

The PRICE

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SYNOPSIS.

Kenneth Griswold, an unsuccessful writer because of socialistic tendencies, saps with his friend Dunbridge at Chau-dre's restaurant in New Orleans and declares that if necessary he will steal to keep from starving. He holds up Andrew Galbraith, president of the Bayou State Security, in his private office and escapes with \$20,000 in cash. By original methods he escapes the hue and cry and goes aboard the Belle Julie as a deckhand. He unexpectedly confronts Charlotte Farnham of Wahaska, Minn., who had seen him cash Galbraith's check in the bank. Charlotte recognizes Griswold, but decides to write to Galbraith rather than denounce the robber to the captain. She sees the brutal mate rescued from drowning by Griswold and delays sending her letter to Galbraith. She talks to Griswold and by his advice sends her letter of betrayal to Galbraith anonymously. Griswold is arrested on the arrival of the boat at St. Louis but escapes from his captors.

CHAPTER VII—Continued.

McGrath found his handcuffs and tried the key in those upon Griswold's wrists. It fitted.

"Now you're fut and hand loose, I'll say to ye what I wouldn't say to a cripple. Wan is that ye're not Gavitt; ye're no more like him than I am. Let that so. Ye've been up to some deviltry. But that's all over and gone. What'll ye be doing next?"

Griswold took a leaf out of the past. Safety in a former peril had grown out of a breakfast deliberately eaten in a cafe next door to the Bayou State Security.

"What would I do but finish my job on the Julie?" he said, pushing the theory to its logical conclusion.

The mate strook his head. "Ye needn't do that; the cops might be coming down here and running you in again. How much pay have ye drawn?"

"Not any."

McGrath took a greasy wallet from his pocket and counted out a deck-hand's wages for the trip.

"Take this, and I'll be getting it back from the clerk. It might not be good fr ye to show up at the office."

Griswold suffered a sudden return to the mellowing humanities.

"I've been calling you all the hard names I could lay tongue to, McGrath, and there have been times when I would have given the price of a good farm for the privilege of standing up to you on a bit of green grass with nobody looking on. I take it all back. You say you haven't forgotten; neither will I forget, and maybe my turn will come again, some day."

"Go along with you," growled the rough-tongued Irishman, whose very kindness had a tang of brutality in it. "If you're coming across the naygur,



McGrath Tried the Key in Those Upon Griswold's Wrists.

Mose, anywhere, sind him back and tell him I'll see that he gets real money fr helping us unload. Off with ye, now, whilst they're catching up with yer runaway cab."

Griswold went leisurely, as befitted his theory, and upon reaching the levee, turned aside among the freight pyramids in search of his confederate. Now that there was time to recall the facts he feared that the negro had been taken. He had secured but a few yards' start in the race, and his pursuer was a white man, able to back speed with intelligence. Griswold had a sickening fit of despair when he contemplated the possibility of failure with the goal almost in sight; and the reaction, when he stumbled upon the negro skulking in the shadows of a lumber cargo, was sharp enough to make him faint and dizzy.

The negro did not recognize him at first and was about to run away, when Griswold shook off the benumbing weakness and called out.

"Tank de good Lawd! Is dat you-all, Cap'm Gravit? I's dat shuck up I couldn't recognize my ol' mammy! Tek disbyer cunjah-bag o' yours 'fo' I gwine drap hit. Hit's des been bu'nin' my han's ev' sense I done tuk out wid it!"

Griswold took the handkerchief bundle, and the mere touch of it put new life into him.

"Where is the fellow who was chasing you, Mose?" he asked.

"I's nev' gwine tell you dat; no, suh. Las' time I seed him, he's des tar'in' off strips up de levee after turrer fellah."

"What other fellow?"

The negro laughed and did a double shuffle at the mere recollection of it.

"Hi-yah! Turrer fellah is de fellah what done tuk my job. Hit was des a-way: when I tink dat white man gwine catch me, sholy, I des drap down in de darke's cawneh I kin fin'; dat's what I done, yas, suh. He des keep on agoin', spat, spat, spat, an' when he come out front de General Jackson over yondeh, one dem boys what's wukkin' on her, he tuk out, an' dat white man des tu'n hisself loose an' mek his laigs go lak he gwine shek 'um plum off; yas, sah!"

Griswold suffered another lapse into the humanities when he saw the list of participants in his act growing steadily with each fresh complication, and he said, "I'm sorry for that, Mose."

"Nev' you min' 'bout dat, Cap'm. Dat boy he been doin' somepin to mek him touchous, 'less'n he nev' tuk out dat-a-way, no, suh!"

"Maybe so. Well, we can't help it now. Here is the twenty I promised you."

"Tank you, suh; tank you kin'ly, Cap'm. You-all's des de whites' white man ev' I knowed. You sholy is."

"What are you going to do with yourself, now?" Griswold inquired.

"Who, me? I's gwine up yondeh to dat restoran' an' git me de bigges' mess o' fried fish I can hol'—dat's me; yas, suh."

McGrath says he'll pay you levee wages if you'll come back to the boat and help get the cargo out of her."

"Reckon I ain't gwine back to de Julie; no, suh. Dat'd be gittin' rich too fas' for dis niggeh. Good-night, Cap'm Gravit; an' tank you kin'ly, suh."

Griswold went his way musing upon the little object lesson afforded by the negro's determination. Here was a fellow man who was one of the feeblest of the underdogs in the great social fight; and with money enough in hand to give him at least a breathing interval, his highest ambition was a mess of fried fish.

The object lesson was suggestive, if not specially encouraging, and Griswold made a mental note of it for further study when the question of present safety should be more satisfactorily answered.

CHAPTER VIII.

Griswold Emergent.

Half an hour or such a matter after the hue-and-cry runaway from the curb in front of the saloon two doors above, Mr. Abram Sonneschein, dealer in second-hand clothing and sweat-shop bargains, saw a possible customer drifting across the street, and made ready the grappling hooks of commercial enterprise.

There was little suggestion of the tramp roustabout, and still less, perhaps, of the gentleman, about the person who presently emerged from the Sonneschein emporium. A square farther on he selected a barber's shop of cleanly promise. An hour later, reaching the retail district, he strolled past many brilliantly lighted shops until he found one exactly to his liking. A courteous salesman caught him up at the door, and led the way to the designated departments.

By this time Mr. Sonneschein's hesitant and countrified customer had undergone a complete metamorphosis. No longer reluctant and hard to please, he passed rapidly from counter to counter, making his selections with manlike celerity and certainty and bargaining not at all. When he was quite through, there was enough to furnish a generous traveling wardrobe; a head-to-foot change of garments with a surplus to fill two lordly suitcases; so he bought the suitcases also, and had them taken with his other purchases to the dressing room.

All traces of the deck-hand Gavitt, and of the Sonneschein planter-customer having been obliterated, there remained only the paying of his bill and the summoning of a cab. Oddly enough, the cab, when it came, proved to be a four-wheeler driven by a little, wizen-faced man whose thin, high-pitched voice was singularly familiar.

"The Hotel Chouteau?—yis, sorr. Will you please hand me thim grips? I can't lave me harrses."

The driver's excuse instantly tied the knot of recognition, and the man who had just cremated his former identities swore softly.

All things considered, it was the Griswold of the college-graduate days—the days of the slender patrimony which had capitalized the literary beginning—who presented himself at the counter of the Hotel Chouteau at half-past nine o'clock on the evening of the Belle Julie's arrival at St. Louis, wrote his name in the guest-book and

permitted an attentive bell boy to relieve him of his two suitcases.

The clerk, a rotund little man with a promising bald spot and a permanent smile, had apprised his latest guest in the moment of book-signing, and the result was a small triumph for the Olive street furnishing house. Next to the genuinely tailor-made stands the quality of verisimilitude; and the keynote of the clerk's greeting was respectful affability.

"Glad to have you with us, Mr. Griswold. Would you like a room, or a suite?"

"Neither; if I have time to get my supper and catch a train. Have you a railway guide?"

"There is one in the writing room. But possibly I can tell you what you wish to know. Which way are you going?"

Without stopping to think of the critical happenings which had intervened since the forming of the impulsive resolution fixing his destination, Griswold named the chosen field for the hazard of fresh fortunes, and its direction.

"North; to a town in Minnesota called Wahaska. Do you happen to know the place?"

The clerk smiled and shook his head.

"Plenty of time, is there?" Griswold asked.

"Oh, yes. Your train leaves the terminal at eleven-thirty; but you can get into the sleeper any time after eight o'clock."

Seated at a well-appointed table in the Chouteau cafe, Griswold had ample time to overtake himself in the race reconstructive, and for the moment the point of view became frankly Philistine. The luxurious hotel, with its air of invincible respectability; the snowy napery, the cut glass, the shaded lights, the deferential service; all these appealed irresistibly to the epicurean in him. It was as if he had come suddenly to his own again after an undeserved season of deprivation, and the effect of it was to push the hardships and perils of the preceding weeks and months into a far-away past.

He ordered his supper deliberately, and while he waited for its serving, imagination cleared the stage and set the scenes for the drama of the future. That future, with all its opportunities for the realizing of ideals, was now safely assured. He could go whither he pleased and do what seemed right in his own eyes, and there was none to say him nay.

In this minor city of his hasty selection he would find the environment most favorable for a rewriting of his book and for a renewal of his studies. Here, too, he might hope to become by unostentatious degrees the beneficent god-in-the-car of his worthier ambition, raising the fallen, succoring the helpless and fighting the battles of the oppressed.

Further along, when she should have quite forgotten the Belle Julie's deck-hand, he would meet Miss Farnham on an equal social footing; and the conclusion of the whole matter should be a triumphant demonstration to her by their irrefutable logic of good deeds and a life well-lived that in his case, at least, the end justified the means.

The train of reflective thought was broken abruptly by the seating of two other supper guests at his table; a big-framed man in the grizzled fifties, and a young woman who looked as if she might have stepped the moment before out of the fitting rooms of the most famous of Parisian dressmakers.

Griswold's supper was served, and for a time he made shift to ignore the couple at the other end of the table. Then an overheard word, the name of the town which he had chosen as his future abiding place, made him suddenly observant.

It was the young woman who had named Wahaska, and he saw now that his first impression had been at fault; she was not over-dressed. Also he saw that she was piquantly pretty; a bravura type, slightly suggesting the Rialto at its best, perhaps, but equally suggestive of sophistication, travel and a serene disregard of chaperonage.

The young woman's companion was undeniably her father. Gray, heavy-browed, and with a face that was a life-mask of crude strength and elemental shrewdness, the man had bequeathed no single feature to the alertly beautiful daughter; yet the resemblance was unmistakable. Griswold did not listen designedly, but he could not help overhearing much of the talk at the other end of the table. From it he gathered that the young woman was lately returned from some Florida winter resort; that her father had met her by appointment in St. Louis; and that the two were going on together; perhaps to Wahaska, since that was the place name oftenest on the lips of the daughter.

It was at this point that the apex of Philistine contentment was passed and the reaction set in. He had been spending strength and vitality recklessly and the accounting was at hand. The descent began when he took himself sharply to task for the high-priced supper. What right had he to order costly food that he could not eat when the price of this single meal would feed a family for a week?

After that, nothing that the obsequious and attentive waiter could bring proved tempting enough to recall the vanished appetite. Never having known what it was to be sick, Griswold disregarded the warning, drank a cup of strong coffee and went out to the lobby to get a cigar, leaving his table companions in the midst of their meal. To his surprise and chagrin the carefully selected "perfecto" made him dizzy and faint, bringing a disquieting recurrence of the vertigo which had seized him while he was searching for his negro treasure-bearer on the levee.

"I've had an overdose of excitement, I guess," he said to himself, flinging the cigar away. "The best thing for me to do is to go down to the train and get to bed."

He went, about it listlessly, with a curious buzzing in his ears and a certain dimness of sight which was quite disconcerting; and when a cab was summoned he was glad enough to let a respectfully sympathetic porter lend him a shoulder to the sidewalk.

The drive in the open air was sufficiently tonic to help him through the details of ticket-buying and embarkation; and afterward sleep came so quickly that he did not know when the Pullman porter drew the curtains to adjust the screen in the window at his



The Porter Knew the Calling of the Red-Faced Man by Intuition.

feet, though he did awake drowsily later on at the sound of voices in the aisle, awoke to realize vaguely that his two table companions of the Hotel Chouteau cafe were to be his fellow travelers in the Pullman.

The train was made up ready to leave, and the locomotive was filling the great train shed with stertorous hissings, when a red-faced man slipped through the gates to saunter over to the Pullman and to peek inquisitively at the porter.

"Much of a load tonight, George?"

"No, sah; mighty light; four young ladies goin' up to de school in Fribault, Mistah Grierson and his daughter, and a gentleman from de Chouteau."

"A gentleman from the Chouteau? When did he come down?"

The porter knew the calling of the red-faced man only by intuition; but Griswold's tip was warming in his pocket and he lied at random and on general principles.

"Been heah all de evenin'; come down right early afte' suppeh, and went to baid like he was sick or tarr'd or somethin'."

"What sort of a looking man is he?"

"Little, smooth-faced, narr'-chisted gentleman; look like he might be—"

But the train was moving out and the red-faced man had turned away. Whereupon the porter broke his smile in the midst, picked up his carpet-covered step and climbed aboard.

CHAPTER IX.

The Goths and Vandals.

In the day of its beginnings, Wahaska was a minor trading post on the northwestern frontier, and an outfitting station for the hunters and trappers of the upper Mississippi and Minnesota lake region.

Later, it became the market town of a wheat-growing district, and a foundation of modest prosperity was laid by well-to-do farmers gravitating to that county seat to give their children the benefit of a graded school. Later still came the passing of the wheat, a re-peopling of the farms by a fresh influx of home-seekers from the Old World, and the birth, in Wahaska and elsewhere, of the industrial era.

Jasper Grierson was a product of the wheat-growing period. The son of one of the earliest of the New York state homesteaders in the wheat belt, he came of age in the year of the Civil war draft, and was unpatriotic enough, some said, to dodge conscription, or the chance of it, by throwing up his hostler's job in a Wahaska livery stable and vanishing into the dim limbo of the farther West. Also, tradition added that he was well-spared by most; that he was ill-spared, indeed, by only one, and that one a woman.

After the westward vanishing, Wahaska saw him no more until he returned in his vigorous prime, a veteran soldier of fortune upon whom the goddess had poured a golden shower of some cornucopia of the Colorado mines. Although rumor, occasionally naming him during the years of absence, had never mentioned a wife, he was accompanied by a daughter, a dark-eyed, red-lipped young woman, a rather striking beauty of a type unfamiliar to Wahaska and owing nothing, it would seem, to the grim, gray-wolf Jasper.

Since the time was ripe, Wahaska did presently burst its swaddling-bands. Commercial enterprise is sheep-like; where one leads, others will follow; and the mere following breeds success, if only by the sheer impetus of the massed forward movement. Jasper Grierson was the man of the hour, but the price paid for leadership by the led is apt to be high.

When Wahaska became a city, with a charter and a bonded debt, electric lights, waterworks and a trolley system, Grierson's interest predominated in every considerable business venture in it, save and excepting the Raymer Foundry and Machine works.

He was president of one bank, and the principal stockholder in the other, which was practically an Allied institution; he was the sole owner of the grain elevator, the saw and planing mills, the box factory and a dozen smaller industries in which his name did not appear. Also, it was his money, or rather his skill as a promoter, which had transformed the Wahaska & Pineboro railroad from a logging switch, built to serve the sawmill, into an important and independent connecting link in the great lake region system.

In each of these commercial or industrial chariots the returned native sat in the driver's seat; and those who remembered him as a loutish young farmhand overlooked the educative results of continued success and marveled at his gifts, wondering how and where he had acquired them.

While the father was thus gratifying a purely Gothic lust for conquest, the daughter figured, in at least one small circle, as a beautiful young Vandal, with a passion for overturning all the well-settled traditions. At first her attitude toward Wahaska and the Wahaskans had been serenely tolerant; the tolerance of the barbarian who neither understands, nor sympathizes with, the homely virtues and the customs which have grown out of them. Then resentment awoke, and with it a soaring ambition to reconstruct the social fabric of the countrified town upon a model of her own devising.

In this charitable undertaking she was aided and abetted by her father, who indulgently paid the bills. At her instigation he built an imposing red brick mansion on the sloping shore of Lake Minnedaska, named it—*Mereside*—had an artist of parts up from Chicago to design the decorations and superintendent the furnishings, had a landscape gardener from Philadelphia to lay out the grounds and, when all was in readiness, gave a housewarming to which the invitations were in some sense mandatory, since by that time he had a finger in nearly every commercial and industrial pie in Wahaska.

But there were still obstacles to be surmounted. From the first there had been a perverse minority refusing stubbornly to bow the head in the house of—Grierson. The Farnhams were of it, and the Raymers, with a following of a few of the families called "old" as age is reckoned in the middle West. The men of this minority were slow to admit the omnipotence of Jasper Grierson's money, and the women were still slower to accept Miss Grierson on terms of social equality.

At the housewarming this minority had been represented only by variously worded regrets. At a reception, given to mark the closing of *Mereside*, socially, on the eve of Miss Margery's departure for the winter in Florida, the regrets were still polite and still unanimous. Miss Margery laughed defiantly and set her white teeth on a determined resolution to reduce this inner citadel of conservatism at all costs. Accordingly, she opened the campaign on the morning after the reception; began it at the breakfast table when she was pouring her father's coffee.

"You know everybody, and everybody's business, poppa; who is the treasurer of St. John's?" she inquired.

"How should I know?" grumbled the magnate, whose familiarity with church affairs was limited to certain writings of a legal nature concerning the Presbyterian house of worship upon which he held a mortgage.

"You ought to know," asserted Miss Margery, with some asperity. "Isn't it Mr. Edward Raymer?"

Jasper Grierson frowned thoughtfully into space. "Why, yes; come to think of it, I guess he is the man. Anyway, he's one of their—what do you call 'em—trustees?"

"Wardens," corrected Margery.

"Yes, that's it; I knew it was something connected with a penitentiary. What do you want of him?"

"Nothing much of him; but I want a check for five hundred dollars payable to his order."

Jasper Grierson's laugh was suggestive of the noise made by a rusty door hinge. The tilting of the golden cornucopia had made him a ruthless money-grubber, but he never questioned his daughter's demands.

"Going in for the real old simon-pure, blue-ribbon brand of respectability this time, ain't you, Madgie?" he chuckled; but he wrote the check on the spot.

Two hours later, Miss Grierson's cutter, driven by herself, paraded in Main street to the delight of any eye esthetic. When the clean-limbed Kentuckian had measured the length of Main street he was sent on across the railroad tracks into the industrial half of the town, and was finally halted in front of the Raymer Foundry and Machine works.

Raymer was at his desk when the smart equipage drew up before the office door; and a moment later he was at the curb, bareheaded, offering to help the daughter of men out of the robe wrappings.

Raymer held the office door open for her, and in the grimy little den which had been his father's before him, placed a chair for her at the desk-end.

"Now you can tell me in comfort what I can do for you," he said.

"Oh, I'm only a little thing. I came to see you about renting a pew in St. John's; that is our church, you know."

Raymer did not know, but he was polite enough not to say so.

"I am quite at your service," he hastened to say. "Shall I show you a plan of the sittings?"

When the sittings were finally decided upon she opened her purse.

"It is so good of you to take time from your business to wait on me," she told him; and then, in naive confusion: "I—I asked poppa to make out a check, but I don't know whether it is big enough."

Raymer took the order to pay, glanced at the amount, and from that to the velvety eyes with the half-abashed query in them. Miss Grierson's eyes were her most effective weapon. With them she could look anything, from daggers drawn to kisses. Just now the look was of childlike beseeching, but Raymer withstood it—or thought he did.

"It is more than twice as much as we get for the best locations," he murmured. "Wait a minute and I'll write you a check for the difference and give you a receipt."

But at the word she was on her feet in an eager flutter of protest.

"Oh, please don't!" she pleaded. "If it is really too much, can't you put the difference in the missionary box, or in the—in the minister's salary?—as a little donation from us, you know?"

Thus the small matter of business was concluded; but Miss Margery was not yet ready to go. From St. John's and its affairs official she passed deftly to the treasurer of St. John's and his affairs personal. Was the machine works the place where they made steam engines and things? And did the sign, "No Admittance," on the doors mean that no visitors were allowed? If not, she would so much like to—

Raymer smiled and put himself once more at her service, this time as guide and megaphone. It was all very noisy and grimy, but it was cared for through the works he would be glad to go with her.

He did not know how glad he was going to be until they had passed through the clamorous machine shop and had reached the comparatively quiet foundry. One of Miss Margery's gifts was the ability to become for the moment an active and sympathetic sharer in anyone's enthusiasms. In the foundry she looked and listened, and was unsophisticated only to the degree that invites explanation. It was a master-stroke of finesse. A man is never so transparent as when he forgets himself in his own trade talk; and Raymer was unrolling himself as a scroll for Miss Grierson to read as she ran.

The tour of the works which had begun in passing acquaintance ended in friendship, precisely as Miss Grierson had meant it should; and when Raymer was tucking her into the cutter and wrapping her in the fur robes, she added the finishing touch, or rather the touch for which all the other touches had been the preliminaries.

"I'm so glad I had the courage to come and see you this morning. We have been dreadfully remiss in church



"Going in for the Real Brand This Time! Ain't You Madge?"

matters, but I am going to try to make up for it in the future. I'm sorry you couldn't come to us last evening. Please tell your mother and sister that I do hope we'll meet, sometime. I should so dearly love to know them. Thank you so much for everything. Good-by."

Raymer watched her as she drove away, noted her skillful handling of the fiery Kentuckian and her straight seat in the flying cutter, and the smile which a day or two earlier might have been mildly satirical was now openly approbative.

"She is a shrewd little strategist," was his comment; "but all the same she is a mighty pretty girl, and as good and sensible as she is shrewd. I wonder why mother and Gertrude haven't called on her?"

Having thus mined the Raymer outworks, Miss Grierson next turned her batteries upon the Farnhams. They were Methodists, and having learned that the doctor's hobby was a struggling mission work in Pottery Flat, Margery called the paternal check-book again into service, and the cutter drew up before the doctor's office in Main street.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Chance for Greater Fame.

A New York physician claims to have discovered a harmless bichloride of mercury tablet. Now he may try his hand at inventing a harmless unloaded gun.—*Detroit Free Press.*