. There was more to explain to a foreigner and one unused to investment than there would be to a man who was an Englishman and familiar with the methods of large companies, he said. He went into technicalities, so to speak, and used rapidly and lightly some imposing words and phrases, to which T. Tembarom listened attentively, but without any special air of illumination. He dealt with statistics and the resulting probabilities. He made apparent the existing condition of England's inability to supply an enormous and unceasing demand for timber. He had acquired divers excellent methods of stating his case to the party of the second part.

"He made me feel as if a fellow had better hold on to a box of matches like grim death, and that the time wasn't out of sight when you'd have

to give fifty-seven dollars and a half for a toothpick," Tembarom afterwards said to the duke.

What Tembarom was thinking as he listened to him was that he was not getting over the ground with much rapidity, and that it was time something was doing. He had not watched him for weeks without learning divers of his idiosyncrasies.

"If he thought I wanted to know what he thinks I'd a heap rather NOT know, he'd never tell me," he speculated. "If he gets a bit hot in the collar, he may let it out. Thing is to stir him up. He's lost his nerve a bit, and he'll get mad pretty easy."

He went on smoking and listening, and asking an unenlightened question now and then, in a manner which was as far from being a deterrent as the largely unilluminated expression of his face was.

"Of course money is wanted," Palliser said at length. "Money is always wanted, and as much when a scheme is a success as when it isn't. Good names, with a certain character, are wanted. The fact of your inheritance is known everywhere; and the fact that you are an American is a sort of guaranty of shrewdness."

"Is it?" said T. Tembarom. "Well," he added slowly, "I guess Americans are pretty good business men."

Palliser thought that this was evolving upon perfectly natural lines, as he had anticipated it would. The fellow was flattered and pleased. You could always reach an American by implying that he was one of those who specially illustrate enviable national characteristics.

He went on in smooth, casual laudation:

"No American takes hold of a scheme of this sort until he knows jolly well what he's going to get out of it. You were shrewd enough," he added significantly, "about Hutchinson's affair. You 'got in on the ground floor' there. That was New York forethought, by Jove!"

Tembarom shuffled a little in his chair, and grinned a faint, pleased grin.

"I'm a man of the world, my boy--the business world," Palliser commented, hoping that he concealed his extreme satisfaction. "I know New York, though I haven't lived there. I'm only hoping to. Your air of ingenuous ignorance is the cleverest thing about you," which agreeable implication of the fact that he had been privately observant and impressed ought to have fetched the boulder if anything would.

T. Tembarom's grin was no longer faint, but spread itself. Palliser's first impression was that he had "fetched" him. But when he answered, though the very crudeness of his words seemed merely the result of his betrayal into utter tactlessness by soothed vanity, there was

something--a shade of something-- not entirely satisfactory in his face and nasal twang.

"Well, I guess," he said, "New York DID teach a fellow not to buy a gold brick off every con man that came along."

Palliser was guilty of a mere ghost of a start. Was there something in it, or was he only the gross, blundering fool he had trusted to his being? He stared at him a moment, and saw that there WAS something under the words and behind his professedly flattered grin--something which must be treated with a high hand.

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed haughtily. "I don't like your tone. Do you take ME for what you call a `con man'?"

"Good Lord, no!" answered Tembarom; and he looked straight at Palliser and spoke slowly. "You're a gentleman, and you're paying me a visit. You could no more try on a game to do me in my own house than--well, than I could TELL you if I'd got on to you if I saw you doing it. You're a gentleman."

Palliser glared back into his infuriatingly candid eyes. He was a far cry from being a dullard himself; he was sharp enough to "catch on" to the revelation that the situation was not what he had thought it, the type was more complex than he had dreamed. The chap had been playing a part; he had absolutely been "jollyng him along," after the New York

fashion. He became pale with humiliated rage, though he knew his only defense was to control himself and profess not to see through the trick. Until he could use his big lever, he added to himself.

"Oh, I see," he commented acridly. "I suppose you don't realize that your figures of speech are unfortunate."

"That comes of New York streets, too," Tembarom answered with deliberation. "But you can't live as I've lived and be dead easy--not DEAD easy."

Palliser had left his chair, and stood in contemptuous silence.

"You know how a fellow hates to be thought DEAD easy"-- Tembarom actually went to the insolent length of saying the words with a touch of cheerful confidingness--"when he's NOT. And I'm not. Have another drink."

There was a pause. Palliser began to see, or thought he began to see, where he stood. He had come to Temple Barholm because he had been driven into a corner and had a dangerous fight before him. In anticipation of it he had been following a clue for some time, though at the outset it had been one of incredible slightness. Only his absolute faith in his theory that every man had something to gain or lose, which he concealed discreetly, had led him to it. He held a card too valuable to be used at the beginning of a game. Its power might

have lasted a long time, and proved an influence without limit. He forbore any mental reference to blackmail; the word was absurd. One used what fell into one's hands. If Tembarom had followed his lead with any degree of docility, he would have felt it wiser to save his ammunition until further pressure was necessary. But behind his ridiculous rawness, his foolish jocularly, and his professedly candid good humor, had been hidden the Yankee trickster who was fool enough to think he could play his game through. Well, he could not.

During the few moments' pause he saw the situation as by a photographic flashlight. He leaned over the table and supplied himself with a fresh brandy and soda from the tray of siphons and decanters. He gave himself time to take the glass up in his hand.

"No," he answered, "you are not `dead easy.' That's why I am going to broach another subject to you."

Tembarom was refilling his pipe.

"Go ahead," he said.

"Who, by the way, is Mr. Strangeways?"

He was deliberate and entirely unemotional. So was T. Tembarom when, with match applied to his tobacco, he replied between puffs as he lighted it:



"You can search me. You can search him, too, for that matter. He doesn't know who he is himself."

"Bad luck for him!" remarked Palliser, and allowed a slight pause again. After it he added, "Did it ever strike you it might be good luck for somebody else?"

"Somebody else?" Tembarom puffed more slowly, perhaps because his pipe was lighted.

Palliser took some brandy in his soda.

"There are men, you know," he suggested, "who can be spared by their relatives. I have some myself, by Jove!" he added with a laugh. "You keep him rather dark, don't you?"

"He doesn't like to see people."

"Does he object to people seeing him? I saw him once myself."

"When you threw the gravel at his window?"

Palliser stared contemptuously.

"What are you talking about? I did not throw stones at his window," he

lied. "I'm not a school-boy."

"That's so," Tembarom admitted.

"I saw him, nevertheless. And I can tell you he gave me rather a start."

"Why?"

Palliser half laughed again. He did not mean to go too quickly; he would let the thing get on Tembarom's nerves gradually.

"Well, I'm hanged if I didn't take him for a man who is dead."

"Enough to give any fellow a jolt," Tembarom admitted again.

"It gave me a `jolt.' Good word, that. But it would give you a bigger one, my dear fellow, if he was the man he looked like."

"Why?" Tembarom asked laconically.

"He looked like Jem Temple Barholm."

He saw Tembarom start. There could be no denying it.

"You thought that? Honest?" he said sharply, as if for a moment he had

lost his head. "You thought that?"

"Don't be nervous. Perhaps I couldn't have sworn to it. I did not see him very close."

T. Tembarom puffed rapidly at his pipe, and only, ejaculated:

"Oh!"

"Of course he's dead. If he wasn't,"--with a shrug of his shoulders,--  
"Lady Joan Fayre would be Lady Joan Temple Barholm, and the pair would be bringing up an interesting family here." He looked about the room, and then, as if suddenly recalling the fact, added, "By George! you'd be selling newspapers, or making them--which was it?--in New York!"

It was by no means unpleasing to see that he had made his hit there.

T. Tembarom swung about and walked across the room with a suddenly perturbed expression.

"Say," he put it to him, coming back, "are you in earnest, or are you just saying it to give me a jolt?"

Palliser studied him. The American sharpness was not always so keen as it sometimes seemed. His face would have betrayed his uneasiness to the dullest onlooker.

"Have you any objection to my seeing him in his own room?" Palliser inquired.

"It does him harm to see people," Tembarom said, with nervous brusqueness. "It worries him."

Palliser smiled a quiet but far from agreeable smile. He enjoyed what he put into it.

"Quite so; best to keep him quiet," he returned. "Do you know what my advice would be? Put him in a comfortable sanatorium. A lot of stupid investigations would end in nothing, of course, but they'd be a frightful bore."

He thought it extraordinarily stupid in T. Tembarom to come nearer to him with an anxious eagerness entirely unconcealed, if he really knew what he was doing.

"Are you sure that if you saw him close you'd KNOW, so that you could swear to him?" he demanded.

"You're extremely nervous, aren't you?" Palliser watched him with smiling coolness. "Of course Jem Temple Barholm is dead; but I've no doubt that if I saw this man of yours, I could swear he had remained dead--if I were asked."

"If you knew him well, you could make me sure. You could swear one way or another. I want to be SURE," said Tembarom.

"So should I in your place; couldn't be too sure. Well, since you ask me, I COULD swear. I knew him well enough. He was one of my most intimate enemies. What do you say to letting me see him?"

"I would if I could," Tembarom replied, as if thinking it over. "I would if I could."

Palliser treated him to the far from pleasing smile again.

"But it's quite impossible at present?" he suggested. "Excitement is not good for him, and all that sort of thing. You want time to think it over."

Tembarom's slowly uttered answer, spoken as if he were still considering the matter, was far from being the one he had expected.

"I want time; but that's not the reason you can't see him right now. You can't see him because he's not here. He's gone."

Then it was Palliser who started, taken totally unaware in a manner which disgusted him altogether. He had to pull himself up.

"He's gone!" he repeated. "You are quicker than I thought. You've got

him safely away, have you? Well, I told you a comfortable sanatorium would be a good idea."

"Yes, you did." T. Tembarom hesitated, seeming to be thinking it over again. "That's so." He laid his pipe aside because it had gone out.

He suddenly sat down at the table, putting his elbows on it and his face in his hands, with a harried effect of wanting to think it over in a sort of withdrawal from his immediate surroundings. This was as it should be. His Yankee readiness had deserted him altogether.

"By Jove! you are nervous!" Palliser commented. "It's not surprising, though. I can sympathize with you." With a markedly casual air he himself sat down and drew his documents toward him. "Let us talk of something else," he said. He preferred to be casual and incidental, if he were allowed. It was always better to suggest things and let them sink in until people saw the advantage of considering them and you. To manage a business matter without open argument or too frank a display of weapons was at once more comfortable and in better taste.

"You are making a great mistake in not going into this," he suggested amiably. "You could go in now as you went into Hutchinson's affair, 'on the ground floor.' That's a good enough phrase, too. Twenty thousand pounds would make you a million. You Americans understand nothing less than millions."

But T. Tembarom did not take him up. He muttered in a worried way from behind his shading hands, "We'll talk about that later."

"Why not talk about it now, before anything can interfere?" Palliser persisted politely, almost gently.

Tembarom sprang up, restless and excited. He had plainly been planning fast in his temporary seclusion.

"I'm thinking of what you said about Lady Joan," he burst forth. "Say, she's gone through all this Jem Temple Barholm thing once; it about half killed her. If any one raised false hopes for her, she'd go through it all again. Once is enough for any woman."

His effect at professing heat and strong feeling made a spark of amusement show itself in Palliser's eye. It struck him as being peculiarly American in its affectation of sentiment and chivalry.

"I see," he said. "It's Lady Joan you're disturbed about. You want to spare her another shock, I see. You are a considerate fellow, as well as a man of business."

"I don't want her to begin to hope if--"

"Very good taste on your part." Palliser's polite approval was admirable, but he tapped lightly on the paper after expressing it. "I

don't want to seem to press you about this, but don't you feel inclined to consider it? I can assure you that an investment of this sort would be a good thing to depend on if the unexpected happened. If you gave me your check now, it would be Cedric stock to-morrow, and quite safe. Suppose you--"

"I--I don't believe you were right--about what you thought." The sharp-featured face was changing from pale to red. "You'd have to be able to swear to it, anyhow, and I don't believe you can." He looked at Palliser in eager and anxious uncertainty. "If you could," he dragged out, "I shouldn't have a check-book. Where would you be then?"

"I should be in comfortable circumstances, dear chap, and so would you if you gave me the money to-night, while you possess a check-book. It would be only a sort of temporary loan in any case, whatever turned up. The investment would quadruple itself. But there is no time to be lost. Understand that."

T. Tembarom broke out into a sort of boyish resentment.

"I don't believe he did look like him, anyhow," he cried. "I believe it's all a bluff." His crude-sounding young swagger had a touch of final desperation in it as he turned on Palliser. "I'm dead sure it's a bluff. What a fool I was not to think of that! You want to bluff me into going into this Cedric thing. You could no more swear he was like



him than --than I could."

The outright, presumptuous, bold stripping bare of his phrases infuriated Palliser too suddenly and too much. He stepped up to him and looked into his eyes.

"Bluff you, you young bounder!" he flung out at him. "You're losing your head. You're not in New York streets here. You are talking to a gentleman. No," he said furiously, "I couldn't swear that he was like him, but what I can swear in any court of justice is that the man I saw at the window was Jem Temple Barholm, and no other man on earth."

When he had said it, he saw the astonishing dolt change his expression utterly again, as if in a flash. He stood up, putting his hands in his pockets. His face changed, his voice changed.

"Fine!" he said. "First-rate! That's what I wanted to get on to."