JOHN BURT

By FREDERICK UPHAM ADAMS

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CHAPTER XXII—Continued.

The moment for action had arrived for James Blake. He compressed his lips, strode through the room and a moment later entered John's office. In the final struggling passion was triumphant, and he nerved himself as best he could for the ordeal.

John Burt looked up. The haggard expression on Blake's face alarmed him.

"What's happened, Jim? You're pale as a ghost!"

"It's a tooth," said Blake, rubbing his hand tenderly over his face. "I'm all right now, but it gave me a bad night. The dentist drew it this morning. I dined with General Carden. I—I suppose—"

"Has Jessie returned? Did you see her, Jim?"

"Miss Carden has not returned, but she is expected to-day next Tuesday," said Blake, nervously lighting a cigar. "I had hoped to bring you better news, John, but this is the best I can do. I thought it would be indelicate to ask General Carden for her address, since nothing but a cablegram could reach her before the sailing date."

A shade of disappointment passed over John Burt's face when Blake spoke, but a smile chased it away when he mentioned the time of her departure.

"You did right, Jim," he exclaimed. "Let's see: Tuesday is the thirteenth. I'm glad Jessie isn't superstitious. That should bring her to New York on the twenty-seventh. That's thirteen days from now."

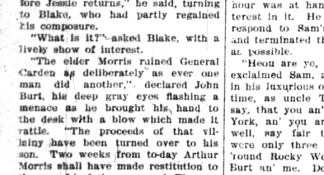
Blake turned ashen when the second thirteen was announced, but John's eyes were fixed on the innocent calendar, his thoughts were four thousand miles across a raving ocean, and he didn't notice the superstitious agony imprinted on the other's face.

John Burt leaned back in his chair and half closed his eyes.

"Two weeks lacking a day," he mused aloud. "There is a long-standing account I should like to settle before Jessie returns," he said, turning to Blake, who had partly regained his composure.

"What is it?" asked Blake, with a lively show of interest.

"The elder Morris ruined General Carden as deliberately as ever one man did another," declared John Burt, his deep gray eyes flashing a menace as he brought his hand to the desk with a blow which made it rattle. "The proceeds of that villainy have been turned over to his son. Two weeks from to-day Arthur Morris shall have made restitution to the man his father wronged. The certainty of this reconciles me to her longer absence. I shall win this campaign, Jim, and it's my last one.



When did Hawkins wire that he would be here?"

"Thursday," answered Blake.

"I shall not wait for Hawkins," said John Burt, abruptly. "He owns a block of this L. & O. stock and I shall assume that I have his co-operation. I shall have control of L. & O. before he reaches New York. How did it close last night?"

"Twenty-eight and a half," replied Blake.

"It opens to-day at a quarter," said John Burt, standing over the ticker. "Take all offerings up to thirty, but do not force matters. You understand, Jim? Watch it closely and keep me advised."

"I understand," said Blake, as he arose to go.

"Wait a minute," called John, as the other stood by the door. "Sam Rounds was in to see you yesterday, was he not?"

"Yes."

"Send for him at once. Tell him it's something important. That's all."

Blake entered his own office and flung himself into a chair. He felt as if he had aged years in the hour that had passed.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Hesaving Lances.

When Randolph Morris retired in favor of his son he transferred no small number of responsibilities to the shoulders of the latter. Arthur Morris inherited his father's money and his ambitions, but not his masterly grasp of affairs. Arthur Morris had little sympathy with that fine old conservatism which stops short at direct participation in corruption. He believed, as has been stated, that every man has his price, and was willing to pay it, provided it promised returns.

Ambitious to pose as a Wall Street leader, Arthur Morris had assumed an enormous load of stocks, and the success of his ventures had given him the following which ever attends the leader in a rising market. In addition to this speculative risk, Morris had secured several valuable franchises, and was confidently in expectation of others at the hands of the city officials.

It will be sufficiently accurate to designate the Morris enterprise by the name of "The Cosmopolitan Improvement Company," and to state that its assets consisted in its acquired and prospective franchises. While purporting to afford relief from existing monopolies, it was in fact nothing more nor less than a well planned attempt to acquire competitors. In the parlance of finance it was a "sand-bag."

Arthur Morris took up the work so suspiciously begun by his father—the wrecking of the L. & O. railroad company. In this campaign, General Carden and many others had lost their fortunes. Morris held control of the bonds, and looked forward to the day when the stock would be wiped out and this splendid property fall into his hands. It was an open secret in railway circles that the L. & O. would then be absorbed by one of the two powerful companies which interested its lines.

John Burt detected a flaw in this conspiracy. He set aside three battalions of a million dollars each, and held them in reserve against the entrenched wealth in the Morris vaults.

Then he again scanned the field of action, and with unerring judgment placed his finger on the weakest point in the Morris defenses. The Cosmopolitan Improvement Company was a rampart on paper. John Burt proposed to enfilade it. The highest legal authority assured him that the franchises already granted to the Cosmopolitan were invalid.

As the crisis in his affairs neared, John Burt took a more direct charge of affairs. The trusted employes of James Blake & Company were informed that "John Burton" was a silent partner, who represented large California interests, and that his orders must be followed without question.

In response to James Blake's message, Alderman Samuel Rounds called and was conducted to the private office of the famous operator.

Blake had anticipated with zest the meeting between John Burt and Sam Rounds, but had been disappointed for several weeks, but now that the hour was at hand, he took little interest in it. He found it difficult to respond to Sam's hearty greeting, and terminated the interview as soon as possible.

"Heou are ye, Jim; heou are ye!" exclaimed Sam, as he greeted Blake in his luxurious office. "Don't it beat time, as uncle Toby Haynes uster say, that you an' I are here in New York, an' you are rich, an' I am—well, say fair to middlin'. There were only three of us young fellers 'round Rocky Woods; you an' John Burt an' me. Do you suppose we'd ever look for John Burt, Jim? I've allers said he'd turn up on top, some day or nother."

"Would you like to hear from him?" asked Blake, without raising his eyes.

"I do indeed," said Sam, with a show of interest.

"He is in Europe."

"Thunder!" exclaimed Sam, in astonishment. "Is he over there now?"

"He is in Paris."

"Paris, eh? Wal, I'll be switched! Paris, eh? Wal, I'll be—I'll be—Paris, eh? Wal, I'll be—"

"Switched," suggested Blake.

"Switched