

The Real Adventure

A NOVEL

By Henry Kitchell Webster

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CHAPTER XXIII.—Continued.

There was something peculiarly horrifying to him in the exhibition Randolph was making of himself. He'd never in his life taken a drink except convivially, and then he took as little as would pass muster. Going off alone and deliberately fuddling oneself, as a means of escaping unpleasant realities, struck him as an act of the basest cowardice. But for that picture of Rose he'd have gone long ago and left Randolph to his bemused reflections. Only . . . Rose had asked him to drop in on the doctor for a visit. "Did she mean she wanted him to visit?"

He tried, though not very successfully, to conceal his violent disapproval of the task, when he said: "Look here, Jim! What is the matter with you? Are you sober enough to tell me?"

Randolph put down his glass. "I love you," he said. "I'm Eleanor's kept man. Well kept, oh, yes! Beautifully kept. I'm nothing but a possession of hers! A trophy of sorts, an ornament. I'm something she's made. I have a big practice. I'm the most fashionable doctor in Chicago. They come here, the women, in shoals. That's Eleanor's doing. I'm a faker, a fraud. I pose for them. I play up. I give them what they want. And that's her doing. They go silly about me; fancy they're in love with me. I haven't done a lick of honest work in the last year. I can't work. She won't let me work. She—she's another me. Wherever I turn, there she is, smoothing things out, trying to make it easy, trying to anticipate my wants. I've only one want. That's to be left alone. She can't do that. She's insatiable. There's always something more she's trying to get, and I'm always trying to keep something away from her, and falling."

"And why? Do you want to know why, Aldrich? That's the cream of the thing. Because we're in love with each other. She wants me to live on her love. To have nothing else to live on. "Do you want to know what my notion of heaven is? It would be to go off alone, with one suit of clothes in a handbag, oh, and fifty or a hundred dollars in my pocket—I wouldn't mind that; I don't want to be a tramp—to some mining town, or slum, where I could start a game of rackets; where the things I'd get would be accident cases, confinement cases; real things, urgent things, that night and day are all alike to me. I'd like to start again and be poor; get this stink of easy money out of my nostrils. I'd like to see if I could make good on my own."

"You didn't see it," he echoed. "I know you didn't. You've never seen me at all, from the beginning, as anything but a machine. But why haven't you? You're a woman. If I ever saw a woman in my life, you're one all the way through. Why couldn't you see that I was a man? It isn't because I've got gray hair, nor because I'm fifty years old. I don't believe you're like that. But even back there in Chicago, the night we walked down the avenue from that store—or the night we had supper together after the show . . . "I suppose I ought to have seen," she said dutifully. "Ought to have known that that was all there was to it. But I didn't."

"Well, you see it now," he said solemnly. "I came back from New York, after that look at Rose, meaning to do it, meaning to talk it out with Eleanor and tell her why, and then go. Well, I talked. Talked cheap. But I didn't go. I'll never go. I'll go on getting softer and more of a faker; more dependent. And Eleanor will go on, eating me up until the last thing in me that's me myself is gone. And then, some day, she'll look at me and see that I'm nothing."

Then, with suddenly thickened speech (an affection, perhaps), he looked up at Rodney and demanded: "What are you looking so solemn about? Can't you take a joke? Come along and have another drink."

"No," Rodney said. "I'm going. And you'd better get to bed."

Rodney walked home that night like a man dazed. The vividness of one blazing idea blinded him. The thing that Randolph had seen and lacked the courage to do; the thing Rodney despised him for a coward for having failed to do—that thing Rose had done. Without knowing it, yielding to a blind, unreasoning instinct, he'd wanted Rose to live on his love. He'd tried to smooth things out for her, anticipate her wants. He'd wanted her soft, helpless, dependent. She'd seen, even then, something he'd been blind to—something he'd blinded himself to: that love, by itself, was not enough. That it could poison, as well as feed.

But she had won, among the rest of her spoils of victory, the thing she had originally set out to get. His friendship and respect. Friendship, he remembered her saying, was a thing you had to earn. When you'd earned it, it couldn't be withheld from you. Well, it was right she should be told that. He made it understand it to the full. He couldn't ask her to come back to him. But she must know that her respect was as necessary now to him as she'd once said his was to her. He must see her and tell her that.

He stopped abruptly in his walk. His bones, as the Psalmist said, turned to water. How should he confront that gaze of hers, which knew so much and understood so deeply—the with the memory of his two last ignominious encounters with her behind him?

CHAPTER XXIV.

Friends.

Except for the vacuum where the nose and heart of it all ought to have been, Rose's life in New York during

the year that got her on the highway to success as a designer of costumes for the theater was a good life, broadening, stimulating, seasoning. It rested, to begin with, on a foundation of adequate material comfort which the uncounted physical privations of the six months that preceded it made seem like positive luxury.

For several months after she came to New York to work for Galbraith she found him a martinet. She never once caught that twinkling gleam of understanding in his eye which had meant so much to her during the rehearsals of "The Girl Up-Stairs." His manner toward her carried out the tone of the letter she'd got from him in Chicago. It was stiff, formal, severe. He seldom praised her work, and never ungrudgingly. His censure was rare, too, to be sure, but this obviously was because Rose almost never gave him an excuse for it. Working for him in this mood gave her the uneasy sensation one experiences when walking abroad under a sultry, overcast sky, with mutterings and flashes in it. And then one night the storm broke.

They had lingered in the theater after the dismissal of a rehearsal, to talk over a change in one of the numbers Rose had been working on. It refused to come out satisfactorily. Rose thought she saw a way of doing it that would work better, and she had been telling him about it. Eagerly, at first, and with a blimp directness which, however, became clouded and troubled when she felt he wasn't paying attention. It was a difficulty with him she had encountered before.

But tonight, after an angry turn down the aisle and back, he suddenly cried out: "I don't know. I don't know what you've been talking about. I don't know, and I don't care." And then, confronting her, their faces not a foot apart, for by now she had got to her feet, his hands gripped together and shaking, his teeth clenched, his eyes glowing there in the half-light of the auditorium almost like an animal's, he demanded: "Can you see what's the matter with me? Haven't you seen it yet?"

Of course she saw it now, plainly enough. She sat down again, managing an air of deliberation about it, and gripped the back of the orchestra chair in front of her. He remained standing over her there in the aisle. When the heightening tension of the silence that followed this outburst had grown absolutely unendurable, she spoke. But the only thing she could find to say was almost ludicrously inadequate.

"No, I didn't see it until now. I'm sorry."

"You didn't see it," he echoed. "I know you didn't. You've never seen me at all, from the beginning, as anything but a machine. But why haven't you? You're a woman. If I ever saw a woman in my life, you're one all the way through. Why couldn't you see that I was a man? It isn't because I've got gray hair, nor because I'm fifty years old. I don't believe you're like that. But even back there in Chicago, the night we walked down the avenue from that store—or the night we had supper together after the show . . . "I suppose I ought to have seen," she said dutifully. "Ought to have known that that was all there was to it. But I didn't."

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CHAPTER XXIV. Friends. Except for the vacuum where the nose and heart of it all ought to have been, Rose's life in New York during

It was natural, of course, that the relation between them, after that, should not prove quite so simple and manageable. There were breathless days when the storm visibly hung in the sky; there were strained, stiff, self-conscious moments of rigidly enforced politeness. Things got said despite his resolute repression that had, as resolutely, to be ignored. But in the intervals of these failures there emerged a new thing—genuine friendliness, partnership.

It was just after Christmas that Abe Shuman took her away from Galbraith and put her to work exclusively on costumes. And the swift sequence of events within a month thereafter launched her in an independent business; the new partnership, with the details of which, through Jimmy Wallace, you are already sufficiently acquainted.

Her partner was Alice Perosini. She was the daughter of a rich Italian Jew, a beautiful—really a wonderful—person to look at, but a little unaccountable, especially with the gorgeous clothes she wore, in the circle of women who "did things," of which Rose had become a part. Rose took her time about deciding that she liked her, but ended by preferring her to all the rest. But the fact that they had become partners served, somehow, to divert a relation between them which might otherwise have developed into a first-class friendship. Not that they quarreled, or even disappointed each other in the close contacts of the day's work. But at the end of the day's work they tended to fly apart rather than to stick together. More and more Rose turned to Galbraith for a friendship that really understood; gripped deep.

There were long stretches of days, of course, when they saw nothing of each other, and Rose, as long as she had plenty to do, was never conscious of missing him. But the prospect of an empty Sunday morning, for instance, was always enormously brightened if he called up to say that it was empty for him, too, and shouldn't they go for a walk or a ferry-ride somewhere.

All told, she learned more about men, as such, from him than ever she had learned, consciously at least, from Rodney. She'd never been able to regard her husband as a specimen. He was Rodney, and generous, and it had never occurred to her either to generalize from him to other men or to explain anything about him on the mere ground of his masculinity. She began doing that now a little, and the exercise opened her eyes.

In a good many ways Galbraith and her husband were a good deal alike. Both were rough, direct, a little remorseless, and there was in both of them, right alongside the best and finest and clearest things they had, an unaccountable vein of childishness. She'd never been willing to call it by that name in Rodney. But when she saw it in Galbraith too, she wondered. Was that just the man of it? Did a man, as long as he lived, need somebody in the role of—mother? The thought all but suffocated her.

One Saturday morning, toward the end of May, Galbraith called up and wanted to know if she wouldn't come over to his Long Island farm the following morning and spend the day. She had visited the place two or three times, and had always enjoyed it immensely there. It wasn't much of a farm, but there was a delightful old Revolutionary farmhouse on it, with ceilings seven feet high, and casement windows, and the floors of all the rooms on different levels; and Galbraith, there, was always quite at his best. His sister and her husband, whom he had brought over from England when he bought the place, ran it for him. Rose accepted eagerly.

Galbraith met her with a dogcart and a fat pony, and when they had logged their way to their destination, they spent what was left of the morning looking over the farm. Then there was a midday farm dinner, which Rose astonished herself by dining with as it deserved, and by feeling sleepy at the conclusion of it.

Coming into the veranda about four o'clock, and finding her, Galbraith suggested that they go for a walk. Two hours later, having swung her legs over a stone wall which had a comfortably inviting flat top, she remained sitting there and let her gaze rest, unfocused, on the pleasant farm land below them.

After a glance at her he leaned back against the wall at her side and began filling his pipe. She dropped her hand on his nearer shoulder. After all these months of friendship it was the first approach to a caress that had passed between them. "You're a good friend," she said; and then the hand that had rested on him so lightly suddenly gripped hard. "And I guess I need one."

He went on filling his pipe. "Anything special you need one for?" he asked.

She gave a ragged little laugh. "I guess not. Just somebody strong and steady to hold on to like this."

"Well," he said, very deliberately, "you want to realize this: You say I'm a friend, and I am, but if there is anything in this friendship which can be of use to you, you're entitled to everything there is in it. Because you made it."

"One person can't make a friendship," she said. "But you are content with it, aren't you? Like this?"

He smoked in silence for a minute; then: "Why, content? It's hardly the word for it. When I think what it was I wanted and what you've given me instead—something I wouldn't trade for all the love in the world."

"I'd like to believe it was a better thing," she said, "but I'm afraid I can't."

"Neither could I when I was—how

old are you?—twenty-four. Perhaps when you're fifty-one you can."

"I suppose so," she said absently. "Perhaps if it were a question of choosing between a love that hadn't any friendship in it and a friendship . . . But it can't be like that! Can it? Can't one have both? Can't a man—love a woman and be her friend and partner all at the same time?"

"I can't answer for every man," he said reflectively. "But I've a notion that nice out of a dozen, if you could get down to the actual bedrock facts about them, would own up that if they were in love with a woman—really, you know—they wouldn't want her for a partner, and wouldn't be able to see her as a friend. That's just a guess, of course. But there's one thing I know, and that is that I couldn't."

She gave a little shiver. "Oh, what a mess it is!" she said. "What a perfectly hopeless blunder it is!" She slid down from the wall. "Come, let's walk."

He fell in beside her, and they tramped sturdily along for a while in silence. At last he said: "I don't know that I can explain it, but I don't think I'd call it a blunder that a strip of spring steel can't bend in your fingers like copper, and still go on being a spring. You see, a man wants his work, and then he wants something that's altogether apart from his work. Love's about as far away as anything he can get. So that the notion of our working ourselves half to death over the same job, and then going home together—"

"Yes," she admitted. "I can see that. But that doesn't cover friendship."

He owned that it didn't. "But when I'm in love with a woman—this isn't a fact I'm proud of, but it's true—I'm jealous of her. I want to be everything to her. I want her to think nobody else could be right and I be wrong. And I want to be able to think the same of her." He thought it over a bit longer, and then went on: "No, I've been in love with women I thought were lying to me, cheating me; women I've hated; women I've known hated me. But I've never been in love with a woman who was my friend." He had been tramping along, communing with his pipe, thinking aloud. If he'd been watching Rose's face he wouldn't have gone so far.

"Well, if it's like that—" she said, and the quality of her voice drew his full attention instantly—"if love has to be like that, then the game doesn't seem worth going on with. You can't live with it, and you can't live—without it." Her voice dropped a little, but gained in intensity. "At least I can't. I don't believe I can." She stopped and faced him. "What can one do?" she demanded. She turned away with a despairing gesture and stood gazing out, tear-blinded, over the little valley the hilltop they had reached commanded.

"You want to remember this," he said at last. "I've been talking about myself. I might have been different if my first love affair had been an altogether different thing. And I'm not, thank God, a fair sample."

"My love affair brought me a home and—kids," she said. "There are two of them—twins—a year and a half old now; and I went off and left them; left him. I thought that by earning my own way, building a life that he didn't surround, as you say, I could win his friendship. And have his love besides. I don't suppose you would have believed there could be such a fool in the world as I was to do that."

He took a while digesting this truly amazing statement of hers. But at last he said: "No, I wouldn't call you a fool. I call a fool a person who thinks he can get something for nothing. You didn't think that. You were willing to pay—a heavy price it must have been, too—for what you wanted. And I've an idea, you know, that you never really pay without getting something."

"I don't know," she said raggedly. "Perhaps . . ."

There was a seven-thirty train to town, and they finished their walk at the station. She got back to her apartment about nine. Two corners of white projected from under her door, a visiting card and a folded bit of paper. It was Rodney's card, and on it he'd written: "Sorry to have missed you. I'll come back at eight."

Her shaking fingers fumbled pitifully over the folds of the note, but she got it open at last. It was from him, too. It read:

Dear Rose: This is hard luck. I suppose you're off for a week-end somewhere. I want very much to see you. When you come back and have leisure for me will you call me up? I know how busy you are, so I'll wait until I hear from you. RODNEY.

When the telephone girl switched her to the information desk, and the information clerk said, "Mr. Rodney Aldrich? Just a moment," and then: "Mr. Aldrich is in fifteen hundred five," the dry contraction in her throat made it impossible for her to speak. She couldn't answer his first "Hello," and he said it again, sharply, "Hello, what is it?"

And then suddenly her voice came back. A voice that started her with its distinctness. "Hello, Rodney," she said, "this is Rose."

There was a perfectly blank silence after that, and then the crisp voice of an operator somewhere—"Waiting?"

"Yes," she heard Rodney say, "get off the line." And then to her: "I came to see you this afternoon, and again tonight."

"Yes, I know," she said. "I just this minute got in. Can't you come back again now?" How in the world, she wondered, could she manage her voice like that! From the way it sounded she might have been speaking to Alice Perosini; and yet her shak-

ing hand could hardly hold the receiver. She heard him say:

"It's pretty late, isn't it? I don't want to . . . You'll be tired and . . ."

"It's not too late for me," she said, "only you might come before it gets any later."

She managed to wait until she heard him say "All right" before she hung up the receiver. Then a big, racking sob, not to be denied any longer, pounced upon her and shook her.

CHAPTER XXV.

Coeur-de-Rose.

It was altogether fortunate for Rose that she had attempted no preparation, because the situation she found herself in when she'd opened the door for her husband, shaken hands with him, led him into her sitting room and asked him to sit down, was one which the wildest cast of her imagination would never have suggested as a possible one for her and Rodney.

It was his manner, she felt sure, that had created it; his rather formal attitude; the way he held his hat. It was the slightly anxious, very determined attitude of an estimable and rather shy young man making his first call on a young lady upon whom he is desperately desirous of making a favorable impression.

And he was Rodney, and she was Rose. It was like an absurd dream. "Won't you smoke?" she asked suddenly, and hurried on when he hesitated. "I don't do it myself, but most of my friends do, and I keep the things." From a drawer in her writing desk she produced a tin box of cigarettes. "They're your kind—unless you've changed," she commented, and went over to the mantel-shelf for an ash tray and a match safe. The match safe was empty and she left the room to get a fresh supply from her kitchen.

On the inner face of her front door was a big mirror, and in it, as she came back through the unlighted passage, she saw her husband. He was sitting just as she'd left him, and as his face was partly turned away from her, it could not have been from the expression of it that she got her revelation. But she stopped there in the dark and caught her breath and leaned back against the wall and squeezed the tears out of her eyes.

He stayed that first evening a little less than an hour, and when he got up to go she made no effort to detain him. The thing had been, as its unbroken surface could satisfy, a highly successful first call. Before she let him go, though, she asked him how long he was going to be in New York, and on getting a very indeterminate answer which offered a minimum of "two or three days" and a maximum that could not even be guessed at, she said:

"I hope you're not going to be too dreadfully busy for us to see a lot of each other. I wish we might manage it once every day."

That shook him; for a moment, she thought the lightning was going to strike, and stood very still holding her breath, waiting for it. But he steadied himself, said he could certainly manage that if she could, and, as the elevator came up in response to her ring, said that he would call her up in the morning at her office. As she cuddled her cheek into the pillow that night, Rose smiled her old, wide smile. She was the happiest person in the world.

That manner of Rodney's lasted—recurring, at least, whenever Rose and he were together—almost unaltered, for two whole days. There was a visit of his to her workshop, where he listened intently to her explanations of her tools and her working methods. There was a luncheon, at which, unwinding, he made her tell him the whole story of her success; and a dinner and theater, after which he brought her home in a taxi, and, having told the chauffeur to wait, formally escorted her to the elevator. But with the last of the next day's light, the ice broke up and the floods came.

She had taken him to a studio ten in the upper sixties just off West End avenue, the proprietors of the studio being a tanned, bearded, blond anarchist of a painter and his exceedingly pretty, smart, frivolous-looking wife.

The two men had instinctively drawn controversial swords almost at sight of each other, and for the hour and a half that they were together the combat raged mightily, to the unmitigated satisfaction of both participants. The feelings of the bystanders were perhaps more diverse, but Rose, at least, enjoyed herself thoroughly, over seeing her husband's big, formidable, finely poised mind in action again. The talk, of course, ranged everywhere: socialism, feminism, law and its crimes, art, and the social mind.

It was half-past six or thereabouts when they left the studio, and the late May afternoon was at its loveliest. "I want to walk," said Rose, "after that tea, if I'm ever to want any dinner." He nodded a little absently, she thought, and fell in step beside her. There was no mention at any time of their destination.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Art of Hanging Pictures. Pictures should have a strong base below, a large centerpiece above, and a higher point above this, thereby meeting architectural demands. A sofa against the wall, or a bookcase, or a large table may form the base, with an important picture as the centerpiece, either square or oblong. At all events the base should be wider than the structure above, and there should be a higher point of apex. The best of one's pictures should be placed over the fireplace.



To drive a tank, handle the guns, and sweep over the enemy trenches, takes strong nerves, good rich blood, a good stomach, liver and kidneys. When the time comes, the man with red blood in his veins "is up and at it." He has iron nerves for hardships—an interest in his work grips him. That's the way you feel when you have taken a blood and nerve tonic, made up of Blood Root, Golden Seal root, Stans root, Cherry bark, and rolled into a sugar-coated tablet and sold in sixty-cent vials by almost all druggists for past fifty years as Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery. This tonic, in liquid or tablet form, is just what you need this spring to give you vim, vigor and vitality. At the flag end of a hard winter, no wonder you feel "run-down," blue, out of sorts. Try this "Medical Discovery" of Dr. Pierce's. Don't wait! To-day is the day to begin! A little "pop," and you laugh and live.

The best means to all the machinery of the body, put into the liver, kidneys and circulatory system, is to first practice a good house-cleaning. I know of nothing better as a laxative than a vegetable pill made up of May-apple, leaves of aloe and jalap. This is commonly sold by all druggists as Dr. Pierce's Pleasant Pellets, and should be taken at least once a week to clear the twenty-five feet of intestines. You will thus clean the system—expel the poisons and keep well. Now is the time to clean house. Give yourself a spring house cleaning.—Adv.

Ready. Bobby—I would kiss you if I thought no one would see me. Flopsy—Shall I close my eyes?

KIDNEY TROUBLE NOT EASILY RECOGNIZED

Applicants for Insurance Often Rejected

An examining physician for one of the prominent life insurance companies, in an interview of the subject, made the astonishing statement that one reason why so many applicants for insurance are rejected is because kidney trouble is so common to the American people, and the large majority of those whose applications are declined do not even suspect that they have the disease.

Judging from reports from druggists who are constantly in direct touch with the public, there is one preparation that has been very successful in overcoming these conditions. The mild and healing influence of Dr. Kilmor's Swamp-Root is soon realized. It stands the highest for its remarkable record of success.

We find that Swamp-Root is strictly an herbal compound and we would advise our readers who feel in need of such a remedy to give it a trial. It is on sale at all drug stores in bottles of two sizes, medium and large.

However, if you wish first to test this great preparation, send ten cents to Dr. Kilmor & Co., Binghamton, N. Y., for a sample bottle. When writing be sure and mention this paper.—Adv.

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