

The BALL of FIRE

By GEORGE RANDOLPH CHESTER
and LILLIAN CHESTER

ILLUSTRATED BY C. D. RHODES

CHAPTER XXVII—Continued.

Towards morning there was an army of newspaper men so worried and distressed, and generally consumed with the mad passion of restraint, that there was scarcely a fingernail left in the profession, and frightened-eyed copy boys hid behind doors. Suddenly a dozen telegraph operators, in as many offices, jumped from their desks, as if they had been touched at the same instant by a powerful current from their instruments, and shouted varying phrases, a composite of which would be nearest expressed by: "Let 'er go!"

It had been eight o'clock in the evening in New York when Gerald Fosland had first given out his information, and at that moment it was 1 a. m. in Berlin. At 3 a. m., Berlin time, which was 10 p. m. in New York, the Baron von Slachten, who had been detained by an unusual stress of diplomatic business strolled to his favorite cafe. At 3:05 the Baron von Slachten became the most thought about man in his city, but the metropolitan press of Berlin is slightly fettered and more or less curbed, and there are certain formalities to be observed. It is probable, therefore, that the baron might have gone about his peaceful way for two or three days, had not a fool American, in the advertising branch of one of the New York papers, in an entire ignorance of decent formalities, walked straight out under den Linden, to Baron von Slachten's favorite cafe, and, picking out the baron at a table with four bushy-faced friends, made this cheerful remark, in the manner and custom of journalists in his native land:

"Well, baron, the International Transportation company has confessed. Could you give me a few words on the subject?"

The baron, who had been about to drink a stein of beer, set down his half liter and stared at the young man blankly. His face turned slowly yellow, and he rose.

"Lass bleiben," the baron ordered the handy persons who were about to remove the cheerful advertising representative and incarcerate him for life, and then the baron walked stolidly out of the cafe, and rode home, and wrote for an hour or so, and ate a heavy early breakfast, and returned to his study, and obligingly shot himself.

This was at seven a. m., Berlin time, which was two a. m. in New York; and owing to the nervousness of an old woman servant, the news reached New York at three a. m., and the big wheels began to go around.

Where was Edward E. Allison? There was nothing the free and entirely uncurbed wanted to know so much as that; but the f. and e. u. was doomed to disappointment in that one desire of its heart. Even as he had stumbled down the steps of the Sargent house, Allison was aware of the hideous thing he had done; aware, too, that Jim Sargent was as violent as good-natured men are apt to be. This thought, it must be said in justice to Allison, came last and went away first. It was from himself that he tried to run away, when he shot his runabout up through the park and to the north country, and, by devious roads, to a place which had come to him as if by inspiration; the Willow club, which was only open in the summertime, and employed a feeble old caretaker in the winter. To this haven, bleak and cold as his own numbed soul, Allison drove in mechanical firmness, and walked around to the kitchen, where he found old Peabody smoking a corncob pipe, and laboriously mending a pair of breeches.

Allison went into the office and closed the door after him. It was damp and chill in there, but he did not notice it. He sat down in the swivel chair behind the flat top desk and rested his chin in his hands, and stared out of the window at the bleak and dreary landscape. Just within his range of vision was a lonely little creek, shadowed by a mournful drooping willow which had given the club its name, and in the wintry breeze it waved its long tendrils against the faded gray sky. Allison fixed his eyes on that oddly beckoning tree and strove to think. Old Peabody came pottering in, and with many a clanging Dutch stove; with a longing glance at Allison, for he was starved with the hunger of talk, he went out again.

At dusk he once more opened the door. Allison had not moved. He still sat with his chin in his hands, looking out at that wearily waving willow. Old Peabody thought that he must be asleep, until he tiptoed up to the side. Allison's gray eyes, unblinking, were staring straight ahead, with no expression in them. It was as if he had turned to glass.

"Excuse me, Mr. Allison. Chicken or steak? I got 'em both, one for supper and one for breakfast."

Allison turned slowly, part way towards Peabody; not entirely.

"Chicken or steak?" repeated Peabody.

"Eh? Yes. Oh, yes. Yes. The chicken."

The fire had gone out. Peabody rebuilt it. He came in an hour later, and studied the silent man at the desk for a long minute, and then he decided an important question for himself. He brought in Allison's dinner on a tray and set it on a corner of the desk.

At eleven Peabody came in again, to see if Allison were not ready to go to bed; but Allison sent him away as soon as he had fixed the fire. The tray was untouched, and out there in the dim moonlight, which peered now and then through the shifting clouds, the long-armed willow beckoned and beckoned.

Morning came, cold and gray and damp as the night had been. Allison had fallen asleep towards the dawn, sitting at his desk with his heavy head on his arms, and not even the clatter of the building of the fire roused him. At seven when Peabody came, Allison rose up with a start at the opening of the door; but before he glanced at Peabody, he looked out of the window at the willow.

"Good-morning," said Peabody, with a cheerfulness which sounded oddly in that dim, bare room. "I brought you the paper, and some fresh eggs. There was a little touch of frost this morning, but it went away about time for sun-up. How will you have your eggs? Fried, I suppose, after the steak. Seems like you don't have much appetite," and he scrutinized the untouched tray with mingled regret and resentment. Since Allison paid no attention to him, he decided on eggs fried after the steak, and started for the door.

Allison had picked up the paper mechanically. It had lain with the top part downwards, but his own picture was in the center. He turned the paper over, so that he could see the headlines.

"Peabody!" No longer the dead tones of a man in a mental stupor, a man who cannot think, but in the sharp tones of a man who can feel.

"Yes, sir." Sharp and crisp, like the snap of a whip. Allison had scared it out of him.

"Don't come in again until I call you."

"Yes, sir." Grieved this time. Darn it, wasn't he doing his best for the man!

So it had come; the time when his will was not God! A god should be omnipotent, impregnable, unassailable, absolute. He was surprised at the calmness with which he took this blow. It was the very bigness of the hurt which left it so little painful. A man with his leg shot off suffers not one-tenth so much as a man who tears his fingernail to the quick. Moreover, there was that other big horror which had left him stupefied and numb. He had not known that in his ruthlessness there was any place for remorse, or for terror of himself at anything he might choose to do. But there was. He entered into no ravings now, no



The World He Had Meant to Make His Own Never Saw Him Again.

writhings, no outcries. He realized calmly and clearly all he had done, and all which had happened to him in retribution. He saw the downfall of his stupendous scheme of worldwide conquest. He saw his fortune, to the last penny, swept away, for he had invested all that he could raise on his securities and his business and his prospects, in the preliminary expenses of the International Transportation company, bearing this portion of the financial burden himself, as part of the plan by which he meant to obtain ultimate control and command of the tremendous consolidation, and become the king among kings, with the whole world in his imperious grasp, a sway larger than that of any potentate who had ever sat upon a throne, larger than the sway of all the monarchs of earth put together, as large terrestrially as the sway of God himself! All

these he saw crumbled away, fallen down around him, a wreck so complete that no shred or splinter of it was worth the picking up; saw himself disgraced and discredited, hated and ridiculed throughout the length and breadth and circumference of the very earth he had meant to rule; saw himself discarded by the strong men whom he had inveigled into this futile scheme and saw himself forced into commercial death as wolves rend and devour a crippled member of their pack; last, he saw himself loathed in the one pure breast he had sought to make his own; and that was the deepest hurt of all; for now, in the bright blaze of his own conflagration, he saw that, beneath his grossness, he had loved her, after all, loved her with a love which, if he had shorn it of its dross, might perhaps have won her.

Through all that day he sat at the desk, and when the night time came again, he walked out of the house, and across the field, and over the tiny footbridge, under the willow tree with the still beckoning arms; and the world, his world, the world he had meant to make his own, never saw him again.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A Matter of Conscience.

Gall stood at the rail of the Whitecap, gazing out over the dancing blue waves with troubled eyes.

"Penny for your thoughts." The impossibly handsome Dick Rodley had strolled up, in his blue jacket and white trousers and other nautical embellishments.

"The news in the paper," she told him. "It's so big."

Dick looked down at her critically. She was so new a Gall to him that he was puzzled, and worried, too, for he felt, rather than saw, that some trouble possessed this dearest of his friends.

"Yes, it is big news," he admitted; "big enough and startling enough to impress anyone very gravely." Then he shook his head at her. "But you mustn't worry about it, Gall. You're not responsible."

Gall turned her eyes from him and looked out over the white-edged waves again.

"It is a tremendous responsibility," she mused, whereupon Dick, as became him, violently broke the thread of thought by taking her arm and drawing her away from the rail, and walking gaily with her up to the forward shelter deck, where, shielded from the crispness of the wind, there sat, around the big table and amid a tangle of Sunday papers, Jim Sargent and Rev. Smith Boyd, Arly and Gerald Fosland, all four deep in the discussion of the one possible topic of conversation.

"Allison's explosion again," objected Dick, as Gall and he joined the group, and caught the general tenor of the thought. "I suppose the only way to escape that is to jump off the Whitecap. Gall's worse than any of you. I find she's responsible for the whole thing."

Arly and Gerald looked up quickly. "I neither said nor intimated anything of the sort," Gall reprimanded Dick, for the benefit of the Foslands, and she sat down by Arly, whereupon Dick, observing that he was much offended, patted Gall on the shoulder, and disappeared in search of Ted.

"I'd like to hand a vote of thanks to the responsible party," laughed Jim Sargent, to whom the news meant more than Gall appreciated. "With Allison broke, Urbank of the Midcontinent succeeds to control of the A.-P., and Urbank is anxious to incorporate the Towando Valley in the system. He told me so yesterday."

The light which leaped into Gall's eyes, and the trace of color which flashed into her cheeks, were most comforting to Arly; and they exchanged a smile of great satisfaction. They clutched hands ecstatically under the corner of the table, and wanted to laugh outright. However, it would keep.

"The destruction of Mr. Allison was a feat of which any gentleman's conscience might approve," commented Gerald Fosland, who had spent some time in definitely settling with himself the ethics of that question. "The company he proposed to form was a menace to the liberty of the world and the progress of civilization."

"The destruction didn't go far enough," snapped Jim Sargent. "Clark, Vance, Haverman, Grandin, Babbitt, Taylor, Chisholm; these fellows won't be touched, and they built up their monopolies by the same method Allison proposed; trickery, force and plain theft!"

"Harsh language, Uncle Jim Sargent, to use toward your respectable fellow-vestrymen," chided Arly, her black eyes dancing.

"Clark and Chisholm?" and Jim Sargent's brows knotted. "They're not my fellow-vestrymen. Either they go or I do!"

"I would like you to remain," quietly stated Rev. Smith Boyd. "I hope to achieve several important alterations in the ethics of Market Square church." He was grave this morning. He had unknowingly been ripening for some time on many questions; and the revelations in this morning's papers had brought him to the point of decision. "I wish to drive the money changers out of the temple," he added, and glanced at Gall with a smile in which there was acknowledgment.

"A remarkably lucrative enterprise, eh Gall?" laughed her Uncle Jim, remembering her criticism on the occasion of her first and only vestry meeting, when she had called their attention to the satire of the stained-glass window.

"You will have still the scribes and Pharisees, doctor; those who stand praying in the public places, so they

may be seen of all men," and Gall smiled across at him, within her eyes the mischievous twinkle which had been absent for many days.

"I hope to be able to remove the public place," replied the rector, with a gravity which told of something vital beneath the apparent repartee. Mrs. Boyd, strolling past with Aunt Grace Sargent, paused to look at him fondly. "I shall set myself, with such strength as I may have, against the building of the proposed cathedral."

"Don't be foolish, Boyd," protested Sargent, who had always felt a fatherly responsibility for the young rector. "It's a big ambition and a worthy ambition, to build that cathedral, and because you're offended with certain things the papers have said, about Clark and Chisholm in connection with the church, is no reason you should cut off your nose to spite your face."

"It is not the publication of these things which has determined me," returned the rector thoughtfully. "It has merely hastened my decision. To begin with, I acknowledge now that it was only a vague, artistic dream of mine that such a cathedral, by its very magnificence, would promote worship. That might have been the case when cathedrals were the only magnificent buildings erected, and when every rich and glittering thing was devoted to religion. A golden candlestick then became connected entirely with the service of the Almighty. Now, however, magnificence has no such significance. The splendor of a cathedral must enter into competition with the splendor of a stately house, a museum or a hotel."

"You shouldn't switch that way, Boyd," remonstrated Sargent, showing his keen disappointment. "When you began to agitate for the cathedral you brought a lot of our members in who hadn't attended services in years. You stirred them up. You got them interested. They'll drop right off."

"I hope not," returned the rector, earnestly. "I hope to reach them with a higher ambition, a higher pride, a higher vanity, if you like to put it that way. I wish them to take joy in establishing the most magnificent conditions for the poor which have ever been built! We have no right to the money which is to be paid us for the Vedder court property. We have no right to spend it in pomp. It belongs to the poor from whom we have taken it, and to the city which has made us rich by enhancing the value of our ground. I propose to build permanent and sanitary tenements, to house as many poor people as possible, and conduct them without a penny of profit above the cost of repairs and maintenance."

Gall bent upon him beaming eyes, and the delicate flush, which had begun to return to her cheeks, deepened. Was this the sort of tenements he had proposed to re-erect in Vedder court? Perhaps she had been hasty! Rev. Smith Boyd in turning slowly from one to the other of the little group, by way of establishing mental communication with them, rested for a moment in the beaming eyes of Gall, and smiled at her in affectionate recognition, then swept his glance on to his mother, where it lingered.

"You are perfectly correct," stated Gerald Fosland, who, though sitting stiffly upright, had managed nevertheless to dispose one elbow where it touched gently the surface of Arly. "Market Square church is a much more dignified old place of worship than the ostentatious cathedral would ever be, and your project for spending the money has such strict justice at the bottom of it that it must prevail. But, I say, Doctor Boyd," and he gave his mustache a contemplative tug; "don't you think you should include a small margin or profit for the future extension of your idea?"

"That's glorious, Gerald!" approved Gall; and Arly, laughing, patted his hand. "You're probably right," considered the rector, studying Fosland with a new interest. "I think we'll have to put you on the vestry."

"I'd be delighted, I'm sure," responded Gerald, in the courteous tone of one accepting an invitation to dinner. "Do you hear what your son's planning to do?" called Jim Sargent to Mrs. Boyd. He was not quite reconciled. "He proposes to take that wonderful new rectory away from you."

The beautiful Mrs. Boyd merely dimpled. "I am a trifle astonished," she confessed. "My son has been so extremely eager about it; but if he is relinquishing the dream, it is because he wants something else very much more worth while. I entirely approve of his plan for the new tenements," and she did not understand why they all laughed at her. She did feel, however, that there was affection in the laughter; and she was quite content. Laughing with them, she walked on with Grace Sargent.

Gerald Fosland drew forward his chair. "Do you know," he observed. "I should like very much to become a member of your vestry."

"I'm glad you are interested," returned the rector, and producing a pencil he drew a white advertising space towards him. "This is the plan of tenement I have in mind," and for the next half hour the five of them discussed tenement plans with great enthusiasm.

At the expiration of that time, Ted and Lucile and Dick and Marion came romping up, with the deliberate intention of creating a disturbance; and Gall and Rev. Smith Boyd, being thrown accidentally to the edge of that whirlpool, walked away for a rest.

"They tell me you're going abroad," observed the rector, looking down at her sadly, as they paused at her favorite rail space.

"Yes," she answered, quietly. "Fath-

er and mother are coming up next week," and she glanced up at the rector from under her curving lashes.

There was a short space of silence. It was almost as if these two were weary.

"We shall miss you very much," he told her, in all sincerity. They were both looking out over the blue waves; he, tall, broad-shouldered, agile of limb; she, straight, lithe, graceful. Mrs. Boyd and Mrs. Sargent passed them admiringly, but went on by with a trace of sadness.

"I'm sorry to leave," Gall replied. "I shall be very anxious to know how you are coming on with your new plan. I'm proud of you for it."

"Thank you," he returned. They were talking mechanically. In them was an inexpressible sadness. They had come so near, and yet they were so far apart. Moreover, they knew that there was no chance of change. It was a matter of conscience which came between them, and it was a divergence which would widen with the years. And yet they loved. They mutually knew it, and it was because of that love that they must stay apart.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A Vestry Meeting.

There was a strained atmosphere in the vestry meeting from the first. Every member present felt the tension from the moment old Joseph G. Clark walked in with Chisholm. They did not even nod to Rev. Smith Boyd, but took their seats solidly in their customary places at the table, Clark, shielding his eyes, as was his wont, against the light which streamed on him from the red robe of the Good Shepherd. The repression was apparent, too, in Rev. Smith Boyd, who rose to address his vestrymen as soon as the late-comers arrived.

"Gentlemen," said he, "I wish to speak to you as the treasury committee, rather than as vestrymen, for it is in the former capacity which you always attend. I am advised that we have been paid for Vedder court."

Chisholm, to whom he directed a gaze of inquiry, nodded his head. "It's in the Majestic," he stated. "I have plans for its investment, which I wish to lay before the committee."

"I shall lay my own before them at the same time," went on the rector. "I wish, however, to preface these plans by the statement that I have, so far as I am concerned, relinquished all thought of building the new cathedral."

Nicholas Van Ploon, who had been much troubled of late, brightened and nodded his round head emphatically.

"That's what I say," he declared. (TO BE CONTINUED.)

GRADES IN MEXICAN ARMY

American Woman Learned Something From Visit Paid Her by a Detachment of Villistas.

Some years ago a humorous story went the rounds of the newspapers, about a young lady who, at a gathering of the Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution, held her head exceedingly high, explaining her haughty demeanor on the ground that she was descended from a bona fide private soldier—the only private, she was convinced, in the Revolutionary host. The following incident would seem to indicate that the Mexicans who are fighting today are almost as "well officered" as the patriot army of the young lady's lively fancy.

An American woman—now safe in the states—writes that five soldiers of the Villista following one day rode into her remote mountain camp. They were very decent fellows, and made no threats; still, in the absence of her husband, it seemed only wise to give them plenty of food and drink, also to yield gracefully to the request of one of the number, who said he was the captain, for the "loan" of a blanket.

Pretty soon a second warrior intimated that he, too, could use a blanket to advantage in his campaigning, adding that he, too, was captain. When a third made the same request, also announcing his rank as that of captain, their hostess paused in her distribution of blankets.

"Tell me," she inquired politely, "is this entire detachment composed of captains?"

"Oh, no, senora!" replied the one who had first spoken. "I am Captain Primero, this is Captain Segundo, and that is Captain Tercero. Those"—indicating the two remaining—"are the private soldiers."

And at this the admiring senora, according to her own account, at once gave a blanket to each of the two "high privates in the rear rank"—moved by "sympathy with them for being captained firstly, secondly, and even thirdly, and also by admiration of them as being such rare birds!"—Youth's Companion.

Hair Demand Exceeds Supply.

During the last few years the exportation of human hair from Japan has increased to the point that the demand for it now far exceeds the available supply. Especially when compared with that of the average European, the hair of the Japanese woman is extremely long, elastic, and strong, which gives it superiority for commercial purposes.

The United States and France offer the principal markets for the Oriental dealers. In Europe it is much used for weaving purposes, the hair being bleached by chemical treatment, dyed in different colors, and subsequently woven with silk into ribbon materials and heavy fabrics suitable for draperies and upholstery, some of which command prices of several hundred pounds a yard.



(Conducted by the National Woman's Christian Temperance Union.)

WHY DRINKERS ARE FAT.

The labor leaders are beginning to teach through the pages of their journals the nature and effects of alcohol upon the physical organism. The following is from the United Mine Workers' Journal:

"Not all hard drinkers are fat, but the tendency of alcoholics to obesity is too marked to escape notice. A well-known doctor says it is because the alcohol usurps the function of the fat, which accumulates. This is how he explains it:

"It is noticeable that those addicted to the use of alcoholic beverages often reveal a tendency to corpulence which is proportionate to their use of the drug. The fatness is not a sign of health. It is not even an indication that alcohol is harmless. It is merely the result of the complete oxidation of the substance of alcohol by the human body. The body will oxidize a two-ounce quantity of alcohol in 24 hours, and will do so completely that no trace of alcohol can be found in any excretory substance. This simply means that the unnatural heat produced in the body by the presence of the stimulant answers, for the time being at least, for what would otherwise be produced by the expenditure of fats and carbohydrates. These latter are the fuel stored up by the body and normally burned up in the production of necessary bodily heat—though not a natural heat—and this expenditure is avoided. The fat is therefore stored up in the body unused, and corpulence is the necessary result. This, of course, is not a normal condition nor a proper process. It becomes more unnatural with increasing use of alcohol."

STOP ALL DRINKING.

A handbook recently issued by the German government for the use of field surgeons sounds a note of warning against John Barleycorn. The article is by Prof. Max Gruber of the Royal Hygienic Institute of Munich. We quote:

"This is no time for the use of alcohol. Not only is the guzzling of all alcoholic drinks to be stopped, but the use of even small amounts is, as a rule, an evil.

"It is scientifically established that even small amounts of alcohol weaken and paralyze our powers of observation, memory and judgment, the command of our intellect, our wills and our reason; our impulses, our brains, our body; cut down the gains from exercise, the endurance of hardships, the ability to resist external injuries. "One's strength and mental power may be enough to withstand the moderate use, but efficiency cannot be improved by it. And those of us who are small and deficient in mental and physical power act recklessly when we dissipate the little that we have, especially when we are under obligations to accomplish the most that we can."

AMERICA'S GREATEST FOES.

"Had saloons never been discovered, and were it then in my power to portray the effects of such a discovery, all men, without exception, would declare it impossible to conceive of any more diabolical plan for the degradation and destruction of the human race. Our greatest foes are the manufacturers and distributors of alcohol. The stories of injuries done by drink are so written in the sad life history of many of our greatest men; are so evident throughout our land in squalor, poverty, misery and crime, and replete in prisons, workhouses and asylums, as well as in domestic infelicity, that it is inconceivable that any intelligent, rational man can deny the necessity for strong, united action to rid the land of both manufacturer and distributor."—Dr. A. Kelley of Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore.

BEER WORSE THAN WHISKY.

This is what the Home Life Insurance company of New York has to say about beer:

"Of all intoxicating drinks, it is the most animalizing. It dulls the intellectual and moral and feeds the sensual and beastly nature. Beyond all other drinks, it qualifies for deliberate and unprovoked crime. In this respect it is much worse than distilled liquors. A whisky drinker will commit murder only under the direct excitement of liquor, a beer drinker is capable of doing it in cold blood. Long observation has assured us that a large proportion of murders deliberately planned and executed, without passion or malice, with no other motive than the acquisition of property or money, often of trifling value, are perpetrated by beer drinkers."

TO THE VOTER.

Which of your boys do you intend shall stand in the footprints of ruined men? Will you help them to enter a life of woe because of your votes? Oh, no! Oh, no! If you vote for saloons, I verily fear you'll have to support them; so now look here.

Which of your boys are you going to give to ruin and death, that saloons may live? DRINKERS BARRED. We do not employ habitual drinkers, and never have, because they are not good workmen.—President White Automobile Company.