

The GIRLA HORSE AND A DOG

By FRANCIS LYNDE

COPYRIGHT BY CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

CHAPTER I.

Cousin Percy's Little Joke.

I suppose every one has had the experience of waking in the middle of the night to find everything perfectly still and quiet and normal, and yet with the impression persisting that there had been a tremendous crash of some sort just before the waking senses were alive enough to realize it. It was some such razing jolt as this that was given me on the morning when I was called in, with the other members of the family, to listen to the reading of my grandfather's will.

But, first, however, to give some idea of the conditions precedent, as a lawyer would say. My father—good, easy-going, comfort-loving Dad—never owned what Grandfather Dudley, pursuing his thin lips and snapping the words out, called "the money sense." As an architect high in his profession and with fine artistic feeling for the beautiful in buildings, he earned a liberal income—and spent it; or so much of it that there was barely enough left after his death to provide for my mother and sister, and to keep me going, as you might say, in an exceedingly modest manner. Without work, I mean. I may as well confess, at once, that I had never acquired the work habit. I was always "going to," but it was so fatally easy to keep on postponing the chilling plunge. I suppose I had been ready on at least half a dozen occasions to take a dive into some pool with a salary attachment; but always some good friend would bob up to say, "Oh, come on, Stannie, old man; we're lacking just one more to make up the bunch. Don't be a clam. Time enough to settle down when you have to," and then it would be all off.

Besides, you see, there was always Grandfather Jasper in the background. He had money—lashings of it, so we all believed; and it had been a family understanding for years that he intended splitting the bulk of it, fifty-fifty, between my cousin Percy and me. Before we go any farther, let me set it down that Cousin Percy was—and is—all the seventeen different kinds of things that I am not, and never wished to be; smooth, neat, well-groomed, a "grind" in college and a "perfect dear" with the girls, ambitious as the very devil, and measuring his friends by the amount of "pull" they might be able to exert in his behalf; there you have him from the crown of his well-brushed little head to his patent-leather pumps.

"You're a fright, Stannie," he would say, in his carefully polished diplomatic manner—he had a billet in the Department of State at Washington, and was in training for the legation service abroad—"you are a perfect fright. Three whole years out of college, and you haven't done a single, solitary useful thing yet. When are you going to begin? And, incidentally, how long are you going to keep Lisette waiting?"

Oh, Lord!—right there was another knot in the tangle—Lisette. We had agreed to agree—Lisette and I—some six months or so in advance of Grandfather Jasper's death, and we were both perfectly well assured, and had assured each other a dozen times, that my income from Dad's estate wasn't more than half big enough to marry on. You see, it was this way: Lisette was one of a family of four girls in a mighty expensive household, and there wasn't anything to lean on on that side of the fence. Though, of course, we never discussed it brutally in so many words, we were waiting for that fifty-fifty look-in at the will which family tradition declared had already been drawn up, signed, sealed, witnessed and put away in cold storage; otherwise in the safe-keeping of Grandfather Jasper's family lawyer.

All of which may serve to bring us back to that nightmare effect registered at the start. When the Dudley will was taken out of the icebox and read to the assembled members of the family, there were at least two shocking surprises. Jasper hadn't been anywhere near as rich as we had all been thinking he was; that his modest manner of living had been, perhaps, as much a matter of necessity as of choice. Bad investments—of which the family had never heard so much as a whisper—had cut his fortune down to something less than half a million, all told. That was shock Number One; and shock Number Two was strictly personal to me: Grandfather Jasper had left me his love and best wishes, and had willed the money and property—all of it, mind you—to Cousin Percy, giving as his reason that he thought Percy would make better use of it.

Of course, I had everybody's sympathy and condolence—even Percy's, for that matter. My mother wept; and, as I recall it, Lisette managed to compass a tear or so when I told her what had happened; or rather what had so ignominiously failed to happen.

"Whatever will you do?" she faltered. "I suppose you will really have to go to work now, won't you, Stannie?"

"Perish the thought!" I told her; then I gave the good reasons why there was no hope for us in that direction. "A fat chance I'd have to earn any real money. I can navigate a yacht—a little,—drive a motor, ride a pole pony, and play a fair hand at bridge and the other great American game. I think these are the sum total of my shining accomplishments. You needn't return the ring," I grinned, seeing that she was looking at it rather regretfully. "You can wear it on some other finger, you know."

"Yes; I suppose I could do that," she agreed; and I'm blest if she didn't shift it to a finger of the other hand right there and then!

It was less than a week after this little fade-out scene with Lisette that Percy's letter came. This is what it said:

"Dear Stannie: "I know just about how you felt last week when you heard Grandfather Jasper's will read, and it isn't going to make you feel any better now when I tell you that I knew of its provisions more than a year ago. When the will was drawn, grandfather showed it to me, and gave me a sealed envelope, which I was to open after his death. That envelope, as I knew at the time, contained, among other things, a codicil to the will. By its provisions you are to receive a legacy under certain conditions which were to be revealed to you at such time as I might think best.

"Your portion of Grandfather Jasper's property was worth, at its latest valuation, something like \$440,000. It lies in a perfectly safe repository, situated between the 105th and 110th degrees of longitude west from Greenwich, and the 35th and 40th degrees north latitude. When you find it, you will be able to identify it by the presence of a girl with brown hair and blue eyes and small mole on her left shoulder, a piebald horse which the girl rides, and a dog with a split face—half black and half white. You will be more than likely to find the three together; and if you make the acquaintance of the girl, you'll be on the trail of your legacy.

"So there you are, Stannie, old boy; there's your fortune. All you've got to do is to go to work and find it. Perhaps by that time you will have acquired the working habit—which is what Grandfather Jasper hoped might prove to be the case.

"Wishing you great joy in your search, I am,

Your affectionate cousin,

"PERCY."

Naturally, I had a quiet little laugh over this screed of Percy's, taking it for a joke; a poor joke and in rather bad taste, I thought. In that mood I handed the letter to Lisette for her to read. She didn't laugh, but she did look a bit scornful and put about, if you know what I mean.

"I don't suppose the blue-eyed girl would appeal to you," she said, "though the horse and the dog might. When do you start?"

We discovered that Meridian 105 west of Greenwich split the state of Colorado just beyond Denver, Colorado Springs and Pueblo, and the hunting-ground plotted out for me took in three-fourths of the remainder of the state, a slice of Utah, a good bit bigger slice of New Mexico, with a bite out of the northeastern corner of Arizona, just for good measure.

"Me for the wild and woolly!" I brayed. "Don't you see me rigged out in a nice, hairy pair of 'shaps' and riding hell-bent-for-leather—I believe that's the phrase—over the snow-capped peaks or the boundless prairies, as the case may be? But just imagine Percy the immaculate pulling a bone-head joke like this!"

"You are taking it for a joke?" she questioned.

"Sure I am; and it's a rather rotten one at that, I should say—considering the source."

"Then you won't go to look for the blue-eyed girl with nut-brown hair and the cunning little mole? Think of what you may be missing!"

For just one crazy minute I had a hunch, or a premonition, or whatever you like to call it, that the letter might not be a joke. Grandfather Jasper had always been a bit eccentric—a rich man's privilege and a rich old man's incontestable right. What if he had actually done this thing to me—a thing scarcely less devastating than cutting me off without a penny? On the spur of the moment I said:

"If I should go, would you wait for me, Lisette?"

She took her time about answering—a good and sufficient plenty of it.

"I think perhaps I'd better not change the ring back, Stannie," she said, sort of wistfully. "If there is any money and you should happen to find it, you would probably fling it all

away before you could get back to Boston. Besides, there is the blue-eyed girl; if she should bring you a fortune, you'd have to marry her, wouldn't you? You are big and strong, and—well—nice in a good many ways, Stannie, and much too good-looking for your own good; but when you marry—if you do marry—you'd better be sure that the girl has money enough to buy her own hats. I haven't enough, as you know."

"I know only too well that the love-in-a-cottage idea has never appealed to you," I said, with the regretful stop pulled all the way out in deference to the sentimental decencies.

"Not in the least, Stannie, dear; not in the slightest least."

This appeared to be the end of our rather lukewarm love-dream, and to be really honest and aboveboard about it, I am obliged to confess that it didn't break as many bones for me as I suppose it should have. Anyway, a half-hour or so after I had said goodbye to Lisette I met Jack Downing; and when he asked me if I didn't want to go with him and a bunch of the fellows for a little spin down the coast of Maine in his motor cruiser, I felt for the invitation so suddenly that I hadn't a ghost of a chance to back out if he had wanted to.

So, a few hours beyond that touching little scene at "The Rockerie," you may figure me, if you please, spinning the wheel of one of the nattiest little boats on the North shore, with a fresh nor'easter blowing and the sea getting up to give me the time of my young life to hold the Guinevere to her course, nor' east, half a point east, as we lifted the Shoals on our port bow.

In such jolly good company as we had aboard the stout ship Guinevere, three full days elapsed before a thought of Percy or his joke ever entered my head again; and it's a tender to one shot that I wouldn't have thought of him, or it, during the remainder of the cruise if we hadn't been obliged to tie up at Rockland for motor repairs. This, as I recall it, was on the fourth day, and it was a



You Can Figure Me, if You Please, Spinning the Wheel of One of the Nattiest Little Boats on the North Shore.

dog that made me remember; a mongrel cur that followed the motor repairman down to the wharf; a most disreputable looking mongrel, at that, but—by Jove! he had the magic markings! Half of his face, measuring from a line drawn straight down over the tip of his nose, was black, and the other half was a dingy, dirty white.

So then I did a little rapid figuring on train schedules. If Percy had left Washington as I knew he was planning to, my diplomatic cousin should have been, at that figuring moment, just about due in San Francisco. That being the case, or the likelihood, I sent up to the telegraph office and told a message, addressing it in care of the captain of whatever might be the next steamer due to sail for ports in China. All I said was: "Your writer was as funny as an hour in a dentist's chair. Bon voyage to you."

Night found us still tied to the Rockland wharf; and just as we were getting up from dinner in the yacht's saloon, here came a boy with a telegram. The wire was from Percy, and it said:

"Don't be a complete fool. It was no joke at all. Ask my lawyer."

Even then, I didn't go off at half-cock, though I have often been called an impulsive jackass. The thing was still too ridiculous to bite very hard. But farther along in the evening, when I got to thinking it over, and more especially when it was shoved in upon me that I really did owe it to Lisette not to turn down even the tenth part of a chance to provide her with the means of buying her future hats, the die was cast, as the play-writers say. I made some sort of a foolish excuse to Jack Downing and the other fellows, caught a night train for Boston, stopped off at the home station long enough to pack a couple of grips and to tell my mother and sister goodbye, and the thing was—oh, no; not done—nothing like that. It was only just begun.

CHAPTER II.

A Needle in a Haystack.

Since my happy hunting-ground began in the middle of Colorado, I took a ticket to Denver by way of Chicago

and Omaha. As I recall it now, it was after the train had passed North Platte that I first became sensibly conscious, as you might say, of the fact that the man in the opposite section of the sleeping-car had a little Pullman table set up in front of him, and was studying maps—and blue-prints. He was a rather efficient-looking fellow of maybe thirty-two or three, with dark hair and eyes, and what Lisette would have called a determined nose, and he sported a beard and mustaches, nut-brown as to color, and neatly trimmed.

Farther along we met in the smoking room, at a time when the stuffy little den had no other occupants. Mr. Opposite Section's only cigar turned out to have a broken wrapper, so I naturally tendered my own pocket-case. That served to break the ice and we talked, dribbling along from one commonplace to another until finally Brown-beard said:

"You don't by any chance happen to be a mining engineer, do you?"

"Far be it from me," I laughed; "nothing so useful as that."

"I didn't know," he hastened to say, half apologetically. "I saw you studying maps as we came along."

Now, ordinarily I'm apt to talk a lot too much about my own affairs—I'll admit it; but this was one time when I had a sort of hunch not to. So I merely said:

"I saw you doing the same thing."

"Sure you did," he admitted cheerfully. Then he told me his name—which I got as Bullton, or Bulletin, or something like that—and said he was a mining engineer, which was the reason why he had asked me if I wasn't one.

Fast that, the talk ran mostly upon his profession, and since the mysterious hunch was still nudging me, I let him have the floor, so to speak, figuring chiefly myself as a good listener.

"Yes; we do run across some rather queer propositions in our trade," he said, after he had given me some sort of an idea of what a mining engineer's job is like. "In my own experience, for example, the only sure shot I have ever had—possibly ever will have—got away from me."

It was up to me to bite, and, of course, I did it.

"How was that?"

"The man died," he replied laconically.

That sounded rather interesting, so I gave him another pinch.

"Tell me about it; if it won't bore you."

He grinned good-naturedly—and accepted another cigar out of my pocket-case.

"You'll be the one to be bored. It was this way: A little over a year ago I was on my way to Chicago with a report that I had been making on some properties in the Cripple Creek district. In the Denver-Omaha Pullman I fell in with a nice old gentleman who had been buying himself a gold brick in the shape of a flooded mine. The mine had at one time been a 'producer,' though not by any means what you'd call a 'bonanza.' After a rather extended dividend-paying period—I don't know just how long, though it was some years—the luck changed, as sometimes happens. In sinking and drifting the operators had uncovered another vein which was exceedingly rich. Don't let me talk your arm off."

"Go ahead," said I. "My arms are insured."

"Well, at about the time that they struck this new underlying vein, they also struck water; so much of it as to lead them to suspect that they had tapped an underground lake. The old gentleman wasn't exactly a woolly sheep—in the Wall Street sense of the term. He had owned stock in the mine for a long time, and it had been paying him dividends, right along. So naturally, after the new strike was announced, he was perfectly willing to own more. I don't know what his investment was, but he gave me to understand that it was something like half a million. In less than a month after the deal was closed the mine was drowned and went out of business."

"Still, I don't see your lost opportunity," I threw in.

"I'm coming to that. As it happens, my specialty as an engineer is the unwatering of wet mines. The old gentleman had maps and profiles with him; the records of a very careful and excellent topographical survey. I'm reasonably certain that I discovered a way in which that mine can be drained at comparatively small expense.

"I told him I thought I could do it; but I didn't give my plan away. Instead, I made him a proposition; offered to undertake the drainage job at my own costs. If I should succeed, he was to deed me a fourth interest in the property. If I didn't succeed, it was to cost him nothing—sort of a contingent fee, as a lawyer would say."

I laughed. "You made an offer like that to a stranger? and on a mine that you had never seen?"

He grinned good-naturedly and got back to me, quick.

"All business is a taking of chances. As the matter stood at that stage of the game, I had everything to gain and nothing to lose, and the only chance I was taking was in the bet on my own ability as an engineer. The old man was a queer old codger in some respects; as secretive and cautious as an old fox. For example: he had carelessly clipped the name of the mine from the blue-prints and other papers, and in all our talk he never once let that name slip, and never even mentioned the name of the district in which the mine was located. But in spite of all this caution he drew up a sort of option agreement with me.

"We found a lawyer and had the agreement drawn up in legal form. The time limit was to be a year, and each of us was to put up a thousand dollars to make the agreement binding. If either of us should wish to withdraw within that time, he was at liberty to do so by forfeiting his ante of a thousand dollars to the other. If neither of us withdrew by or before the end of the year, I was to be at liberty to go ahead with my drainage project, and the agreement bound the owner to turn over a one-fourth interest in the property to me upon the completion of the job and the unwatering of the mine.

"At the moment I was under engagement to go to Peru for a Chicago syndicate, and I expected to be out of the United States for at least six months, and maybe longer. As it turned out, the South American job was a lot bigger than I had anticipated, and for that reason the time limit of a year expired a week ago, on the day that I landed in New York. Yesterday I called upon the Omaha banker, and he gave me the cheering information that my old man was dead—had died just a few days earlier."

"Still, I don't see how you have lost out," I put in.

"Wait; here comes the funny part of it. Mr. Banker tells me solemnly that I am remembered in my old gentleman's disposition of some cash legacies made just before his death, and I'm to have the thousand dollars which he put up as a forfeit. I took the prize down and spent some of it within the next few minutes wiring the old man's home lawyer, whose name and address the banker had given me. I briefed the situation for the lawyer, said I was ready to fulfill my part of the contract, and asked him to wire me the name and location of the mine. You'd never guess in a thousand years the kind of an answer I got."

I shook my head.

"No; probably not. What was it?"

"It was a bolt from the blue, all right. Mr. Home Lawyer wired that his client had never owned a share of mining stock in his life, that there was nothing in his papers or records bearing upon the subject of my telegram, and that I must be either drunk or crazy. Of course, he didn't put it just that way in his reply, but that is what he meant."

"How do you sort it out?" I inquired.

"The lawyer's telegram? I put it up that my cautious, secretive old gentleman never told anybody at home about his mining investments; kept them in a separate pocket, so to speak. Quite possibly he didn't have any other excepting the one I've been telling you about, and the one he regarded as a dead cock in the pit. That would explain the situation nicely, don't you think?"

The story had left me a bit fogged as to the present state and standing of the thing, and I said so.

"Well, it stacks up about this way," said Brown-beard. "There is a perfectly good mine somewhere west of us that is worth anywhere from a quarter to a half million, and at the present moment it is kicking around without an owner. So far as I can see, I'm the only man on top of earth who has a claim on any part of it. And I have no more idea than the man in the moon where it is 'at.' No; I'm afraid my handsome fortune is a lost dog, so far as I'm concerned."

His mention of a lost dog hit me right in the center of the solar plexus and I laughed like a fool.

"What struck your funny-bone?" he demanded, sort of dubiously, I fancied.

"Nothing," I gurgled; "nothing worth mentioning—only I'm hunting for a lost dog, too."

But I didn't tell him any more. After we'd smoked a while longer, and Brown-beard had apologized for making me listen to his rather lengthy tale of woe, we took the porter's hint that he'd like to have the smoking room for his nightly shoe-shine, and turned in.

CHAPTER III.

Waifs and Strays.

When I crawled out of my berth at the porter's call the next morning, my Pullman was standing in the Denver yard. While I was shaving in the washroom I asked the colored boy if my smoking-room chum of the night before was up yet.

"Yes, sah; he done been up an' gone, for the longest."

Of course, this was mere idle questioning on my part. Tracing the brown-bearded mining engineer who had used me as a convenient dumping ground for his story was the least of my intention at the moment. For that matter, since we hadn't exchanged

cards, and I wasn't even sure that I'd heard his name straight, I couldn't have traced him if I had wanted to.

Recalling the story in the garish light of another day, it seemed a bit less credible than it had while I was listening to it, and I began to wonder if the teller of it might not be a member of the deathless guild of smoke-room romancers. I buried the story among the things to be smiled at and forgotten, when I took a taxi for the hotel. After an excellent breakfast I made a few inquiries about the meridian; the 105th, that the maps showed as passing just west of the city. The maps were right. The 105th meridian, which is the one from which mountain time is reckoned, ran a little west of the city proper, and, by consequence, west of the two other principal cities of the state, Colorado Springs and Pueblo.

I found that the 105th meridian, tracing it north from Denver, stops short against the 40th parallel of latitude just south of a little town called Erie. Traced south, it tracks the D. & R. G. railroad for about twenty miles and then takes to the mountains, barely shutting out Manitou, and passing, of course, well to the westward of Pueblo. This simplified matters—a little.

Yet this business of wandering aimlessly from post to pillar, combing the face of nature for blue-eyed maidens and piebald horses and harlequin-faced dogs was already beginning to strike me as about the most fantastic thing a body could conceive of doing. To attempt it without a plan of some kind seemed worse than useless; so, for perhaps the first time in a pretty rattle-brained life, I sat down to do some ground-and-lofty head work, with Cousin Percy's letter for a sort of nexus.

The third paragraph contained the meat of the matter: "Your portion of Grandfather Jasper's property was worth, at its latest valuation, something like \$440,000." What single piece of property outside of a large city could be worth any such sum as that? I could think of nothing but a mine of some kind, unless it might be a cattle ranch, or a growth of standing timber; and in the area laid out for me, mines would outvote cattle or timber about a hundred to one, I thought.

Then there was that other phrase: "It lies in a perfectly safe repository. . . . Repository" implied a receptacle or container of some sort; a brick wall, or a barbed-wire fence, or any inclosing thing you like to imagine. Could a mine be said to be a "repository"? As you see, I kept coming back to the mine idea, in spite of all I could do; and at last, without a word of warning, and right out of a clear sky, as you may say, smack! a thing hit me squarely between the shoulder-blades—Brown-beard and his eccentric old gentleman!

After I got cooled off a bit I had to admit that there was something less than one chance in a thousand that, at the price of a couple of cigars given to a fellow traveler in distress, I had purchased any real clue to my own puzzle.

Yet I couldn't get away from the notion that I was on the verge of a discovery. Oddly enough, the miraculous part of it—the one chance in a million that I should run across the one person in a hundred million who could tell me that particular story—didn't impress me at the time. I was too busily engaged in trying to fit the puzzle pieces together to think of anything else at the moment.

Come to sum them up, they fitted astoundingly well. Grandfather Jasper had always been exceedingly close-mouthed when speaking of his investments. Added to that, he would be the last man in the world to have confessed that he had been bitten, even indirectly, by a "gold-brick" game. Then, too, the course he had pursued with the mining engineer (always granting the truth of Brown-beard's story) was just like him; he would have wanted a year in which to think it over—or maybe longer. Also, it was like him to keep all the identifying marks as carefully hidden as a nut meat in its shell.

At this point I began to think about getting action. One word from Bullton, or Bulletin, or whatever his name was, would settle the identities beyond question, and that word was his "old gentleman's" name. He hadn't mentioned it once in telling his yarn—which might have been by design, or just a happen-so. But, by heavens, I'd make him mention it!

(Continued next week.)

DESPAIR LURKS IN WEAK BLOOD.

Gude's Pepto-Mangan, the Blood Builder, Arouses Dull Faculties.

Many a man and many a woman feels all out of sorts from thin, weakened blood. The least little thing gone wrong throws them into a wild form of despondency. Instead of bracing up and meeting ordinary difficulties, they are downed. Nerves are on edge. Appetite lags. Sleep is restless. They are weak and tired and dull. Poor blood works its havoc till the will loses its power. Few people who fall into habits of worry and despondency realize that most of their troubles are due to lack of endurance—to blood that has become weakened by overwork or straining.

Healthy men and women with rich, red blood see things brightly. They tackle life with zest and go along smiling, full of eagerness and endurance.

Gude's Pepto-Mangan taken steadily restores the blood to its natural richness. It actually makes red corpuscles, the tiny particles in blood which make it red. Druggists have Gude's Pepto-Mangan in liquid and tablet form.—Adv.

66-46

Subscribe for the "Watchman."