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Texas and Market Streets, Shreveport

A TALE OF RED ROSES



By
**GEORGE
RANDOLPH
CHESTER**

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CHAPTER VII.

Marley and Bozzam Plan to Outwit Sledge.

PRESIDENT MARLEY smiled as he met Bozzam. The two gentlemen agreed the weather was fine.

"I'm afraid you're too late, Marley," laughed Bozzam. "Our subscription list is ready to close."

"I have all the street railway stock I care for," laughed Marley in return. "I only came up to take your measure for the battle."

"It ought not to be so fierce," replied Bozzam, in the usually friendly manner of men who are about to cut each other's commercial throats. "There should be room for two good car systems in this town."

"Not on the same streets," objected Marley. "Don't you think it rather foolish to parallel our lines, Mr. Bozzam? The route, as published, looks like malice to me."

"I have no voice in that matter," declared Mr. Bozzam, eying his caller narrowly. "You should see our majority stockholder about that."

"I see," mused Mr. Marley. "Who is your principal stockholder?"

"I believe the gentleman's name is Sledge—Benjamin F. Sledge," Bozzam informed him, with a smile. "Perhaps you've heard of him."

"Yes, I have," admitted Marley, whose smile was more or less strained. "Friend of yours, I believe," suggested Bozzam, still smiling, and still studying Mr. Marley's countenance interestedly.

"Not offensively so," denied Marley. "Indeed!" exclaimed Bozzam, with a splendid assumption of perplexity. "You know, I find it very difficult to unravel the personal, political and commercial relationships of all you fellows. Frankly, I have believed until now that you were in on the game."

"Game?" repeated Marley. "I mean that I thought you were to benefit by the formation of this new company," exclaimed Bozzam with an apparent trace of confusion.

"Benefit?" exploded Marley. "Why, it has all but broke me. Do you think it's any benefit to a man to have his only valuable holdings reduced from par to thirty-five?"

"By George, I'm shocked!" sympathized Bozzam. "Why, I thought you and Sledge were in perfect understanding."

"I don't know where you acquired that absurd impression, but it is entirely wrong," asserted Mr. Marley, with much vehemence. "Mr. Sledge would do everything in his power to hurt me."

"And I presume that you would do him a like favor if you had the opportunity," grinned Bozzam.

"I would not say that," hastily returned Marley, feeling that he had enough trouble on his hands. "You're thinking it, though," laughed Bozzam.

Mr. Marley flushed slightly, but kept discreetly silent.

"I thought so," Bozzam chuckled. "Mr. Marley, how much of the stock of the reorganized company do you own?"

"Two thousand six hundred and twenty-five shares."

"A little over a fourth," commented Bozzam and drew a sheet of writing paper toward him, on which he figured for a moment. "To gain control you would need 2,376 shares additional," he announced. "How many of the stockholders would vote with you in an emergency?"

"Not very many," confessed Marley. "Naturally a share of our trouble is blamed to me, and I am not very popular at present."

"Certainly not," agreed Bozzam. "Fussing with pickers isn't safe, anyhow. You'd better buy the stock."

"Buy it?" protested Marley. "Great Scott, man, what do I want with more of it?"

"Would you like to win out on this little game of Sledge's?"

"Show me how," demanded Marley. "How active are you willing to be?" inquired Bozzam. "Are you willing to jump through a hoop?"

"I'll do anything that is lawful."

"Then you'll go the limit," smiled Bozzam. "Your first step will be to buy those two thousand odd shares at thirty-five. Let's see." He figured it out. "They will cost you a little over \$82,000."

"I haven't the money," confessed Marley. "Sledge has cleaned me out of both cash and credit."

"Borrow it on your stock."

"I can't borrow over twenty on it. I couldn't raise enough on my total unencumbered stock."

Bozzam walked to the window and looked down into the street for some little time, during which Marley watched him in silent wonder, struggling against his rising hope.

"I think I can raise a loan for you at twenty," Bozzam reported as the

result of his deliberation. "If that is not enough I might have it arranged to buy the balance needed and vote it with you."

"But what is the plan?" demanded Marley. "I don't see what good control of a ruined company is going to do me nor why I should break myself buying worthless stock."

"Because Sledge isn't liberal enough with me," returned Bozzam. "Why, Marley, don't you see that this company of ours is a fake?"

"You don't mean it?" gasped Marley. "Did Sledge have you start this company in order to break me?"

"Oh, hush!" scorned Bozzam. "He did it to sell the old company our franchises, for the nice little quarter of a million dollars the public has just put up for stock in your reorganized company. Our stock is plenty, strictly the public has been allowed to buy fifty thousand of it, we got two hundred thousand and Sledge seven hundred and fifty. The public is the only person who has put up any money, and he gets his back. The only business we'll do is to sell our franchises and disband, with a 25 per cent dividend. The public gets twelve and a half thousand, we get fifty, and Sledge gets the balance of your quarter of a million."

He paused to let all the beauty of that logical little plan sink into Mr. Marley's inner being.

"Great Scott!" murmured Mr. Marley and wiped his brow. "But how can we stop him?"

"Get control of the company. Call a special meeting. When we offer to sell you our franchises stand pat and refuse to pay more than \$50,000 for the franchises. You can defy us to build and make a fine grand stand play out of it when you know that we won't. We'll accept fifty thousand, and then you juggle it to Bill Moodson and Timbers and me a hundred thousand on the side. You've saved your company a hundred thousand, we've dragged down what we ought to have for our work, Sledge gets the hook, and your stock bounces up to par. Why, man, you'll not only be where you were before, but you'll clean up close to a hundred thousand profit on the stunt."

"Order some whisky," Marley suggested to his host.

Sledge, in the luxurious little room which he occupied for an hour each day as president of the First National, gazed stonily at Bendix as he punched the button on his desk.

"Chamberlain's house," he speculated. "Hunh!"

"Of course Marley gave notes for it. Thirty, sixty and ninety days and four months; four payments, of \$7,000 each."

In answer to the bell Cashier Davis came in with the pomposity of the owner of the mint mingled with the obsequiousness of a messenger boy.

"Frank Marley," rumbled Sledge accusingly. "He's got money. Where did he get it?"

"Not here, sir," smiled Mr. Davis, rubbing his fish fat hands together.

"Find out," directed Sledge, and Davis took his sleek white sideburns and his white waistcoat out of the room.

"He's using cash, even in the payment of his grocery bills," supplemented Bendix. "Young Keene tells me that he saw into Marley's pocketbook."

bound to be worth more than thirty-five. Speculators have grabbed it, I guess."

"They'd make a noise," objected Sledge, glaring down at the cuspidor, which, in this room, took the place of the hand hole in the gate as a source of inspiration.

"How about Bozzam?"

"I've tried my best to trace something back to his crowd, but I can't find a connection any place."

Sledge was silent for a moment. "Bozzam's in it," he said decisively. "I don't like to think so," defended Bendix. "He seems to work clean."

"You found him," explained Sledge. "He's in it. He's a crook."

Even Bendix grinned. "I don't deny that, but he's too wise to start anything with you. That's what I bank on."

"He thinks I'm on the pan," judged Sledge. "He's a stranger."

Davis came in. "We have telephoned all the banks," he reported. "None of them has made any recent loans to Mr. Marley nor have any checks been drawn in his favor."

"Hunh!" grunted Sledge. He stolidly walked out of the office, followed by Bendix, and climbed into his waiting runabout, over which the crossing policeman stood guard. "Don't buy any more stock," he directed Bendix and drove off. "Sell it."

He strode into the offices of the traction company and stopped at Hunt's desk.

"Marley drawn any money here?" he wanted to know.

"His salary," replied Hunt, fawning servilely on the big man who stood at his side.

"Is he selling any stock?"

"Not that I know of, sir."

"Making any flash?"

"Not particularly. He has been whistling."

"Making any threats?"

"Not that I heard."

"Hunh!" and Sledge turned from the desk. "Anybody in with him?"

"I think his daughter, sir," smirked Hunt, and Mr. Glider, unless he have gone out the other way."

Sledge looked down at his lapel. The red rose was an excellent specimen except that it had one struggling petal in which was a worm hole. He jerked off that petal and walked unannounced into Marley's office, pausing just inside the door, struck dumb by a tableau being enacted at the opposite entrance.

Bert Glider, in the act of departing, was kissing Molly goodbye, and Marley, at his desk, was looking on unconcernedly. Bert grinned impudently at Sledge and departed. Molly grinned demurely at him and sat in the big leather chair opposite her father. Marley grinned cheerfully and offered him a cigar.

"Fine weather," he observed.

"Who give out the dope about extending the Ridgewood avenue line?" Sledge gruffly wanted to know.

"I did," returned Marley calmly. "I thought it might help the price of my stock. It's been going down of late."

"Who gave you the word?"

"I didn't need it," Marley reminded him. "I'm still president of the road, you know."

"I've called it off," Sledge informed him. "You got no franchise."

"I beg your pardon," Marley smilingly interrupted. "The original franchise granted a line to the end of Grace street. When it was cut through to connect with Ridgewood avenue the authorization of the cut and all the condemnation proceedings were for an extension of Grace street."

"May I tell Mr. Sledge what we intend to do out there?" Molly pleasantly inquired.

"I don't mind," granted Mr. Marley, beaming upon his child.

"We plan to carry out the original idea of building an amusement park on the Person property and to drop the Lincoln road project if the stockholders don't object at their meeting tomorrow," she happily told him. "Mr. Glider thinks it a much better location. Shall you be at the meeting, Mr. Sledge?"

In reply he chuckled at her.

"You're a corker!" he complimented her.

"You don't own much stock any more, do you?" she went on, delighted with her catechism.

"Enough to stick around," he reminded her. "Marley, are you figuring to put something over at this meeting?"

"Are you?" returned Marley blandly.

"Hunh!" Sledge half laughed. "Molly, my Bob is matched against the champion fourth pound bull of Chicago tomorrow night. I can arrange for you to see the scrap without these roughnecks getting a peek at you."

"Thank you," she replied. "I'm sure I can't come, however. I've never seen a real dog fight, and I don't want to see one. But I hope Bob wins."

"He'll win," declared Sledge confidently. "He's never been licked yet."

"Everybody gets it some time, don't they?" Molly dimpled up at him.

"Full of thought, he went over to see Bozzam, who now had an office in the newest palace of commerce.

"Look here, you big slob," he gently observed, "you can't bully me, and you can't bluff me. When you get the goods on me is the time for you to get

"I've tried my best to trace something back to his crowd, but I can't find a connection any place."

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"Everybody gets it some time, don't they?" Molly dimpled up at him.

busy, but until then you keep your trap closed. I'm not one of your village pikers."

Sledge regarded him fixedly for a moment.

"You're in it, all right," he decided. "Hunh!" And he walked out.

Continued in next week's Banner.

The American Spirit.

Save to the aged clerk with his silver hair and those destined followers in the race of life whose duties are the bars of habit, work in America is not a "squirrel's wheel." The English Wesley once said, "I can plod." The American says, "I can plod if I can see something ahead to plod for."

In this country of vast dreams and huge fulfillments idleness is a rusty sword in the scabbard, but work that has no point to it turns the iron around and is even more excruciating. The resiliency of the American spirit is proverbial. It is born of hilltop visions of work that is profitable to do, endeavor that gets one on. Everything must be charged with a more or less useful idealism. A business man said to a clergyman who urged him to join his church, "If there is anything I can do that will really count I will come in, but I don't want to join the church just to sit around and sing." It is this intuitive sense that he has taken hold of a great work that explains much of the American's enthusiasm and unquenchable buoyancy.—From "American Ideals," by Clayton Sedgwick Cooper.

Grasshopper Glacier.

Grasshopper glacier, at the headwaters of the East and West Rosebud rivers in the Beartooth mountains of Montana, derived its name from the myriads of grasshoppers imbedded in the perpetual ice of that neighborhood. Many of the specimens are as perfect as if preserved in alcohol for exhibition. In the opinion of scientists who made a first hand study of the glacier the insects were caught in a periodic southward flight and succumbed to the cold in their attempt to cross the mountain range. The huge ice mass, under whose crust the grasshoppers are buried, is virtually under the shadow of Granite peak, 12,842 feet high, the highest in Montana. Only recently has its existence as a perpetual glacier been verified, though as long as forty years ago it was traditionally known in early Montana mining camps and mountain towns. It was considered then merely a fanciful tale of pioneer prospectors and fur trappers who had penetrated to the upper reaches of this branch of the rugged Rockies.—Argonaut.

Making a Rug "Antique."

How "genuine antique rugs" are manufactured and prepared for European and American markets is told by a writer in the National Geographic Magazine who visited Bagdad.

The shopping streets seem like tunnels, he writes. They are arched overhead with brick to keep out the heat. Thus they run, like subways, up and down the bazaar quarter. Through those long, stifling, faintly lighted tunnels throngs the eternal crowd of men, mules and camels.

Often you will see a fine rug lying flat in the fifth of a narrow street, ground beneath the tramp of men and beasts, but there is method in this. Foreigners make oriental rugs, bright and new, in Persia and sell them through Bagdad. Since an "old rug" is worth more, wily brokers have hit on this shameful way to make a new rug look old.

Prerequisite.

Junior—So you didn't propose to her, after all? Weed—No. And I'm not going to. When I got to her house I found her chasing a mouse with a broom.—Puck.

Hereditary.

Honx—Poor old Henpecke has to mind the baby. Joax—Yes. It's wonderful how that baby takes after its mother.—Philadelphia Record.

Bad men excuse their faults; good men leave them.—Johnson.



A SPRING NOVELTY.

This is one of the very newest sport suits—a saffron colored silk jersey cut on beautiful lines. The skirt closes down the front with big brown novelty buttons, as does the single breasted loose coat. Please notice how smart are the collar and cuffs of brown glazed leather, which is also used to face the slit pockets. The string belt is another interesting feature. With this elegant outfit goes a brown chip sailor simply trimmed with a soft bow and band of satin ribbon. The whole design speaks of simple elegance.

FOOTGEAR.

The ultra smart sports shoes exhibit the instep and toe strap effects. The newest thing in oxfords for use at the southern spring resorts is low of heel, rounded of toe, in white suede, toe strapped and rather heavily trimmed with the finest of black patent kid. This model is repeated in white and tan, in all white and in all tan. Many of the high topped laced shoes in white suede or glaze kid show both the instep and the toe strap simulations. The reason for their vogue is not far to seek. They shorten the apparent length of the feet. Another vogue in boots is the high topped, front laced model in African brown suede.

YOUR SPRING BONNET.

The newest shade for hats is wistaria. It is particularly fetching as seen in the little helmets, which do not look a bit wistaria because smoothly covered with crepe georgette and trimmed most unquely with reseda green leaves. This foliage is also in crepe, but of the crinkly sort, and how it permanently retains its crispness is known only to the maker. Possibly, instead of a wistaria crane helmet, you would prefer one in gleaming material, like a brown novelty straw.

Fashion.

"What makes the fashion?" a fashionable woman once asked the great designer Worth.

"What I make and you wear—that is the fashion, madam," he replied.

Evil grows and strengthens by endurance.—Cicero.

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