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NUMBER 15.

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## A TALE OF RED ROSES



By  
**GEORGE  
RANDOLPH  
CHESTER**

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### CHAPTER IV.

Molly's Dizzy Popularity.  
THUS sped the evening, with Molly climbing the dizzy heights of popularity in hourly increasing excitement. She not only had a notable partner for every dance, but a brilliant partner for every tete-a-tete between numbers, and the almost equally happy, though not so highly favored, Fern warned her, in a giggling, whispered moment, to keep her back to the wall lest she be stabbed. Her cup of happiness was full when the famous musician, a near-sighted man who wore his hair short and inspected her rapturously through half inch thick glasses, composed a sparkling little rondo for her at a piano



Inspected Her Rapturously Through Half Inch Thick Glasses.

in a quiet little alcove and named it "Molly" and wrote it on her dance card, all in the space of seven minutes. True, he had danced with her two numbers before and had had time to think of her—possibly to think of her in rondo terms.

Occasionally she caught sight of Sledge in the throng, although she had not seen him on the floor, and she realized that her number with him would be a "sit out." Perhaps that was why it had been put down so far in the program, when she would welcome a rest. It was like his doing, for she had to acknowledge that he was at least farsighted.

One thing perplexed her. He was much less awkward and much more at ease here than he had been at her party. Whenever she saw him he was talking gravely with men of large air and, in every case, he was accorded notable respect. Even the musician seemed absorbedly interested in him, and her leading millionaire came back to him again and again. She wondered why men sought him, and she was still wondering when the eminent sociologist fairly snatched her out of the arms of the mayor after the eighth dance.

"Come and watch me smoke a cigarette," he begged her. "I've been trying to get a chance to talk with you again the entire evening, but there's always such an increasingly mad scramble around you that the attempts made me feel undignified."

"You'd worry a lot about that," she guessed.  
"Wouldn't it?" he laughed. "Will you chill if we step out on the terrace?"  
"I don't know how," she happily told him, and they hurried outside, where he led her to a seat in the moonlight and deftly made her comfortable with three cushions from as many chairs.

Sledge and Senator Allerton passed them as he lighted his cigarette, and he looked after Sledge until the match burned his fingers.  
"There is the biggest man I have seen in a long while," he remarked as he sat beside her on the settee.

"They say he is not only the boss of the city, but of the state," replied Molly, very much interested. "You knew that, didn't you?"

"Of course," he acknowledged, "but I scarcely think that would influence my judgment. I have studied a great many men of more power and influence than he has at present, but none of them, so far as I can recollect, seemed to have his elemental force. Wherever

he was born, he would have been a leader. He is a wonderful man. Throw him in a savage country and he would be king."

A huge figure approached them.  
"Hello, Watt," rumbled the deep voice of Sledge. "My dance, Molly?"  
"Well, you having a good time?" asked Sledge, sitting comfortably in the seat Mr. Watt had just vacated.

"The time of my life," she assured him, with happy animation.  
"That's the word," he heartily approved. "If there's anybody here you want just tell Cameron. If he don't trot 'em right over tell me."

"The mayor has been very kind," acknowledged Molly, beginning to wonder.

"He's got his orders," returned Sledge complacently. "Let me see your dance program," and he took it from her lap. "I thought so," he commented. "There's a dark horse turned up, and you didn't get him."

"A dark horse?" she faltered.  
"A ringer," he explained. "Lord Bunchase, Andrew Lepton, the big coffee monopolist, sneaked him in here under an alias, and nobody's on." He puzzled over the card a moment. "Excuse me till I fix it," and he stalked away.

Molly sat silently, allowing a cold wave of humiliation slowly to chill her soul. Why, Sledge had carefully prearranged her triumph of the evening. He had assumed control of her dance card and of her succession of delightful tete-a-tetes. He had driven the star performers into her net as if they had been droves of sheep. True, men had sought her a second time of their own accord because of that charm which she knew she possessed—a vaguely understood attractiveness, more than beauty, more than mere sex attractiveness. She had won by her own power, but Sledge had given her the glorious opportunities. His omnipotence began to annoy her and his ruthlessness to inflame her already inflamed resentment.

She knew precisely what was happening at this moment. He was creating havoc in not less than half a dozen dance cards, with no compunction about having discommoded or distressed any one. Then there was Bert downtown battling with a disaster which had thrown him completely from his feet. Poor Bert! She had by no means forgotten him, even amid the height of her excitement. She should have been there to comfort him, and yet—well, he had not seen fit to come to her for comfort. Men were queer creatures. A woman when disaster overtook her did not need to deaden her intelligence. She needed it then more than ever.

After all, though, Bert was a man, and that was the way of men, and there was no use to dream of overturning the entire accepted order of creation. She was certain, however, that she could be of more help to Bert after they were married. He was weaker than she had thought.

Very well; Sledge had thrown down the gage of battle. He had laughed when he was threatened and had ruined Bert in challenging defiance. Let him now take the consequences. If he went to the penitentiary, well and good. He had probably sent other people there, with no more quans of mercy than she would now show to him. She could be as ruthless as he. What was it Professor Watt had called the quality? Elemental force—that was it. Well, she possessed it too. She felt it within her, stirring with the same physical nascency as the virility of parenthood, to which it was so closely allied.

Just off the governor's stuffed leather library was a small room, with a hard desk and six hard chairs, and a hard looking letter file, and a hard, fire-proof safe set into the wall, and here, while Lord Bunchase led Molly Marley through the pieces of a hard two-step, Governor Waver and Senator Allerton and Sledge and Frank Marley gathered for a few moments of comfortable chat such as elderly gentlemen love to indulge in while frivolous younger people dance the flying hours away. All four being gentlemen who, by the consent of the public, bore the grave responsibility of the public welfare on their shoulders, it was not strange that their chat should turn to public affairs.

"I am glad to be identified with the enterprise," avowed State Senator Allerton, who was a suave, clean faced gentleman, with a good forehead and a quite negotiable tongue. "At the same time, as far as I am privately concerned, I can only regard it as a temporary investment."

"Why temporary?" demanded Frank Marley, who was feeling particularly capable this evening. His \$175,000 worth of street railway stock had been increased to \$202,500. He was to have \$27,500 cash out of the undivided surplus of the old company, and his daughter, Molly, was the most popular girl at the governor's ball. "The street railway company has always made money, and the city needs additional transportation facilities. We have reached the normal period of extension, and I do not see what is to prevent us from limitless prosperity."

"The franchises," Senator Allerton reminded him. "Your present permits have less than five years to run."

"I have never had any trouble in having them renewed," objected Marley, priding himself on his management.

"Times are changing," sighed Allerton. "There is a growing disposition on the part of the public to charge public service corporations for the use of public property."

"The people are ungrateful," mourned Governor Waver, who had enriched himself through furnishing electric light at his own price to a public which had known nothing better than gas. "The moment they see a profit

on their luxuries they want part of it. An undivided surplus such as the street car company has had is a constant menace."

"That was a sinking fund for extensions and improvements," Marley reminded him. "The stockholders had no right to ask for a division of it."

"They would if we had not put it out of harm's road," insisted the governor. "That much has been saved to the men who really earned it, but I should not like to see a similar profit exposed. To my mind, a 7 per cent dividend is an even worse folly."

"It gives confidence in the stock," argued Marley. "The public would never be so eager to take up this new issue if it had not been for that 7 per cent dividend."

"That's what it was for," interpoled Sledge, looking out of the window into the sunken garden and vainly hunting the hand hole in the gate.

"It has served its purpose," granted Allerton. "But taxpayers are becoming greedy. When they see the stockholders of a public corporation making 7 per cent they want some of it and try to make the corporations pay part of their taxes. In every city of importance the voters are demanding pay for street car franchises and making the street railway companies, in addition, bear half the cost of all street improvements."

"It's a bad outlook," agreed Governor Waver. "Frankly, as soon as I receive my new issue of stock I shall have it quietly placed on sale."

Marley looked at him indignantly. "Why, the street railway company is entering on the greatest period of prosperity in its career," he asserted. "There'll be no trouble about franchises. The city is wild to have the improvements and must have them."

Allerton looked at him wonderingly. "Waver is right," he stated. "I shall sell my own stock, and I'll venture to say that Sledge has already made silent arrangements for disposing of his. Do you know that the franchises at present granted in this state are revocable and that it is not possible to secure one which is positively safe for longer than ten year periods? When you come to the renewal of your franchises, Marley, you will be met with a demand for pay and will have other restrictions imposed on you. Our present franchise law, in view of the public tendency, is a bad one for investors."

"Let's fix it," suggested Sledge. "I'm afraid it's too late," protested Allerton.

"Not for a new gag," dissented Sledge. "A new one can be put over quick."

"I fancy that there should be protection somewhere," opined the governor. "No matter what changes in public sentiment, the investing class, upon which the public depends for prosperity, must always be protected."

"But how?" inquired the senator. "How in this particular case?"  
"Head 'em off," grunted Sledge. "I'm keeping my stock."

"I'd be glad to hold mine," stated the senator. "But how is it to be made of future value?"  
"That's up to you," Sledge replied, rising. "Figure it out and see me tomorrow. Marley, I want to talk to you."

Mr. Marley, today a man worth over a third of a million dollars in the street railway stock alone, arose in offended dignity. He was a trifle too important, too capable and too wealthy to be ordered about like a messenger boy by a man who might shortly be a convicted criminal. Molly had arranged an interview between her father and Bert on the previous afternoon, and Mr. Marley also now knew a thing or two.

"I would suggest tomorrow," he stated coldly. "I should much prefer to talk with you during business hours."

"This ain't business," said Sledge, leading the way into the library, where he took a seat in an alcove.

Marley followed him reluctantly. "If it is my family affairs"—he began in protest.

"Sit down," directed Sledge. "Bert Glider has been making threats against me."

"Has he?" inquired Marley noncommittally.

"Tell him to quit or make good," ordered Sledge.

"Really, Mr. Sledge, I don't see where I can interfere," reproved Mr. Marley. "The matter is entirely between you and Bert."

"I decline to interfere."  
"Making Bert a bum cuts no ice?"  
"His temporary financial condition has no bearing in the matter. I should feel humiliated to think that I had allowed that trifling consideration to be a factor."

"Huh!" grunted Sledge. "You got enough for both, eh?"  
"Quite enough," and Marley reflected, with a pleasant feeling of superiority upon the moment soon to come when this political and commercial bully would be cringing.

"Then watch out for your eye," warned Sledge and, rising, walked out into the drawing rooms.

He found Molly quite busy, but since she was only occupied with a state representative and a local millionaire and the mayor and the young champion of the tennis players' club, he borrowed her.

"Sure," grunted Sledge. "I'm gonna break him too."

She was astounded to see how they melted before him and almost had a feeling of wildly clutching at the coat tails of the mayor, whom she heartily disliked.

"I'm sorry for you, Molly," Sledge told her as he pre-empted the piano alcove. "I got to hand you another jolt."

"You're a fast worker," she complimented him. "But you'll have to work faster. I just gave Willie Walters a hint of the splendid news we are to have for the Blade, and he is tickled to death."

"Good work!" applauded Sledge. "I want that pulled quick."

"Oh, Frank!" exclaimed his wife in shocked tones. "I should think you wouldn't like to play cards with such a man!"

The husband answered proudly: "That's all right. I nearly always win."—London Answers.

At His Own Estimate.  
"What are the qualifications required to make a successful card player?" asked Mrs. Trumpitt casually.

"Well, it's hard to say," replied her husband thoughtfully. "A man must be cool, calculating, crafty, cunning and have a touch of meanness in his disposition."

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Socially Successful.  
Mr. Brown's colored valet desired to entertain some of his friends, and his master contributed generously to the cause. The next morning Mr. Brown asked Mose if his party had been a success. Mose drew himself up a couple inches above his usual height.

"Was it a success, sub?" he exclaimed delightedly. "Well, sub, it sho' wuz! Dey wuz sixteen invited and twenty dat come!"—New York Post.

CHAPTER V.  
Sledge Reduces His Salary List.

SLEDGE walked back through the Occident in such a mood that the regular members of the "Good morning, Ben," brigade fell away from him like bar flies from a cake of ice. Even Doc Turner, waiting the daily advent of the boss, met with the rebuff of stony silence and sat down in his favorite newspaper corner, with his trusted brown beret jammed down to his ears and his inch long stub of cigar puckered tightly in at the corner of his wrinkled lips, where it looked at a distance like a speck of black rot in a dusty potato. Doc had digested, condensed and purveyed news to the big chief so long that he felt a proprietorship in that department and was justly offended when Tom Bendix came in a few minutes later.

"What's the matter with Sledge this morning?" snarled Doc.

"How do I know?" immediately snarled Bendix. "I don't sleep with him."  
"He's got a grouch on him a foot thick," complained Doc. "He gave me a cold turndown. Walked straight through me without even a grunt."  
"I'll tell Sledge he'd better be careful," sarcastically commented Bendix. "Well, Kelly, what do you want?"  
Schooner Kelly, who was afflicted with pink whiskers and a perennial thirst, stopped scratching.

"Two bits," he stated, with admirable clarity. "What's the matter with Big Ben?"  
"He's teething," replied Bendix, producing the desired two bits, without which Schooner Kelly would be a nuisance for hours to come."  
A low broved thug, with a long and wide scar sunk in one cheek, drew Bendix mysteriously aside.

"Tell him you told me," advised Bendix, weighing the matter carefully, for of such trifles was political control constructed.

"Is that the worst news I can carry?" demanded the other, disappointed.

"If there's any worse we'll send it out when the wagon backs up," responded Bendix dryly.

"All right, captain," agreed the tale bearer. "Say, can you slip me an ace?"

Bendix slipped him an ace from a fust provided for that purpose.

"Thanks," said the thug. "Say, what's the matter with Sledge?"  
"None of your business!" snapped Bendix, with a wondering glance at the back room, and he waded through the usual morning lineup with that wonder growing on him. The actions and bearing of Sledge varied by so thin a half's breadth from day to day that a notable variation meant some thing.

Continued in next week's Banner.

Agora Rabbits.  
The long haired Angora rabbit is a native of Asia Minor. Its name is derived from the province of Angora, where almost all the animals of whatever species have long fine silky hair. Over a hundred years ago the beauty of the Angora rabbit attracted attention, and it was introduced to Europe. The peasants of Switzerland, Savoy and Flanders have long bred the animal, and in those countries Angora rabbits are a source of considerable profit. Soft furry "Angora" caps and mittens and other articles of clothing are knit from yarn spun from the hair of the Angora rabbit. The hair is not sheared periodically, like the fleece of sheep, but is combed off every few months. In the course of a year some three-quarters of a pound of hair is obtained from a single animal.

Labor.  
Labor is the contest of the life of man with an opposite. Literally it is the quantity or lapse, loss or failure of human life, caused by any effort. It is usually confused with effort itself or the application of power, but there is much effort which is merely a mode of recreation or of pleasure. The most beautiful actions of the human body and the highest results of the human intelligence are conditions or achievements of quite unlaborious—nay, of recreative—effort. It is the negative quantity—or quantity of defeat—which has to be counted against every feat and of defect which has to be counted against every fact or deed of men. In brief, it is "that quantity of our toil which we die in."—John

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"The Dutchman down in the Eighth ward has rented his back room to the Hazelnut club," he stated.  
"Well?" inquired Bendix.  
"Well, the Hazelnut club has Charley Atwood for its president, and Charley is a brother-in-law of Purcell."  
"I see," said Bendix. "I suppose Dutch Klein knew this?"  
"The Cameron picture's down off his back bar."

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