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A Story for Young and Old.

BY FRANK H. CONVERSE,
AUTHOR OF "PETER ARABAS," "HOW TO
GO SEA," "PAUL GRAYSON," ETC.
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CHAPTER XIII.—CONTINUED.
"I don't wish to increase your general
unpleasantness," he observed, poking
his head through the door with a guilty
smile, "but I'm compelled to re-
mark that the thief has also taken"

"Not my Roman gold bracelets,
John dear," interrupted his wife,
clasping her hands in a tragic manner
—"don't say that!"

"I grieve to be obliged to say so, my
love," said Mr. Mason, with affected
pleasantry, "and also to add that not
only have your watch and chain been
stolen silently away, but the biggest
trunk case to have been despoiled of a
dress or two, as well as the fur-lined
circular, which you would insist upon
bringing, in spite of my remonstrances,
while"

"Here, Tad! Tad, come back here!
where are you going?" interrupted Miss
Smith, as, at the words "fur-lined cir-
cular," Tad, seizing his cap from the
table, bolted from the room without a
word, followed by Mr. Mason, who
uttered something about hunting up the
sheriff, while his wife, with a hyster-
ical sob, sought her own apartment
for the purpose of seeing whether she
had sustained any further loss.

Mr. Atherton rose to his feet with
suspicion in his eye, and the little
satchel key, which he had previously
drawn from his pocket, in his hand.
"—I—do not like the appearance
of all this," he said, in a tone of severe
displeasure. "That boy's behavior,
from my first encounter with him, at the
station in Philadelphia, to this last
—er—hasty exit, has, to say the least,
hardly been above suspicion; and I
must say"

"What, sir?" wretchedly exclaimed
Miss Smith, not heeding pacific Mrs.
Flagg's gentle twinkle at her dress-
skirt, "so you dare to insinuate that
my—that Tad, who's been under my
own eye ever since he came to Rip-
port—an honest, staid boy never
lied—would"

"Without meaning to come into no
collision," gently but firmly interposed
Captain Flagg, in persuasive tones,
"an' s'cein' we're all neighbors an'
'frin's, s'posin' we lay to an' anchor
for a spell, an' see what comes of it.
In any way of thinkin'," continued the
Captain, beaming mildly upon Mr.
Atherton, who, apparently a little
ashamed of his haste, had subsided
again into his chair, "that there boy is
all Miss Smith says, an' more, too, an'
it's my belief that what's sot him off all
in a sudden is some kind of a clever
he's in a hurry to overhaul. What do
you think, Polly?"

Polly said that she knew it was some-
thing of the sort, while Mrs. Flagg
murmured words to the same effect.
So, as there was nothing to do but
await events, Miss Smith swallowed
her rage, and, as she contemplated the
"righteous indignation," and took up
her knitting; Mr. Atherton controlled
his impatience as best he could, and,
drawing a paper from his pocket, be-
came seemingly absorbed in its con-
tents, though Tad was perpetually
scampering up and down its columns;

and Miss Smith in a confidential
undertone, regarding the strange events
of the day.

CHAPTER XIV.
Meanwhile, Tad, possessed by one
dominant thought, which had flashed
across his mind at Mr. Mason's men-
tion of the loss of his fur-lined cir-
cular, was speeding through the
half darkness up the street in the di-
rection of Potter's.

For, an hour or so before, while
walking the hotel piazza, pending the
arrival of the stage, Tad's eyes,
which, generally speaking, were every-
where, happened to glance through one
of the long windows into the
dingy apartments dignified by the name
of "Ladies' Parlor," where, rather to
his surprise, he noticed a richly attired
lady, with a tall before her feet, sitting
on the worn, hair-cloth sofa. Guests
were not common at Potter's—par-
ticularly well-dressed ladies—and Tad,
secretly marveling, gave this one more
particular attention as he walked to and
fro. One thing struck him as being
rather peculiar, which was that, de-
spite the warmth of the July evening,
the stranger wore over her other ap-
parel a long silk circular, very similar
to the one which had played so impor-
tant a part in his own exodus from the
city, even to the fur lining, of which he
caught a tiny glimpse.

Joe Whitney had joined him in his
walk, and, noticing the direction of his
glance, had whispered confidentially:
"Say, that's my passenger—Potter's
girl to give me a quarter to drive her
over to Middleboro, to catch the train
'cause he can't spare the hostler. She's
in a big hurry," added Joe, with a
gleeful chuckle, "as they're harnessing
up Brown Pete, and there's 'fifteen
one better trotter in the stable—that's
Potter's sorrel mare, and she's a regular
flier." For Joe, like most boys,
was very fond of a fast horse, and, be-
ing an excellent driver for his years,
obtained gratuitous rides and occasional
quarters by taking occasional passen-
gers to their different destinations for
Mr. Potter.

But the arrival of the stage, with Mr.
Atherton and one other passenger—a
small, silent man, who only spoke in
monosyllables, whose features Tad
could not distinguish in the gathering
darkness—drove Joe's communication
and the mysterious occupant of the pas-
senger, alike from his mind, will after the
discovery of the robbery of Mrs. Ma-

son's room, when, as I have said, her
husband's sudden reference to the loss
of the cloak caused a new idea to occur
to him, which brought the incident just
narrated freshly to mind, and sent him
rushing from the room. Not only this,
but, growing into an almost certainty
as he hurried along, it added such
speed to his flying feet that, on his ar-
rival at Potter's, in a flash, he had
reached the door, and, with a guilty
heart, he thrust his hand into the
head-first against the small, silent man
who had been Mr. Atherton's fellow-
passenger, as he was walking the piazza
with a cigar in his mouth. Hastily ex-
cusing himself, Tad burst into the of-
fice, where Mr. Potter, who weighed
nearly three hundred pounds, was sit-
ting in his shirt-sleeves, reading the
New England Farmer.

"Say, Mr. Potter," gasped Tad,
breathlessly, "how long has Joe been
gone with that person—passenger—in
the long black cloak?"

"Oh," responded Mr. Potter, look-
ing up from his paper and speaking
with aggravating deliberation, "how
long? Lemme see. M'm," raising
his voice for the benefit of his wife, in
the other room, "how long's that young
Whitney been away with that air lady
passenger—the one in a red and a
magnificent hurry to get to Middleboro?"

Tad, with feverish impatience,
awaited the answer. The small man
on the piazza, near the open door, must
have been of a rather inquisitive nature;
for, holding his cigar between his
fingers, and his head a little to one
side, he, too, seemed to listen for Mrs.
Potter's response.

"Pretty nigh half 'n hour," called
Mrs. Potter, through the half-open
door. "Why, who wants to know?"

"Me—Tad Thorne, Mrs. Potter," ex-
claimed Tad, in an agitated voice, and
oh, Mr. Potter! won't you have the sor-
rel mare put right in quick, so I can
drive off after her—I mean him—
dressed up in Mrs. Mason's cloak, and
catch 'em before he—gets to Mid-
dleboro!"

"Why, what on earth is the matter
with you?" demanded Mrs. Potter, with
some asperity, as she bounced into the
office.

"It's that Forrest—his name is
Jones—I mean Edwards," poor Tad
exclaimed, incoherently, "he's stole
Mr. Atherton's hand-bag, full of
d'innies and papers, and dressed up in
Mrs. Mason's clothes and cloak!"

"Mr. Potter!" interrupted a quick
and somewhat imperious voice, pro-
ceeding from the smoker of the piazza,
who, flinging his cigar aside, suddenly
appeared inside the door, "have your
fastest horse put into a light buggy,
and be quick about it!" And in the
voice, as well as its owner, Tad, with a
great thrill of joy, recognized City De-
tective Blossom, who, it will be re-
membered, had named Mr. Jones to
restore the little alligator-skin sachel
to Tad, in the streets of Boston, a long
time before.

"Tell him the sorrel mare, Mr.
Blossom," cried Tad, who was wildly
excited; "what can I not over to much
faster than Brown Pete—and oh,
please let me go, too!"

The detective glanced sharply at
Tad, and nodded. "You can go," he
said, briefly. "The sorrel mare, Mr.
Potter, and be quick about it," he
added, and, greatly bewildered, Mr.
Potter hurried his directions to his
wife, who repeated them from the back
window to the hostler, in the stable-
yard.

"How was it?" asked Mr. Blossom,
in his curt way, as Tad followed him
out on the piazza. And Tad succeeded
in giving a tolerably succinct account
of the robbery and leading circum-
stances which had made him almost
positive as to the guilty person.

"Smart boy," the detective re-
marked, approvingly, as the buggy
rattled round the door; "jump in!"
And, springing after Tad, Mr. Blossom
matched the reins from the hostler's
hands, chirruped to the sorrel mare,
and they were off.

"It's a straight road to Middleboro—
only one hill," gasped Tad, whose
breath was almost taken away by the
rapidity with which the light buggy
was being whirled along behind the
single back of the sorrel mare. As
long as he lives he will never forget
that night drive over the level, dusty
highway, lined on either side by the
dense pine growth peculiar to the New
England States. The moon was
nearly full, and as it gradually rose
above the tree-tops great patches
of alternate light and shadow were
thrown across the road. Mr. Blossom,
whose thin, keen face did not
show the slightest trace of emotion, sat
bolt upright on the buggy-seat, with
feet firmly braced, his short muscular
arms extended straight out before
him, as rigid as bars of steel from the
tanned reins, which were wound in
one turn about each of his small, nar-
row hands.

Evidently Mr. Blossom not only
knew how to drive but how to get all
possible speed out of the sorrel mare.
With her small ears laid back and her
nose pointing forward, the intelligent
animal seemed to understand that now,
if ever, her best efforts were required,
and her slim, long, want-measuring
limbs with long, steady strides that
seemed to imperceptibly grow longer
and swifter as she warmed up to her
work.

The sorrel mare was going nearly
two miles to Brown Pete's one, at her
present rate of speed. Trembling with
excitement, Tad held his hat on with
one hand, while with the other he
clung to the rail of the buggy, as the

pine and hemlocks which bordered the
road seemed flying by like lightning.

"There they are," briefly said Mr.
Blossom, speaking for the first time
since they had started. Far ahead in
the moonlight rose Winslow's hill, be-
yond which lay Middleboro, about two
miles distant. Outlined against the
pale ribbon-like road was a black mor-
gling object, at the sight of which Tad's
heart gave a great throb of excitement.

Mr. Blossom took the long, slender
whip from the socket and gently
touched the sorrel mare's heaving flank.
Where! Tad began to wish he was
safely back on Mr. Potter's piazza.
Such going! The mare was making
such time as she had never made
even at the Middleboro trotting-park.
If a wheel should come off—

But now, as they gained rapidly up-
on the team in advance, it was evident
that the pursued had become aware of
the pursuer. Up the long hill sped
Brown Pete, but the feet of the
sorrel mare followed with increasing
speed. Down the log incline—and
now the distant lights of Middleboro
town were distinctly visible.

CHAPTER XV.
Mr. Blossom's lips were tightly com-
pressed, as he glanced from the flying
team to the distant village lights; for,
though the sorrel mare was doing her
best, it was very evident that she was
beginning to be "windied" while
Brown Pete, driven at a less rate of
speed at the beginning of the journey,
seemed nearly as fresh as ever.

"You'd better pull up, Edwards—
I'm bound to have you," called Mr.
Blossom, in a strong, clear voice, that
rose above the rattling wheels.
"Just catch your horse," shouted a
mocking voice, as the speaker, whose
plumed hat had dropped off, turned on
the seat and looked back. He had
matched the reins from Joe's hands at
the first indications of pursuit, and
was plying the whip unmercifully,
while Joe, in a seeming agony of terror
at discovering the dangerous character
of his passenger, had dropped into the
bottom of the buggy.

But Joe was no coward, and was
quick-witted, withal. As he heard the
detective's shouted remark and his im-
pleasant companion's reply, he hesitated
one brief second, and then, reaching
up, seized the right-hand rein in both
hands—pulling on it with all his
strength.

Of course, the inevitable result fol-
lowed. Brown Pete swerved wildly to
the right—the forward wheel turned
under the buggy-bottom, and
crashed! which caused the buggy
to turn over—with such surpris-



"O'ME THE SACHEL!" PAINTED TAD,
ing suddenness that Joe went flying
into a small duck puddle by the road-
side, while Edwards—skirt, cloak and
all—sailed impetuously over a fence,
and landed in a field beyond it.

Mr. Blossom, with a joyous exclaima-
tion, began to yell up the sorrel mare
—so easy task, I can assure you.
And Tad, who, despite his excite-
ment, had never taken his eyes from
the one object of pursuit, uttered a
cry; for, before the buggy came to a
full stop, he saw Edwards gathering
himself up and starting in a ridiculous
run across the field.

"He ain't get away!" cried Tad,
whose nerves, wrought up to the
highest pitch, would have ventured
anything to save the prize, so nearly
within their grasp. Before, the words
had left his lips, Tad had slipped over
the back of the buggy, scaled the fence
like a squirrel, and was following close
at Edwards' heels, while Mr. Blossom's
nimble feet were gaining the fence it-
self. Like most boys, Tad was a good
runner, while Edwards, encumbered
by the clinging skirts, made very in-
different progress, even though holding
the back of the buggy, scaled the fence
in an other moment Tad had seized the
end of the long circular, which was stream-
ing out behind like black wings.

"O'Me the sacchel!" painted Tad, and
with the words the cloak-clasp parted
—Tad fell on the back of his head,
holding the fur-lined circular in his
hand, while Edwards plunged forward
—caught his foot in the front breadth
of Mrs. Mason's best black silk, and
went down on his nose in a highly un-
dignified manner.

When Tad regained his feet, Mr.
Blossom was rather humorously re-
garding a very shame-faced individual
attired in a torn and mottled
black silk dress, which entirely failed
to conceal a pair of very massenilla
boots and trousers. Mr. Edwards' wrists
were adorned with steel hand-
cuffs, and his features wore such a
downcast look that Tad's tender heart
was touched.

"O! he'll only give the rest of the
things up, hadn't you better let him go,
Mr. Blossom?" suggested Tad, in a low
tone; but the detective shook his head.
"—He wanted in Boston, for some-
thing more serious than stealing," said
Mr. Blossom, gravely. And then he
banded Tad the recovered sachel, to-
gether with Mrs. Mason's jewelry,
which he had taken from Edwards' pocket
with professional dexterity.

"If there's any reward offered for all
this, you've earned your share of it,"
the detective remarked; and then the
three made their way back in compar-
ative silence.

Joe had banded himself from the
duck puddle, unharmed Brown Pete
from the overturned vehicle, which was
not badly damaged, and when the
singular trio regained him in the road,
while the two horses, carefully blank-
eted, stood with drooping heads and
trembling sides, by the roadside.

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