

The Lunatic

John C. Warren slammed the door of his private office so hard that his secretary, William Peters, thought his mother-in-law had returned. The president of Warren's Advertising Company was worried. His firm during the past year had become familiar in the use of red ink, and now the directors were persistently urging him to modernize their system.

"I wish these blinking directors would mind their own business," he growled as he sat down at his large mahogany desk. "We have stood by our principles for the past sixty years, and I don't intend to change them now. By the way, William, I intend to take a couple of weeks in the country, and you had better do likewise."

This more than pleased this humble personage, and gratification was manifested by the peculiar smile which passed over his pinched features.

"I went out to see my brother Cecil today," continued the president.

"And is he any better?" queried the timid secretary, who knew that Mr. Cecil held a warm spot in the president's heart.

"No, the poor fellow seems to be as simple as ever. He said he would like to accompany me to my summer home, but that is impossible."

"I shall never forget the first time I saw him, Sir. He was sitting at your desk dissembling your desk clock with a very wicked looking pen-knife. I thought for a moment, Sir, that you had lost your reason, and then I remembered your telling me that you had a twin brother."

"Clocks were always Cecil's weakness," smiled the president. "It irritated him greatly to be disturbed while he was playing with one. Five-twenty. You may go, William, and a pleasant holiday to you."

"And to you too, Sir," returned the secretary as he disappeared from the office.

The bachelor apartments of John C. Warren were well-appointed. The furnishings bespoke wealth but not extravagance. On this particular evening Mr. Warren—Mr. Cecil Warren—was seated at the writing table, inspecting what was once the mechanism of the mantle clock.

"I think this is a better one than that numskull had before," muttered the lunatic.

Mr. Cecil had escaped that very morning, and, knowing that his brother was absent, at once decided to impersonate him. He reasoned that this was the last place where the authorities would search for him. The lunatic was interrupted in his experiments by the persistent ringing of the telephone at his elbow.

"Hello," he snapped. "Mr. Wright? Oh yes, you say that you received my telegram, and that we should hold a conference to give these young idiots a talking to. Very well. Yes, you had better notify them to meet at my apartments tomorrow night at eight o'clock. Cheerio, old top."

Mr. Cecil sat back and stared into space. What was this all about? Here was his opportunity to match wits with the directors of his brother's firm. He would show them how sane he was, but not knowing what the circumstances were, he dropped the matter.

The following evening at eight o'clock sharp four men were gathered in the Warren apartments, anxiously waiting for the president to open the conversation. That simple gentleman was staring into space.

"I think it fitting, Mr. Wright," began the lunatic slowly, "that you tell these gentlemen just why this meeting was called."

"Mr. Warren and myself," began Mr. Wright, "have been with this company for over thirty years, and it is mainly through our endeavors that it holds the esteemed place that it does today."

"Not yours, mine," corrected Mr. Cecil, much to the embarrassment of the other.

"It has never been our policy," Mr. Wright continued, "to sacrifice principle for business, and, by the gods, we don't intend to now. We have lasted for over sixty years, and I am confident that we shall be able to weather this."

"But, sir," broke in one of the younger directors, "it is expedient that something be done. If we continue as of old there can be but one result—bankruptcy. To the best of our knowledge there is but one way by which this may be overcome, and that is by placing ourselves on the same basis as other firms. We have to modernize. We know that Mr. Warren and yourself are against this, but we don't intend to sacrifice our money for your principles."

"Don't call them my principles," exploded the lunatic, who up to this time had said little. "As for you," he glared at Mr. Wright, "you doddering old owl, keep out of this. I am president, and when a change is made I'll make it. We shall begin remodelling the office and plant the first of the week. I don't think the place has been cleaned for the last twenty years. That is all for tonight, gentlemen."

With this final remark he resumed his seat, and, as the directors filed out, he sat staring into space. It was a bewildered group of men that left Cecil Warren that night. What had come over the president? He, who had always defended the principles of the firm against all arguments. This was a different John Warren than they had known.

John C. Warren opened the door of his quiet country home, only to be seized by three able-bodied men.

"Let go of me," he howled. "And explain the meaning of all this."

"We'll do nothing of the sort," answered the man who seemed to be in charge. "It took us three days to find you, and now we are going to hold on to you. We visited your brother yesterday, in his London office, and he informed us that we might find you here. He told us also that you might try to impersonate him."

"Do you mean to say that you think I am insane," began the president now thoroughly alarmed. "But I am John—"

"Just as I thought. You had better keep quiet, or maybe we will quiet you. Your brother would have accompanied us, but he had some business to attend to, something about remodeling the office. Come on, boys, if we hurry we can catch the one-twenty."

Poor John C.! Here he was about to be escorted to a lunatic asylum instead of his brother, who had planned it well. Why, he might even now be turning his firm into a clock-making establishment, and he was absolutely powerless to prevent it. These were John C's thoughts as he was speeding along towards his destination. But the erstwhile president could plainly see that he would have a difficult time in obtaining his release. He began searching about for a method of escape. He realized his one hope was Mr. William Peters.

Two weeks had elapsed since Mr. William Peters had begun his hard-earned vacation, and now that worthy

gentleman was once more bending his steps towards the office. In his timid hesitating manner he opened the door of the outer office. Astonishment and deep concern were registered in turn on the countenance of John Warren's private secretary. William Peters was amazed. Antiquated furniture, spinsters had disappeared. Instead of the old oak desk in the corner stood a radio from which were issuing the melodious notes of a modern waltz. Hurrying figures of young stenographers were industriously engaged in doing he knew not what. Everything seemed to breathe life, and the gloom of former years had vanished.

All this the secretary saw with one glance of his quick searching eyes. Greatly perplexed, he directed his steps toward the president's private office. Here a different scene met his eyes. Seated behind the large mahogany desk was Mr. Warren, apparently engrossed in what looked very much like an expensive clock. His suspicions were correct, John Warren had gone insane. Knowing not what to do, he advanced warily towards the industrious figure huddled at the desk.

"Beg pardon, Sir, but I am here for work," he ventured.

"Yes ?" queried the man behind the desk. "And who are you ?"

"I am your secretary, Sir," stammered Mr. Peters, now positive that he was dealing with a lunatic.

"I see, and how long have you held that position ?" asked the lunatic, who, by this time, saw in the secretary a man dangerous to his freedom.

"Why, Sir, I have worked for you for over twenty years. I have just returned from a two weeks vacation."

This last remark gave Mr. Cecil his opportunity and he took it.

"So far as I am concerned the rest of your life is a vacation. Get out of here and do it quickly !" roared the lunatic with a peculiar gleam in his eye.

The former secretary was now thoroughly alarmed and needed no urging to get away from this enraged lunatic. Once outside the door, William breathed a sigh of relief, thankful that he had lost nothing except his position. Since it was impossible to do anything at present, he began walking slowly in the direction of his lodgings.

"Times sir ?" asked a ferret-like urchin.

He bought it, and all too late noticed that it was four days old. He crossed the square and sat down in the park. While contemplating what he had best do next, his eye fell on a small item tucked away in a corner.

Lunatic Recaptured it said, and went on to describe how Cecil Warren had escaped from a well known private asylum, and how he had later been recaptured at the summer home of his wealthy brother. Mr. Peter's mind flashed to the man behind the desk of John Warren's greatly changed office, and to the time when he had first seen Cecil Warren. He had it! It was not Cecil but John who had been returned to the asylum. He must lose no time now in obtaining his employer's release, and in placing that lunatic where he belonged. He hailed a taxi and gave instructions to take him to Highgate Row where, he knew, was the asylum. Arriving at his destination, he demanded to see at once, the doctor in charge as his business was very urgent. He was immediately ushered into the presence of the head alienist.

"Doctor, you have captured the wrong man," blurted out Mr. Peters.

"Calm yourself my man," soothed the doctor, thinking that here was a potential patient. "Now what seems to be the trouble?"

"Sir, you have captured the wrong man," persisted Mr. William. "You have not Cecil Warren here, you have John Warren."

"You don't mean to say that we have John Warren, president of Warren's Advertising Firm?" cried the doctor. "I shall get his release at once."

The secretary went on to explain how he had returned to the office only to be dismissed by Mr. Cecil, and how he had eventually discovered the error of the asylum authorities.

Cecil Warren laughed. He was thinking of his snobbish brother.

"He who laughs last laughs best," he said aloud.

"You are right there, you idiot," roared John Warren, as he burst into the office, followed by three men.

Surprise and fear showed in the face of the lunatic. He glanced quickly about for means of escape. He leaped towards the window. Death rather than capture! But he acted without thought, for the lately installed steel frame held fast, and before he could recover he was quickly secured.

"Well, it almost worked," he said ruefully, as his captors led him away.

John C. Warren sat at his desk prosperously smoking his special brand of cigars. He had finally come to the conclusion that some of Cecil's changes were for the best. It was but a month after the president's release, and some signs of prosperity were already beginning to appear.

"By the way, William," he said thoughtfully, "You had better go out and buy another clock, and I'll experiment with this one."

—N. E. T., '35.



My only books,
Were woman's looks,
And folly's all they've taught me.

—Thomas Moore.

The Devil was sick, the Devil a monk wou'd be;
The Devil was well, the Devil a monk he'd be.

—Motteux.

