

# Weird Tales



ALL STORIES NEW—NO REPRINTS

March, 1944

Cover by John Giunta

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*Except for personal experiences the contents of this magazine is fiction. Any use of the name of any living person or reference to actual events is purely coincidental.*

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# The Shoes of Judge Nichols

By STANTON A. COBLENTZ

Heading by ELTON FAX



I DO not know what was behind it all. It was simply "one of those things" that do happen, and leave you wondering all your life. It came upon me as suddenly as an avalanche—and, even now, I am stunned when I think of it. The nearest I have ever come to an explanation is that it was due to the great

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*People scoff at psychic possession—when some outside conscious force is said to occupy a human body—but there's no arguing with a fact!*

force of my desire; that by wishing very strongly, I caused a psychic dislocation, a release of energy, a conversion of the thinking, feeling part of me into that accursed—

But I anticipate. Let me tell, as nearly as I can, just what occurred, in the hope that the reader, more versed in these affairs than I, will be able to account for my uncanny experience.

My name is Ben Cummings; by trade I am a taxicab driver. I believe I am as good at my work as the next man; but, somehow, I was never able to get ahead—never able to accumulate much money. One reason was Judge Sampson Nichols, who runs the traffic court in our city. Five separate times that devil sentenced me, for speeding, passing red lights, and other violations. The last time he plastered on a fine of an even hundred, and added the warning, "The next offense, young man, and it'll be jail for you!" As I saw the judge glaring down at me—sleek-looking as a polished red apple, with his round rosy face, green-blue eyes, and well-tailored suit that cost more than I earn in a week of Sundays—well, then I clenched my fists and felt ready to slash his throat. "God!" I thought. "How I'd like to be in his shoes!"

I remember expressing this idea that evening to Mona as we were on the way to the movies—Mona is my girl, you know, and we are going to be married as soon as I can save enough to fit out a home. "Well, if you had any spunk," she flashed back at me, screwing up those little eyes of hers until they seemed to hit me like a pair of hard bright rods, "you'd do something to put yourself in his shoes, instead of letting him soak you with hundred-dollar fines! How we ever going to get married if this keeps on?"

I guess I must have brooded over these words. I knew all about Judge Nichols, I thought—he lived in a grand mansion

up on Overlook Heights. More than once I've driven a fare to his place, which had grilled iron gates, with a granite lion on each side. It looked like a million dollars to me. If a man could live like the judge, I thought, he would be happier than a king!"

And didn't I have as much right to happiness as that glib, sermonizing tyrant of the Traffic Court?

THIS thought kept preying on my mind all night. For hours I couldn't sleep; I kept seeing that damnable judge's face: his head greying at the temples, and turning bald at the peak; his big fleshy nose, with a little red bulb at the end; and the sharp, downturned lines of his lips. I still saw him, like some one who was with me in the room, when I dropped off at last into a doze. Then I had the most hideous dreams, as if I went through a long tussle in the dark; and when I awoke, it was with a jolt, as if somebody had slapped me on the head.

"By glory!" I cried, jumping up with a start, for there was a blinding sunlight in the room. "I've overslept! I'll be late to work!"

But as I pulled myself out of bed and blinked in the strong light, something very strange hit me right between the eyes. In fact, many strange things! So many that I fell back again among the covers, and started to pinch myself, thinking I must be dreaming.

"Jesus! Who has kidnapped me?" I wondered. For this wasn't my two-by-four hall bedroom, with its one dingy window looking out on a brick court. Four windows stared down upon me—beautifully curtained, and with the sun pouring through them. I was impressed by the size of the place, the costly maple furniture, the elegant decorated lamps. Almost at the same time, I realized that I was dressed in silk pajamas—the first I had

ever worn in all my life! And I hardly recognized my hands, which seemed shorter, chubbier, fatter, and had lost their seams and scars. They were like the hands of somebody else!

So many impressions crowded over me that all I could do was to gasp and groan.

But I had scarcely uttered a sound when a lady's voice came from the next room. It was high-pitched, and about as pleasant to hear as a rusty axle. "Sam! For goodness' sake, be more quiet! Don't you know I've got a headache?"

My own head was in such a whirl that I slipped, and came banging down to the floor—at which a door to my right popped half open, letting in a glimpse of a pajamaed form and a hawk-nosed face with the long hair hanging untidily about it.

"Sam! Have you been drinking again?" squeaked that same voice as before. "If you're not more considerate, I'll get out of the house! And this time I won't come back, no matter what the scandal, you damned white-livered gutter rat!"

The door closed with a bang, and I went staggering about the room, too bewildered to imagine what had happened, but blankly examining various objects, like a stranger in a foreign land. Where was I?

Who was this horrible woman? Why did she address me as "Sam"? These were the questions that flung themselves dully at my numbed brain. . . . Then all at once, with the suddenness of a shot, I was struck with the greatest surprise of all.

I had reached the full-length mirror just opposite the entrance to a rose-tiled bathroom. And I happened to glance into the glass, and what I saw made me reel, and sink down in a state near to collapse.

It was not my own image that stared back at me—not the young lean features, with the gray eyes and pale complexion. It was another face—and also a familiar one! It was rounded and reddish, and had

green-blue eyes, hair that was turning gray at the temples, a bald peak of a head, and a big fleshy nose, with a little red bulb at the end!

THERE is a point at which surprise ends, and at which, in a dazed sort of way, one accepts any miracle. I had about reached this point when I saw that face in the mirror. The mouth gaped at me with amazement that, I knew, matched my own; every movement, every grimace, was timed to a movement, a grimace on my part. There was only one explanation: somehow or other, I had entered another man's body. Yes, the body of my old enemy, Judge Nichols!

Now I had heard of cases of "psychic possession," when some outside conscious force is said to occupy a human body, in place of its proper owner. It seems to me that I had also read of "split" or "multiple" personalities, which are written up in all the psychology books, and which some authors try to explain as "psychic possession." But, of course, I had never taken any stock in such nonsense. However, there is no arguing with a fact. And here, certainly, was the fact that the judge's face looked out at me from the mirror!

While I stood there in a stunned way, wondering how I was going to get back into my own body, the door to my right burst open again, and that awful hawk-nosed woman came in, like a redskin on the war-path. She was wearing a lavender dressing gown, but, even so, I could see that her build was about as flabby as an egg without its shell.

"What's the matter with you, you dummy, standing there like a wooden block?" she squealed at me. "Why don't you get a move on, take your bath and shave, and go down to breakfast? Don't you know you've got to get to court today?"

Somehow, there was something about her that cowed me. Ordinarily I am not a

meek man; and yet I answered, in tones like a feather duster:

"O. K., ma'am."

She glared at me as if she had been hit. "O. K., ma'am?" she flung back, projecting her sharp little chin forward like a sword-thrust. "Since when are you getting so slangy, my dear man? And if you think you can gain anything by your sarcasm, you're badly mistaken! I suppose you've forgotten my name!"

With that, she turned haughtily away. You can bet I was relieved to see her go! How could I tell her that I had not forgotten her name, since I never even knew it?

However, I decided to make the best of things as I found them, and try to live the judge's life until I discovered some way of getting out of it.

As I entered the bathroom for a warm shower, I made some new discoveries. The first was that I couldn't move with anything like my old spryness. My limbs seemed heavy, and a bit rusty, and just wouldn't work right; also, there was a sort of catch in my left calf. Worst of all, however, was the pain that shot through my face just after I turned on the cold water in the shower. Good heavens! I had never in all my life felt anything like it! It was enough to bend me nearly double. I didn't know yet that it was only neuralgia, but I began to see that life in Judge Nichols' shoes wouldn't be all clover.

After a time, the pain went away, and I dressed in the sleekest suit I had ever put on, though it was a little tight about my waist, which bulged considerably. Then I shaved with my first electric shaver; and was just wondering where to go for breakfast when I heard a bell ringing, and a voice yelled up at me, "Judge Nichols! Telephone! Telephone!"

At first I didn't recognize that this meant me. And when I did take notice, I didn't see the extension telephone

on the dressing table; and Mrs. Hawk-Nose, happening to come up, screamed at me, "My God, Sam, losing your wits? Don't you see that phone there? Can't you hear it ringing?"

As I snapped up the receiver, I wasn't exactly in a mood for a conversation.

"Hello!" I barked.

"Hello!" answered a husky voice. "Guess you know who this is."

"How in hell do I know?"

The voice seemed considerably subdued. "It's me—Everett."

"Ever who?" I roared.

"Everett—Everett, Dad!"

That "Dad" pretty nearly bowled me over. It was my first realization that I had a son!

"I'm in trouble, Dad," he went on. "It's a deuced bad predicament—well, since it's got to come out anyway, I might as well let on it's that same chorus girl again. Can you send me down two hundred right away—"

"Go to the devil!" I yelled and banged the receiver back into place, feeling that this was no time to bother a newly made parent.

But I didn't get out of it so easily. I had a long session with old Hawk-Nose, who said I was never fair to "poor dear Everett," and swore I had promised only last week to "give him another chance."

I don't know when she would have ended her tirade, if she hadn't happened to notice the suit I was wearing. "God Almighty, you've got on your old clothes!" she screamed at me—and you would have thought I had killed somebody. "They've got to go to the cleaners! Good Lord, but you're getting neglectful! Now hurry, and change—breakfast is getting cold!"

By the time I had gone down to the breakfast room, after almost getting lost on the way, I wasn't in much of a mood for eating. On coming in, I was surprised to see a stunning girl of about nineteen, who greeted me with a cheery, "Morning, Dad!"

It was quite a revelation to find myself twice a parent, even though I still didn't know my daughter's name!

That breakfast was an ordeal. I couldn't stand the sauerkraut juice they had put out for me; though Hawk-Nose seemed scandalized when I refused it. "Why, it's the doctor's prescription!" she hissed at me. As for the decaffeinated coffee substitute—it was like ~~the~~ medicine, though I managed to gulp it down, after losing a tussle to get more than one lump of sugar. In the same way, she would only let me have one piece of toast. "Doctor's orders! You can't let that diabetes get the best of you!" I began to see that living with Hawk-Nose was worse than being in a straitjacket.

But when breakfast was over, I began to feel a little better. My daughter—Gloria was her name—came over and put her arms around my neck. Even though I knew it was because she wanted something from me, it was very pleasant to be treated so familiarly by such a fine-looking girl. "Oh, Dad," she cooed, "I wonder, couldn't you do me a favor?"

"What is it, darling?" I asked, regretting that I was nothing but her father.

"Well, dearest," she said, —and I could see that she was hesitating,— "you know Ronald. The poor boy was given a ticket again last night. He was driving me back from that Phi Beta reception, and they said he was speeding, but I'll swear he wasn't doing a mile over sixty. Most likely he'll be coming up in your court today. Try not to be too hard on him, won't you, dearest?"

Though I was beginning to feel a little jealous of Ronald, there was no resisting my daughter's smile. "All right, darling, we'll see what I can do," I promised, taking time off to deliver her an affectionate kiss. I was beginning to wish that Mona could be a little more like Gloria.

But just at this point, the telephone rang again. Being right near it, I snapped up the receiver automatically.

"Hello!"

"Is this Judge Nichols?"

It must have been the influence of Gloria's sweet smile, but I had forgotten that I was no longer Ben Cummings. "Hell, no!" I growled back. "You've got the wrong number!"

From the other end of the line there came a voice, so clear and loud that Hawk-Nose may have heard it as she came up. "Stewed again!"

From the glance that my wife gave me, I could see that she suspected that I was worse than merely "stewed."

### III

"OH, BY the way, Sam," said Hawk-Nose, "I forgot to tell you. While you were at the club last night, Geeghan's wife phoned. He's laid up with the flu—won't be in today."

"Who in tarnation is Geeghan?"

I saw my wife and daughter exchange meaningful glances.

Hawk-Nose's tone was tart as she replied:

"Forgotten that too, have you? Well, maybe you'll remember when you have to do your own driving!"

"Oh, is that all?" I tossed back, relieved to know that Geeghan was my chauffeur. "Well, I ought to be used to that by now."

Again those meaningful glances between wife and daughter. "Just listen to the man, will you!" my chief persecutor took up, acidly. "Why, don't I remember how you always grumbled driving was worse than pulling teeth!"

I could see that, no matter what I said, I would get my foot in it; and so I resolved to speak as little as possible.

But the very next minute, I went wrong again.

"Oh, listen, Sam," popped up Hawk-Nose, "on your way to court, maybe you'll step into the bank for me?"

Before I could stop it, the natural reply slipped out. "What bank?"

Hawk-Nose's response was a scream. "Now just hear that, will you? So he's forgotten what bank he has his money in! The next thing, he'll be forgetting his own head!"

And then, after a silence, "I see I can't trust you, Sam. I'd better go myself. I've got some shopping to do, anyhow."

"So have I," announced Gloria. "I'll go with you. Dad'll drive us downtown, won't you?"

"You bet I will, darling!" I agreed, returning the sweet smile she threw me.

Naturally, being women, they took a good while to get ready; and so I lounged the time away in a large room that looked like a museum, and smoked some of the Judge's best cigars—he certainly was a judge of cigars, too!

Pretty soon the maid came in, and said, "Your morning mail, sir!" and threw a whole bundle of letters into my hands. I was surprised that any one ever got so much mail, and it seemed to me I didn't have any business reading it, but then wouldn't it look funny if I didn't know what was in my own letters? So I slit the first envelope open, and it was a bill from a big department store—for hostess gowns, evening slippers, lingerie, and a lot of other junk. I tell you it made my eyes pop out of my head—came to \$262.47! I began to wonder if my salary was big enough to pay such bills. And I had my answer in the next letter, which was from a law firm, and began, "Dear Sir: We have exerted every effort with the bank, but they still threaten to foreclose on your home, unless payment of delinquent interest on the mortgage is forthcoming immediately—"

This was as far as I could read. My head was reeling; I felt a terrible stab of that neuralgia running again all through my face. After all, it didn't seem fair of Judge Nichols to saddle me with his debts!

NOT feeling in a mood to look at any more letters, I got up, and started to ramble around the house, thinking it might be a good idea to learn the lay of the land. That was how I happened to hear part of a conversation, as I passed a half closed door. I really didn't mean to eavesdrop, but I just couldn't help stopping when I heard Hawk-Nose's voice.

"Gracious me, I don't know what's come over your father, Gloria. I'm worried. He's so forgetful, all of a sudden, and acts so queer—why, he's almost like a different man!"

I could have hugged my daughter when she replied, defensively, "Oh, father's really a dear." But I didn't feel quite so good when she added, "Of course, he's awfully funny—sometimes I could just burst out howling. He's so old-fashioned—so backward in his ideas!"

"That isn't what I mean," answered my wife, sharply. "Whoever would expect *him* to have ideas, anyhow? But did you notice, my dear, what strange answers he gives to our questions? Did you see that funny look in his eyes?—actually, as if he were somebody we didn't know at all. I'm thinking of having him consult Dr. Holstein."

"You mean—the famous brain specialist?"

I thought it about time to tiptoe away, which I did very neatly. But I was not in a happy mood when the ladies came down a few minutes later, all rigged up in furs that looked like a million dollars; and announced that they were ready to leave.

I was glad, anyhow, to get away; and when I stepped out and saw the Judge's eight-cylinder Mesmerac sedan, I felt a glow coming all over me. It was the swell-looking buggy I had ever gotten my hands on. "Jesus!" I whistled, as I took my place at the wheel. "This car's sure one beaut of a baby!"

Hawk-Nose, who had plumped herself

down at my side, glared at me savagely.

"Why, you blockhead, have you forgotten?" she snapped. "Only last week, you said you would turn in the old tub, if the government hadn't frozen new car sales. The old tub—those were your very words!"

I didn't attempt any answer, but in order to let out my hurt feelings I stepped on the gas. We began shooting down the avenue at a mighty clip, turning curves on two wheels, and passing every car on the way. Once we halted so suddenly for a traffic signal that Hawk-Nose screamed, "My God, Sam, what's getting into you? You never drove like a wild man before! Why, you were always so cautious!"

"Still time to reform!" I flung back.

Through the mirror, I could see Gloria's surprised glance. "Gee, Dad," she approved, "you're getting almost up to date!"

But after we got into the downtown traffic, of course, we had to move like a snail.

Then, just when we were waiting for the green light at Dunston Avenue and Fifth Street, I saw a familiar face. Heaven knows what a relief that was! There amid the crowd—or, rather, at the edge of the crowd—was Mona herself, passing so near I could have reached out and touched her. Well, I certainly did raise my hat in a hurry, and let out a cheery, "Good morning!"

I don't know whether I followed it, without thinking, with my pet name for her, but I guess the word didn't get more than half out of my mouth. However, she began eyeing me with such a hard, indignant stare that I realized, all at once, what was wrong.

Why, only last night, after hearing about the hundred-dollar fine, she had said, "That damned Judge Nichols—if I could lay hands on the filthy cur, wouldn't I just like to cut his throat!" Yes, that was what she had said; and looked as if she meant

it, too! And now, from the way she was glaring at me, I knew she hadn't changed her mind.

Luckily the green light went on just then. As we shot ahead, I heard Hawk-Nose's voice in my ears, as cold and cutting as an icicle. "Oh, so that's your latest choice in sweeties, is it, Sam? How lovely! But I can't say that I admire your taste. She looked very vulgar to me!"

Bell-like and amused rang out the voice of Gloria from the rear. "Oh, I wouldn't worry, if I were you, Mother! Did you see the look she threw him? Why, if a glance could kill, there'd be nothing left now but the post mortem!"

I WAS mightily relieved when I put Gloria and Hawk-Nose down in front of the Daintie-Waist Dress Shoppe, and turned out along Lafayette Avenue toward the courthouse. But if I thought my troubles were over, I was badly mistaken. I had barely reached the corner of Blackstone Street when the damned engines of that Mesmerac Eight began to sputter, and then stopped cold. I knew what was wrong, of course; and it wasn't a minute before I was out, and down under the car. I'll swear I completely forgot that I was supposed to be Judge Nichols, and not Ben Cummings! I didn't remember, either, until I had put everything to rights, and got out from under the machine. Then I noticed a black oil streak down my left trouser leg. But what the hell! I thought. It was too late now to be helped!

It did seem to me that there was a peculiar smirk on the face of a passer-by, who stopped just long enough to say, "Morning, Judge! Holy smoke, you missed your vocation! Why don't you get a job as auto repair man?"

"Guess I'm used to cars," I answered. "My old flivver of a taxi—" But then I checked myself, remembering who I was. Fixing autos was always my hobby," I



ended, lamely. But I thought the man's face had a queerer smirk than ever.

Hardly a stone's throw from the courthouse, I found a good parking place. But I was getting a little nervous, and took a stroll around the block before going in, because I wasn't sure how I'd come out in this judging business.

Just as I was getting toward the building's main entrance, a plump spectacle-wearing bigwig stepped up to me, with a cheery, "Morning, Sam!"

"Morning!" I answered, wondering if I should have called him "Fred" or "Tom" or "Bill."

"Well, old sport, how you getting along for that Antlers Club speech?" he asked, giving me a companionable slap on the back.

"Oh, I'm doing fine, old man!" I tried to act the part, although this was the first I had heard of the speech.

He had placed himself at my side, and moved slowly along with me.

"Let's see, when's she coming off?"

At first I was stumped. "Really, old pal, I've got so darned many engagements on my mind," I pleaded, after a moment, "I never can remember such things without looking up my date-book."

I thought his answering "H'm!" did not sound convinced. "Well, let's see now," he went on, taking out a notebook and pencil, "what's your topic?"

I saw that I was getting into deeper and deeper water. "Oh, my topic?" I replied, as airily as I could. "Well, tell you the truth, I haven't decided yet."

"The hell you haven't!" The man looked surprised, even startled. "Why, you know damned well, Sam, every paper in town carried mention of it!"

My only response was to look blank.

To my relief, the man started on ahead of me, as if suddenly remembering an engagement. "Well, Sam," he concluded, "guess you were enjoying the High Jinks

last night! See you again when you're sober!"

Following a little distance behind, I saw him disappear up the courthouse stairs and beyond a door marked, "Warren P. Rutherford, Justice of the Superior Court."

**L**UCKILY, I didn't have much trouble finding the traffic court, for I had been there often enough. But what a pleasure to know that, this time, I wouldn't have to pay any fine! There were quite a number of people waiting, since I'd gotten there an hour late; and I thought they all looked at me just a little queerly as I came in. In fact, a girl in the rear started to titter, and then turned her face away in a hurry; but I thought she must be drunk.

Anyhow, I got along pretty well. There really wasn't anything to it; my rule was to find everybody guilty. Sometimes, when the offender was a lady, and young and good-looking besides, I would be forgiving, and let her off with a dollar or two and a warning not to do it again. But I was hard as nails to everyone else—you bet the dignity of the law had to be upheld! God! how I enjoyed lecturing those poor fools, telling them a speeding driver was an enemy of the people, just the way old Judge Nichols used to pump it out to me. When anybody tried to talk back, I would double the fine—but I didn't have to do that more than twice. The fellow I had most fun with was a cabman named Mike Finney; I knew him from of old, and the way he used to gyp me out of my fares was a scandal. Well! here was my chance to get even. He wasn't up on much of a charge—only passing a red light. Still, I used my heaviest voice, and bawled him out as a menace to the community; and when he got fresh and said he was halfway across the street before the red light went on, I cut him short and told him he was a liar and in contempt of court. "That'll be a hundred dollars out of your pocket!" I

decided; and I felt as good as if I'd made a hundred myself when I saw how he went red in the face.

After about an hour, I thought it was time for the noon recess. As I stepped out of the court, I overheard someone saying, "Say, did you hear the Judge today? Whew! what a grizzly bear!"—which made me feel proud, knowing I had made a success. However, I had quite a come-down a little later, when I looked in the mirror in the washroom. Now I knew why people stared at me so oddly when I came into court, and why that girl tittered. There was a black oil-streak across the white of my collar! Worse still, a black patch, nearly an inch square, monopolized the knobular end of my nose!

Oh, why hadn't I thought of consulting a mirror before?

But no use worrying now! Let bygones be bygones, I thought. After a hearty lunch, which I paid for out of the contents of the Judge's wallet, I returned to court, feeling a great deal better. I got along beautifully for an hour or two, and helped the city treasury considerably . . . when, just as I was about ready to call it a day, I received the shock of my life.

A new offender came in—and I'm afraid I went pale as I stared at him. As a matter of fact, he also went pale—I saw what a gasp he gave, and how he glared back at me. That tall, slim form—that sharp-cut, angular, gray-eyed face—that old striped blue suit and battered old cap—it was all very familiar, and yet very strange. Surely, I was the first man in all history able to look at himself! Or was it myself? Without doubt, this was the body of Ben Cummings! But this body was inhabited by another mind! And whose mind could it be? Whose, indeed, but Judge Nichols'? For the first time, sharply, gratefully, the realization came over me that, since I had stepped into his shoes, he must have stepped into mine!

THE charge against him was one of obstructing traffic. According to Officer Hendricks, who had made the arrest, his taxicab had stalled on the car-tracks at First Avenue and Madison, the busiest intersection in the city; and trolleys coming from four directions, not to speak of busses, trucks and private cars, had all been held up in one of the worst traffic jams in years.

"When I ordered him to pull to one side," testified Hendricks, "the idiot swore he couldn't make the car obey—said he was new to it, not on to its wrinkles! Just imagine! Why, ain't I seen this bird driving that same old tin can for three or four years! Finally, I had to hop into it myself, and pull him to the curb. It's deliberate interference with traffic, Your Honor—just cussed meanness, there ain't no other word for it!"

The accused man sputtered, and tried to protest. "But, Your—Your Honor, I swear, I couldn't get the car to respond. Why, it's the flimsiest, most worthless piece of junk I ever—"

It was at this point that I cut him short. It made me angry to hear him call my car a piece of junk. Besides, I was indignant at him—a little unreasonably, I must admit—for wearing my clothes and having possession of my body. Also, there was a sudden gloating inside me now that at last my old enemy, Judge Nichols, was in my power. And I resolved to make the best of my opportunity.

"Unless I'm mistaken," I said, trying to look severe, "you were here five times before on charges."

There was a pained expression on the culprit's face as he replied, "I—I'm afraid I don't remember, Your Honor."

"No—and for a good reason!" I drawled, ironically. Then, while the audience tittered, I bellowed,

"And what about yesterday, young man? Have you forgotten that you were here then, too? I let you off with a fine of one

hundred, didn't I? But don't you remember my words, "The next offense, young man, and it'll be jail for you!"

I paused for effect, knowing I had him just where I wanted him. The yellow cur had threatened me with jail, had he? Well, then, let him taste his own medicine!

"This court always keeps its promises," I went on, taking pleasure from the way he writhed at every word. "However, I'll be mild this time—which is more than you deserve. Ninety days for you, young man, in the county jail!"

It was pure delight to see how his face, pale before, went utterly white; then how he shot forward, sputtering out a protest, "But you can't—can't do that to me! You don't know who I am!"

"Oh, yes I do!" I answered, glibly. "Most likely you're Julius Caesar! Or maybe Adolph Hitler!"

A roar went up from the court as Officer Hendricks seized the offender, and applied a club to his resisting shoulders.

**A**FTER my victim had been dragged and pounded out of sight, I began to wonder whether I had done a wise thing after all. Mona would learn what had happened—and how would I let her know it wasn't really I that went to jail, but Judge Nichols? However, all was over between Mona and me, now that I was in the Judge's shoes! At least, I had done a good thing in keeping my enemy from her for three months. Thinking the matter over, I was sorry I hadn't made it six.

Before the afternoon was half gone, I began to get tired of hearing cases, and called it a day. I was just about to leave the building when the telephone rang; and, somehow, I had a sickly sinking sensation that it was nothing good. A woman's voice came to me from the other end of the line—a voice about as soft as a razor-edge, and as sympathetic as an ice-cube.

"Hello!"

"Hello! Who is it?"

"Who do you think it is? It's *me!*"

"Sorry. Can't hear. Afraid the connection isn't very good," I returned, wondering if this were some old flame of the Judge.

"It's me! *Me!* Julienne!"

This left me as deeply in the dark as ever. But, trying to make the best of a bad situation, I answered. "Well, well, and how are you, Julienne? Mighty nice of you to call me! How's the world treating you these days?"

Her reply hit me like a blow between the eyes. "My God, man! Don't you get fresh! Been drinking again? Or maybe you consider it a joke, pretending not to recognize your own wife's name! Well, you'll soon find I didn't call you on any joking matter!"

I staggered, and felt ready to collapse. So the phone call was from Hawk-Nose! But how could I have known that her name was Julienne?

"Don't think I haven't heard all about your disgraceful conduct!" she screeched at me. "The scandal's all over town! How you got down under the car, like any common workman! And how you came to court smeared up like a blackface vaudeville comedian! I tell you, I've stood all the humiliation I can! Unless you have some mighty good explanation, I'll see Forester, Bycott and Merwyn!"

Forester, Bycott and Merwyn, I knew, was a firm of divorce lawyers. I felt that I wouldn't mind dropping Hawk-Nose into the deep sea; but a divorce scandal, to a man in my position, would be hard to bear. Besides, how would I pay the alimony? Surely, mine was a hard lot! Although I had never been married, really, now I would be divorced, and have to pay alimony!

But it was useless to argue. When I told Hawk-Nose that I had never, so far as I knew, been a bad husband, she got

red-hot, and fired the names of about six hussies at me. "Better go to them for sympathy!" she cried, and rang off.

I was feeling pretty bad as I left the courthouse. I could see that already, in less than a day, I had made quite a hash of the Judge's life. But I got into the car, and drove away down Lofton Avenue; and pretty soon I came to a tavern I knew, and got out, and went in for consolation. Now I had always, when I was in my own shoes, been able to carry my liquor, and never really got drunk. However, it was different in Judge Nichols' shoes. After the first glass or two, I began to feel funny in the head; and after a few more glasses, I believe I began to sing and dance, although I haven't much recollection of that. I know that everything was whirling around me; and after a while it all went blank, and I slipped down, and fell off into a deep, leaden sleep. It seems to me I heard a voice—or maybe it was only a dream I had—"Ye gods, look at the Judge! Soused worse'n a sailor on shore leave!"

**I**T MUST have been hours later when I awoke. There was a pain in my head; my arms and shoulders were so bruised it hurt me to move. The air seemed heavy and foul, and there was an oppression in my limbs; and everything about me was dark, except for a dim light shining a little ways off. "Where in hell am I?" I cried out, more than a little frightened, for I thought I was the victim of foul play.

Then a shadowy figure loomed up, and I saw heavy dark bars running between him and me. "Where in hell you think you are?" he growled. "In a circus?"

I staggered to my feet, and, with trem-

bling fingers, grasped at the bars. "What am I doing here? How—how can it be? What have I done? I—I—by God, it's impossible!"

"Now listen here," said the man, a little less roughly than before, "you're not quite yourself. Been having a nightmare, most likely. Guess you're not the first man, Ben Cummings, what ever got put in the cooler!"

These words told me all that I wanted to know—more than I wanted to know! Somehow I had realized it the minute I had awakened—realized it from the very feel of my body! I was no longer in Judge Nichols' shoes! The spell had worn itself out; the psychic conversion, the desire force, had been reversed; my intense wish to be rid of the Judge's burdens had upset the unstable equilibrium, and I was once more my old self! But at what a cost! I was in jail, serving a ninety-day term! And I was the one who had sentenced myself!

You may imagine that I cursed my idiocy. I have been cursing it all through these weeks, when I have been writing up the story in jail. But, at least, I have been able to make things up with Mona; she has visited me several times, and has cheered me with some delicious bits of gossip. Judge Nichols, she says, is the laughing-stock of the town. He behaved very oddly one day at court, and came in with a face blackened like a clown's. That same evening he was found in a tavern, so drunk you could have rolled him off the pavement. His wife afterwards filed suit for divorce. "Don't blame her, neither!" Mona added, hotly. "Serves him just right, darling, for the cruel, mean way he had you locked up!"