

# Wallingford In His Prime

By GEORGE RANDOLPH CHESTER

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## CHAPTER VI.

**A Little Business Talk.**  
**T**OAD JESSOP, whose freckles were so strong that they made him look like a man, had tried all the seats on that side of the car except the one occupied by J. Rufus Wallingford when the jessing and panting and rheumatic jointed old accommodation train stopped with no apparent provocation, and before Toad's very eyes appeared a lineman, descending a telegraph pole with alternate stabs of his splendidly spiked feet. The lineman, reaching the ground and picking up a few scattered tools, climbed into the car, leaving the scenery absolutely vacant except for some bare rolling hills on his side of the train and on the other some equally bare farland.

Apparently finding the additional weight of one bony faced human being too much for its feasibility, the train presently heaved itself rid of some heavy machinery; then it puffed and quivered relievedly away, though not so rapidly but that Wallingford, gazing idly out the window, had ample time to read upon the largest machinery crate, "Dougalbobbler Brothers, Dougalville."

In the meantime Toad Jessop was acquiring information as rapidly as the bony faced lineman could deliver it to him.

"Say, what was you doin' up on that pole?" demanded Toad, planting himself firmly upon his knees just in front of the seat the pole climber had taken.

The lineman sorted out Toad's blue eyes from amid his freckles and liked them. "I was up there straightening a kink in the wire," he answered.

"Why?" demanded Toad.

"It was gettin' the messages twisted."

"How?"

"Well, you see the 'o's' and 'a's' and 'e's,' the 'w's' and 'm's' and 'n's' and such letters as that slide right around a kink, but the 'k's' and 'q's' and 'y's' and 'x's,' especially the capital 'X's,' always stick."

This being a perfectly logical explanation and one which anybody could understand, Toad pursued that subject no further.

"What's all that machinery for they put off back there?" he next inquired.

"That's a calico mill," the man promptly responded.

Toad flattened his face against the glass in a vain attempt to look backward, then he hurried to the rear door. A curve and a hill hid the spot from view. "What kind of a mill?" he asked doubtfully upon his return.

"A calico mill," repeated the lineman. "Didn't you notice the acres and acres of calico grass around there?"

Toad, with another glance at the rear door, shook his head sadly and looked out the window in the hope that he might see a stray sample of calico grass. He was still at that vain and unprofitable employment when Wallingford waded past on his way to the smoking compartment.

"Say, boss," he called Wallingford, "do you know calico grass when you see it?"

"I'm afraid not, Toad," replied Wallingford, smiling. "Why?"

"There was so much of it back where we stopped," explained Toad with a troubled brow, "and I didn't see it. They put off the machines for a calico mill there, you know."

Wallingford turned with a puzzled expression to the bony faced passenger, who looked up at him and laughed.

"He's such a smart lookin' kid I wouldn't help tryin' to see how much he'd stand for," the lineman pleasantly observed, and Toad wheeled instantly to bend upon him a clear and indignant glare.

"Ore crushing machinery, isn't it?" guessed Wallingford.

"Iron," replied the other with a nod, surveying with interest and approval the important looking big man, whose round pink face spoke so plainly of cheerfulness and good living.

"Much of a deposit?" inquired Wallingford, with the instant interest of a man commercially inclined.

"They say it's a wonder. The Dougalbobbler brothers own it, whoever they are. They're hustlers. Next week a spur track is to be put in back to the mines." He panned and smiled over the magic of things. "Dougalville! There ain't a livin' soul back there now, but in a month it'll be a good sized town, out hustlin' for electric lights and trolley cars."

"Also it will have a real estate boom and six saloons," agreed Wallingford, and passed on to the smoker.

Toad followed him. "Say," observed Toad in a pained tone, "that man back there," here he pulled down Wallingford's car and whispered into it, "why, he's a liar!"

J. Rufus Wallingford, respectable and prosperous real estate dealer, and his messenger boy, valet, companion and friend, Toad Jessop, finished their business in the northwest in four days. On the return trip Wallingford had mileage torn off as far as bleak barren Dougalville only. He had expected to stop between trains and survey the lonesomeness as mere raw material, but he found there a tiny telegraph station and waiting room which had been shovelled off a freight car intact, apparently even to the operator, for that functionary was inside; he found a roughly built frame shack labeled "Kimbley mine—Office;" he found a gang of railroad laborers putting down a half graded, wabby spur track, and up the ravine into which it was headed he saw, against a background of soiled little tents, a swarm of human ants setting machinery in place and another swarm digging an impressive looking hole in the ground.

From the same train by which Wallingford had arrived there descended a drove of clay footed laborers, and as these, by common impulse, surged immediately toward the office, Wallingford watched the accommodation creek upon its jolty way toward the happy land of taxis and bathtubs and push buttons. For relief from the intolerable landscape, which would not alter nor decay, but lay in its flat sterility forever and ever, he watched the sifting of the clay hung laborers, who were admitted into the office one at a time and came out again with little slips of paper in their hands, to trudge up the ravine toward the Kimbley mine and more clay.

When the last one had returned to his native element Wallingford walked slowly across to the office, but to his surprise he found it locked. Hearing loud voices, however, he stopped and listened in perplexity. Suddenly, from around the corner of the building there dashed two of the clay decorated callers, followed by half a dozen well muscled gentlemen who looked highly unnatural without striped clothing. These, howling a choice collection of epithets, expletives and blasphemies, and stooping to pick up missiles by the way, were followed by a man with blood colored hair and big, flat, outstanding ears almost as red, who was so bow legged that a beer keg could have been rolled through his wicket. This man was evidently the general of the pursuing army, for he directed it not only with energy, but with rancor.

"Soak 'em!" he cried in a twanging voice. "Soak 'em, can't you! Soak 'em, soak 'em, soak 'em, soak 'em!" and he jumped up and down like a dancing hoop.

The two laborers had struck for the track, and were now headed due southeast, with an apparently steadfast determination to overtake the accommodation, dodging, by mere instinct, the specimens of rock ballast which were hurled after them.

"What's the excitement?" asked Wallingford of the violent haired one.

The man turned respectfully from the pleasures of the chase and surveyed Wallingford carefully, from silk hat to polished toes, and from shoe laces to satin cravat, where, upon the focusing point of a two carat diamond, his fish-belly-blue eyes came to a permanent rest.

"What excitement?" he sullenly inquired.

"The mob scene," returned Wallingford, endeavoring to smile in spite of his growing resentment.

"You see, the proposition's too good," the man considered that for a moment in careful silence. "What do you want?" he finally demanded, his eyes, however, still remaining at the diamond level.

"Civility!" snapped Wallingford. "Who's running this mine?"

"The Dougalbobbler brothers," was the prompt and rather emphatic response.

"Where will I find one of them?" This time there was a considerable hesitation before he replied:

"Well, I'm Alec Dougalbobbler."

Wallingford inspected his man anew, and in spite of his habitual diplomacy he grinned. "Why, Alec, I'm ashamed of you," he bluffed, having estimated Dougalbobbler to be the arrant coward that he was. "You never should allow such a peevish impulse to get the better of you. You should be cheerful and happy, as I am, and when you are in a pleasanter frame of mind I'd like to talk a little business with you."

"What do you want?" again demanded Alec, but this time in a much milder and more conciliatory tone.

"They tell me you own the land across the track there," and Wallingford waved his arm in the general direction of the fat desolation.

Mr. Dougalbobbler, with a nod that tilted his ears upward and forward like the sweep of an aeroplane, admitted that such was the case.

"You expect to have a town over there by and by?"

The aeroplane tilted once more, its thin wafer of a fore rudder cleaving the way.

"The sooner it's there the better it is for your mine?"

"Another tilt."

"Well, I own over 500 brand new portable houses. If you'll sell me that land at a reasonable figure I'll cut it up into building lots, have my 500 odd houses erected within two weeks, help you in your advertising, and there's your town ready made!" And by way of introduction he handed Alec his card.

Mr. Dougalbobbler dropped his eyes to the card and let them rest there in cautious speculation. "I'll have to see Frank about this," he stated after mature thought. "We'd ought to see Ralph, too, but he's in the east." And, turning toward the ravine with a side glance to see that Wallingford was turning with him, he started in the direction of the incipient mine.

"Are you selling any stock?" asked Wallingford.

"A little," admitted Alec. "That proposition is too big for individual capital. That's Ralph's department."

Wallingford glanced at his companion and smiled. "No trouble to find investors, I suppose?" he ventured.

"Not very much," was the slow reply, as Alec shifted his gaze from side to side upon the ground. "You see, the proposition's too good. We got the government geological survey the minute it came out and bought up the best iron veins it showed. This is the richest iron field since the Mesaba range was opened. Look at this survey," and he produced a pocket worn, governmental, cross section map, showing an iron ore bearing stratum thick enough to take up half of the drawing.

"Some iron there, I guess," Wallingford admitted, passing back the paper.

"Enough to build all the engines, locomotives, dynamos, battleships and cannons in the world for the next fifty years," asserted Alec, pulling his eyes up to the cravat level again. "Our mining claims cover all the thick part of that deposit, and here's the assay we've had made of the ore."

Just then, rounding the rocky corner of a red streaked hill, they came face to face with Frank Dougalbobbler.

Wallingford would have known him anywhere. With the exception of the hair, which in Frank's case was the color of well bleached hay, the brothers were so alike—ears, eyes, noses and mouths—as to be libelous caricatures of each other.

Also found no difficulty in looking into his brother's eyes with earnest inquiry as he propounded Wallingford's plan.

"Well, I don't know," said Frank uneasily, shifting from one foot to the other. "We always like to get in on all the profits of everything we do."

"I'll make you more profit than you can obtain in any other way," asserted Wallingford confidently. "I'll have a good reporter for a press association come up here the day my portable houses are on the ground. He'll see a blank landscape with a few stakes driven into its expressionless countenance; he'll see an army of men juggling the complete walls, floors and roofs of houses; then he'll see a finished little city all ready to cook ham and eggs in 500 cheerful homes and preparing to elect a tomato haired mayor."

Both brothers smiled thinly, and Alec even almost bowed.

"And where do we get in on the real estate end?" inquired Frank.

"Sell me the center twenty acres over there, solid, at \$100 an acre and alternate acres surrounding that at the same price," offered Wallingford. "You can figure for yourselves the result of holding those alternate acres until the city grows up around them."

Once more the Dougalbobbler brothers then present gazed deeply and earnestly into each other's eyes.

"I guess we'll consult Ralph about this," decided Alec. "We never do anything very important without all of us agreeing on it."

"You'll take a chance on Ralph or you won't have any proposition to offer him," declared Wallingford. "There's an express train thunders through here in about thirty minutes, I'm going to board that train and slam away from this morgue full of dead scenery before it gives me the willies."

The brothers again smiled thinly. "If we don't stop to consult Ralph," ventured Frank after a vacillating hesitation, "we'll have to have a better price for that land."

"You'll find me on the station platform waiting for that answer," asserted Wallingford stiffly and left them alone to think it over. He was disappointed in not finding them more enthusiastic.

(To Be Continued.)

Gladstone's Domestic Rule.

Mr. Gladstone once said that he had solved the domestic problem in this way: "Whenever Mrs. Gladstone insists I submit; and I whenever I insist she submits." He didn't say, however, whether they took turns about insisting and submitting. Marriage is a failure when one of the parties insists on being the insister and doesn't take turns in submitting to the submitter.

## FRENCH PROCKS FOR THE LITTLE WOMEN



KIDDIES WHITE DRESS

The little girl shown in the picture wears a dainty batiste gown whose

fills are edged with picot lace. The round neck and short kimono sleeves are also trimmed with the lace. The wide sash is tied in a big butterfly bow. The little cap, also of batiste and lace, is a charmingly original idea. Cuffs and costumes are both of Parisian workmanship.

## CAUGHT A 200-POUND FISH.

### A Two-Hour Battle Necessary to Land This Alligator Gar.

The record fish has been caught. The fish is an alligator gar. It was caught after two hours of hard work in a slough off the Mississippi river near Quincy.

Its length is seven feet two inches, and its weight 200 pounds. Its mouth, open, measures nineteen inches across. Around the body its measurement is thirty-eight inches.

The teeth of the fish measure an inch in length, and are about the size of a lead pencil. Within the body were four thirty-two eggs, one carp fifteen inches long, and numerous smaller fish.

—Springfield (Ill.) Dispatch to Chicago Tribune

### The Doctor's Best Cure.

"Doctor," said the druggist, "this is a bitter mess you have ordered for Mr. Wambat."

"I know it is."

"What are you trying to cure?"

"Trying to cure him calling me out in the middle of the night when there's nothing the matter with him."—Louisville Courier-Journal.

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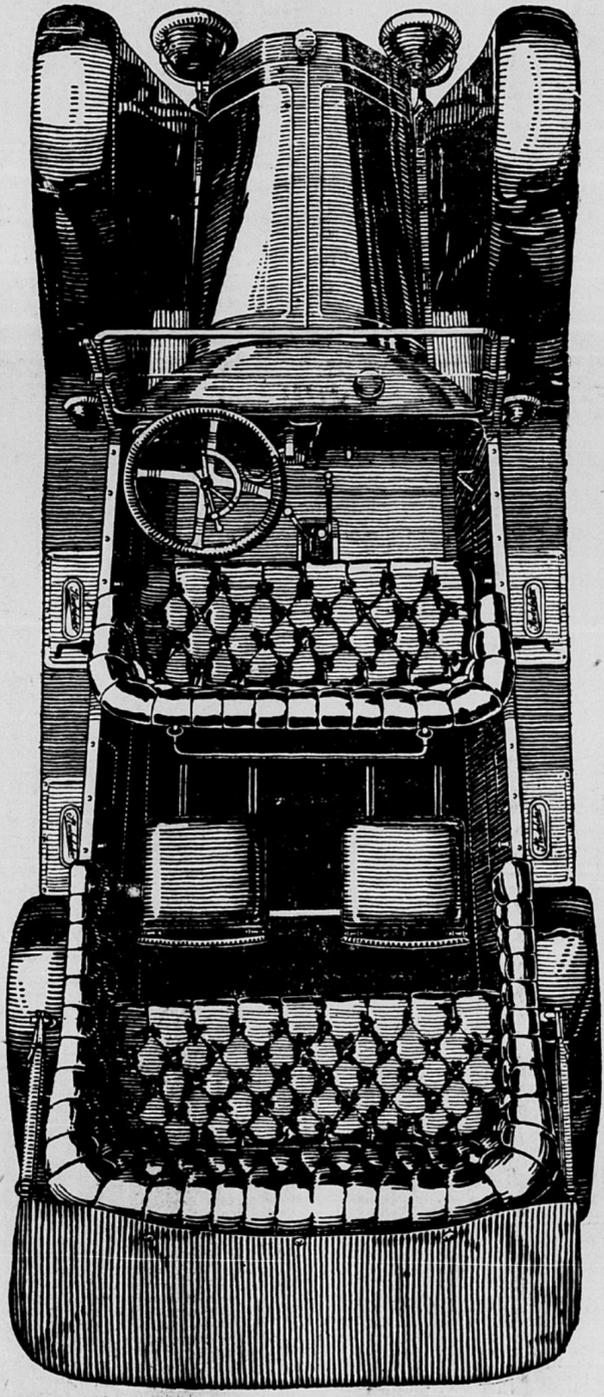
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