

THE BOSSIER BANNER.

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"A Map of Busy Life, Its Fluctuations and Its Vast Concerns."

Subscription, \$1 per Year.

FIFTY-FIFTH YEAR.

BENTON, BOSSIER PARISH, LOUISIANA, THURSDAY, MARCH 30, 1916.

NUMBER 13.

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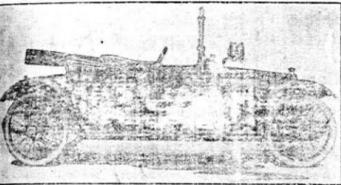
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A TALE OF RED ROSES

By GEORGE RANDOLPH CHESTER

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PROLOGUE.

"A Tale of Red Roses," by George Randolph Chester, is one of that author's best stories. It introduces a typical red blooded boss politician of the type found in many American cities and a beautiful girl, with whom the boss is in love. Incidents of political intrigue and high finance are fascinatingly told.

The author relates, as only he can, stirring incidents in ward, city and state politics. In his strenuous, spectacular wowing the politician makes the girl the favorite at a governor's ball. He has diplomats, artists and notables of every description pay her homage. He lavishes presents on her. He anticipates her every wish. His love is overpowering, all consuming. "A Tale of Red Roses," holds the interest of the reader from start to finish. Once begun it must be finished.

CHAPTER I.

The Dawning of a Tender Passion. A COAL wagon, naturally choosing the rush-hour for its performance, broke down in front of an extra crowded car, and traffic was promptly knotted for three blocks. A shining big automobile, following up the hill, came so close behind that the glare of the street car shone with unpleasant brightness on the occupants—a smiling red checked girl at the wheel; by her side a gray van dyked man with sinister lines running sharply downward from his down pointed nose; in the tonneau a plainly dressed and modestly pretty black haired girl with large and rather timid eyes and a slender golden haired girl whose chief mission in life, from her expression, would have been taken to be mischievous fun.

"Hello, Bert!" called the girl at the wheel. "Can you uncrush yourself?"

The rather large young man in the neatly fitting blue suit who had been jammed against the rail of the rear platform had already begun to worm his way out of the ill humored throng on the street car.

"I'll try it," he laughed, "although I don't expect to have a button left."

The crowd, its clothing still clanging from the recent rain, made way for him reluctantly, even though it needed the space he occupied, for the pompous looking, van dyked man in the car was Frank Marley, by all odds the most unpopular man in the city. He was the president of the street car company.

The young man in the neat blue suit, whose cheeks were flawlessly pink and whose luxuriant black mustache was curled in two amazingly perfect ringlets, picked his way daintily through the slush.

"Bert, this is the treat I promised you," said the girl at the wheel.

"Miss Fern Burbank," he guessed, clasping the blond visitor's hand, and at the same time he gave his left hand condescendingly to little Jessie Peters.

"Welcome to our muddy city."

"Thank you," smiled the golden haired young lady. "Of course this is handsome Bert Glider."

"Molly's been telling on me," he lightly answered as he took the folding seat just behind Mr. Marley, sitting sideways so that he could address the two girls in the tonneau and still enjoy the clean cut profile of Ethelyn Marley, known to her intimates as Molly, for no better reason than that it was a handier name.

The lights in the car ahead suddenly went out, and a groan arose from the miserable passengers on that suffocating vehicle. A roughly breathed man, who had been resting his elbow in the wishbone of gray whiskered little Henry Peters, reached the point of heroic defiance.

He cursed the street car company and demanded, "Why don't they put on more cars?"

Little Henry Peters, who admitted he was a stockholder, took the company's part.

The conductor crowded back through the solidly packed aisle and the squirming platform to jerk hopefully at the trolley rope, and little Henry Peters, squeezed between his opponent and the fat butcher until bones

could stand no more, popped from between their peripheries like the inside of a grape, landing in the solar plexus of a tired Hibernian, who had endured more than enough.

"Get out of my stomach, stockholder," he gruffly ordered and pushed little Henry's derby tightly down over his ears just as another machine drew out of the fretting rearward line and, stopped by the ragged gutter, rested abreast of Marley's machine. The conductor having restored the lights, the attention of the uncomfortable passengers was now directed to the newcomer, a heavy jawed man of middle age, who sat as stolidly in his runabout by the side of his driver as if he had been at home dining.

"It's Sledge," said the man with the frayed cigar. "He gets his little old rickshaw, too, from jamming sixty people into a forty passenger car. While he's running the town this rotten old line won't have any competition."

"Mr. Sledge is a good customer of mine," observed the fat butcher.

"There's one thing about Ben Sledge—he always keeps some big city improvement going on," announced the Irishman who had extinguished little Henry Peters.

Little Henry pulled his derby audibly off his head and rubbed the red circle it had left.

"Mr. Sledge is the workingman's friend," he declared.

"Aw, shut up!" ordered the gaunt Celtic laborer and kicked his ankle by way of accidental emphasis.

It was strange that, while everybody on the car kept the name of Frank Marley sacred to their hatred, the name of Sledge, who was notorious throughout the United States for his utterly conscienceless methods of public theft, was received with equanimity.

Meanwhile Sledge, turning to see who his neighbors might be, met the eye of Frank Marley and nodded perfunctorily and then bent his entire attention on Molly, gazing at her in stolid concentration, with no more change of expression on his heavy features than if he had been reading a time-table. Bert Glider noticed his rudeness and tried in a mood of intense aggravation to catch Sledge's eye and reprove him with a savage frown, but his light as well have tried to catch the eye of an oyster. Sledge, perfectly contented with the pleasing picture which sat before him, continued to stare calmly until Molly, discerning from Bert's countenance that something was wrong, turned to meet the small gray eyes of Sledge fixed thoughtfully upon her. She wheeled abruptly to her father.

"Isn't that the scandalous Sledge?" she asked, annoyed and still amused.

Her father nodded his head and smiled, his nose becoming still more pointed in the process.

"Well, introduce him. I can make him stop staring, then," she ordered.

"He can't drive on."

"I say, Sledge," called Marley, leaning forward. "This is my daughter, Molly."

Sledge tugged at his hat and smiled his acknowledgment of the introduction.

"Glad to meet you," he told Molly looking at her with such a fine looking girl, Marley. "She's a corker!" and once more he viewed Miss Molly with quiet approbation, in which there was a dawning glimmer of quite un-Sledge-like enthusiasm.

"I think so myself," laughed Marley.

"First thing I know she'll be getting married."

"Sure!" agreed Sledge, contemplating her earnestly in this new light. "I'd marry her myself."

The street car ahead gave a forward lurch, and the famingly indignant Molly darted into the opening.

"The ugly brute!" she gasped.

There arrived on the morning train, escorted to the platform by a distinctly worshipful porter, a tall, big boned gentleman in a light gray suit of fine texture, a plump, careless man to whom one would instinctively turn for a tellingly funny story, and a hard jawed man of a most forbidding expression, who looked about as communicative as a cabbage. This gentleman loafed about the hotel with his mouth shut, while the other two "scouted." Promptly at 11 o'clock they returned from their various directions and gathered in the room of the smiling tall one in the gray suit.

"Well, Timbers, is it as cheerful as we thought?" asked the host, settling himself in the most comfortable chair.

"Looks gay and merry to me," Bozzam replied Mr. Timbers, folding his hands on his fat knee and frowning intently at a little slip of paper he held between his thumb and forefinger.

"Sledge is, of course, the whole works."

"What's the approach to Sledge?"

"Tom Bendix," returned Timbers

promptly, consulting his slip of paper. "He sifts everything before it gets to the big boy, and you don't need any introductions. The best plan is to go right to his office and give him the straight story."

"How about Marley?"

"A bluff," returned Timbers contemptuously. "Because he's the president of the street car company he thinks he invented electricity, and his noodle is swelled so that it cracks his scalp."

"You'd better lead me to this Bendix person," suggested Bozzam, rising. "Come on, Moodson."

Very automatically the silent man arose and accompanied Bozzam down the room with the air of being just as willing to do that as anything else.

Just as automatically he followed into the office of Tom Bendix five minutes later and stood silently by, so oppressive in his inertia that he removed to himself all speculation about any one who was in his company.

"I want to talk electrical transportation with you," began Mr. Bozzam cheerily as he laid the cards of Mr. Moodson and himself on the desk. "I am Charles W. Bozzam of New York, and this is Mr. Alvin Moodson of Philadelphia."

Bendix shook hands noncommittally with the two gentlemen and invited them to have seats.

"I don't know that I care to talk electrical transportation, but I'm willing to listen," he smiled.

"There isn't much to say," Bozzam stated. "We think your city needs new and better street car facilities, and we are here to give them to you if you will let us. The company I propose to form will be bona fide and will be incorporated for a million dollars in regular money. Mr. Moodson will take a quarter of a million of the stock himself. It might be some satisfaction to you to secure a report on Mr. Moodson from Dunn or Bradstreet."

Mr. Bendix arched.

"It sounds like a high grade proposition," he acknowledged. "I'll speak to some friends of mine about it this noon."

When Tom Bendix walked into the Occident saloon he paused a moment at the bar, but even though his wishes were as potent here as those of omnipotence, since he represented the omnipotent Sledge, he had to wait, for both the choice bartenders were in dejected attendance on a careless fat man.

"Who's the entertainment committee?" asked Bendix, a trifle sharply.

"A tall stranger by the name of Timbers," rejoined Phil, vigorously

"I don't suppose you remember that we last decided on the Ridgewood avenue extension for the express purpose of reorganization, new issue of stock and readjustment of shares," he chillingly reminded Marley.

"I know," persisted Marley. "But, after mature deliberation, it seems that to make the extension from the company's earnings is the more legitimate business method. I am not in favor of the modern practice of watering stock. The earnings, after all, are not increased by stock juggling."

Sledge turned ponderously from his inspection of the dingy little arway as Bendix left the room.

"Your girl's a peach," he delicately hinted.

"Molly?" smiled Marley's nose. "She is a beauty, isn't she? The boys are crazy about her. It looks like a college convention out at my house all the time."

"I want to get acquainted with her," ordered Sledge, much as if he had been sending the happy word to some rising new politician.

A shade of annoyance passed over Marley's brow.

"That is a matter which is entirely up to Molly," he stated, with a trace of stiffness.

"All right. Put it up to Molly," said Sledge and looked out of the window again.

Marley hesitated and half arose. He knew that his call was over, and yet he had something else on his mind.

"By the way, Sledge," he observed, trying to speak as if the matter had just occurred to him, "that note of mine at the First National—it falls due next week. I am afraid I shall have to have an extension."

Sledge nodded imperceptibly.

"Tell Davis I said it was all right," he directed.

Bendix returned, and with him was Bert Glider, redolent of the odor of barber shop and with his curly black mustache waxed and brilliant until it was filled with almost painful reflections. He greeted Mr. Marley with much more offensiveness than that gentleman did him.

"Hello, Marley," he said, grasping the street car magnate's hand with tremendous man to man heartiness. "You are just the one I want to see. I've been trying to get Molly on the phone, and they tell me she'll be in at your office some time this afternoon. Will you carry her the happy news that I've invited him to her taffy pulling tomorrow night? Tell her to invite Jessie Peters."

Sledge turned slow questioning eyes on Marley.

"You going to be home tonight?" he inquired.

"Well, yes, I rather think so," faltered Marley.

"I'm coming out to see you," decided Sledge.

"I'll be glad to have you," admitted Marley. "I suppose I may see Davis tomorrow?"

Sledge nodded assent, looking stonily out meanwhile at the hand hole in the high board gate at the end of the arway.

"Well, Glider, tell us about it," invited Bendix as Marley went out.

"I want you to tell me," laughed Glider, in happy unconsciousness that he was a deadly offense to Sledge, who called him "pretty"; "is the Ridgewood avenue extension a sure go?"

"Why do you want to know?" inquired Bendix.

"I have a little speculation in mind which depends on it," confessed Glider.

"Subdivision at the end of the line, I suppose," guessed Bendix.

"Well, yes," acknowledged Glider.

"Foxy of you to think of it," applauded Bendix. "Your only fault is that you don't guess those things first. Who do you suppose would acquire a deed to that land before the extension was publicly announced?"

"I know the answer," returned Glider, crestfallen, but still handsome; "you fellows."

"Certainly not," denied Bendix. "But some friend of the family—yes, maybe. How much will you give for the land?"

"I'm not at liberty to state," replied Glider uncomfortably. "The owner made me a price on it this morning, but it was confidential."

"The owner didn't know he was tagged," retorted Bendix dryly. "You may have the land, I think, for twenty thousand, Glider, but you'll have to speak quick."

"Twenty thousand?" gasped Glider. "Why, old Porson offered it to me for eight."

"That's what we intend to pay him."

"Give me a day or two to think it over," begged Glider.

"All right; you're on," agreed Bendix and hurried out of the room.

Bert was about to follow him when Sledge called.

"Glider," was his peremptory summons, "what kind of flowers does Molly Marley like?"

Bert Glider almost stuck the ash end of his cigar in his mouth, then suddenly upbraided himself for a fool as he mentally complimented Sledge on deserving his reputation of being the most astute politician in the state.

"Red roses," he promptly returned and twined the right hand curl of his mustache. He stopped that process abruptly and felt of the curl with deep concern. One of the hairs was disarranged, and he fixed it with the aid of a vest pocket mirror.

"Thanks," said Sledge and resumed his interested inspection of the hand hole in the gate.

Sledge looked out of the window for long moments of thick silence, and then he expressed his thoughts on a plot in hand in this fashion:

"Say, Bendix, send a load of roses out to Molly Marley for her party tomorrow night, the redder ones they've got."

CHAPTER II.

Molly invites an Additional Guest.

WHERE are the red roses, Molly?" asked Bert Glider as he walked into the reception parlor of Marley's pretentious big house that night.

"I don't know," replied Molly, much concerned. "Did you send some?"

"No, but I thought some were to be sent to you," laughed Bert. "It's too good to keep, Fern. By the way, that Fern just slipped, and you'll have to pardon me for it. It's Molly's fault. She never called you anything else."

"Who is it?" demanded Molly, more eager to hear the news than he liked to see. "The information is highly important, if true, and I must not be kept in suspense."

"Hold on to something, then," he warned her. "One, two, three—Sledge!"

"Sledge?" she repeated. "What? That great big—She paused for lack of words, and her face flamed suddenly scarlet with indignation.

"Sledge," he joyously insisted, and then, to the puzzled Fern. "You remember the big fellow whose car stopped just abreast us last night?"

Mr. Glider, who as a boy had been an expert in pulling the wings from flies, went straight on with the slaughter, seizing immediately the glorious opportunity which presented itself when Mr. Marley, brave in smoking jacket and pumps, sauntered into the parlor.

"Great news, Marley!" hailed Bert, beaming with delight upon the joyous laughter of Fern. "Molly has captured a new honor for the family. Whose do you suppose is the latest scalp at her belt?"

"It might be almost anybody," returned Marley, who felt that his motherless daughter's popularity reflected somehow on himself. "Who is the particular victim you have in mind?" and he laughed in advance.

"Sledge!" exploded Bert. "By the way, Marley, he gave you a hint of it too. Didn't he ask you today while I was there for an invitation to Molly's party tomorrow night or something like that?"

"Well, not exactly, but he did throw out some pretty strong hints," acknowledged Marley with a grin, entering into the joyous spirit of the occasion. "He asked permission to call on Molly. I told him that was up to her."

"How unusually considerate!" observed Molly, biting her lips to suppress the rising fury which had driven the blushes from her cheeks and left them almost waxen.

The Marley butler, a thin faced and thin legged young man with a painfully intellectual countenance, stalked past the hallway portieres in answer to a below stairs ring and returned from the front door with:

"Mr. Sledge, sir, to see Mr. Marley."

"Show him into the library," hastily directed Marley, suddenly contrite and feeling a shinking horror, as did all the others in the room, of having this man face to face with Molly, especially after the crimes against her, of which they had themselves been guilty.

The instructions were too late, however.

"Good evening," rumbled the deep voice of Sledge, who just then appeared directly in the center of the opening in the portieres. He wore an Inverness topcoat, the open front of which disclosed a marvelous expanse of white shirt front, spaced with diamond studs, the glitter of which paled, however, by contrast with the enormous solitaire which illuminated the solid gold watch bob presented to him by the Young Men's Marching club of Ward G. His hair was pressed as smoothly to his skull as an earnest Italian barber could plaster it, and various angry specks on his cheeks told how interspersedly he had been shaved.

The crowning triumphs of his toilet, however, he carried. In his right hand he bore, held by a wide velvet ribbon, in the same huge fingers which clutched the gold headed cane presented by the Capital City Sledge club, a thirty dollar box of candy, two feet across, wrapped with six beilboned layers of fancy paper and provided with an absolute maze of drawers and partitions. In his left hand he carried a speckless silk hat of the latest French shape, and that arm encircled a conical parcel, so big that it would have staggered a small man, while from the upper end of the cone protruded a square yard of screaming red roses.

"Good evening, Miss Molly," he added, becoming more specific. "I brought these for you myself," and he beamed his cordial good will upon the entire assemblage.

It was in this breathless crisis that Molly Marley, aggravated beyond endurance, took her merited revenge.

"How perfectly delightful!" she cried, and she swept toward him with more eager cordiality than she had ever bestowed upon Bert Glider himself.

"We've just been talking about you," and then, to the intense consternation of her father and her foremost ally, she added: "I want you at my party tomorrow night. Won't you come, please?"

Continued in next week's Banner.

Identifying Her.

"Brown, do you know the lady across the street?" asked Smith.

"Let me see," replied Brown; "she certainly looks familiar. That's my wife's dress, my daughter's hat, my mother-in-law's parasol. Why, yes! That's our cook"—Ladies' Home Journal.

Extremes in Apes.

The gibbon is the smallest of the manlike apes. Its arms are so long that it can touch its ankles when walking. The gorilla, which is often six feet high, is the largest of the apes.