The Ambition of Mark Truitt Author of

HENRY RUSSELL MILLER "THE MAN HIGHER UP." "HIS RISE TO POWER," Etc.

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CHAPTER XXIV-Continued.

Together he and Mark dragged Piotr to the cab and forced him within. Piotr, dazed by Mark's appearance, resisted but feebly.

Before the grim majesty of approaching death even Piotr's madness was abashed. The supreme consciousness received back the atom that, when imprisoned in flesh, had been Roman. It was Kazia who saw. "He is dead."

The Matka uttered a low moan, then became silent again, resumed her rigid gazing at the not less still body. Piotr's hand passed over his eyes in a bewildered gesture. The woman who kept the door made the sign of the cross and went quietly out.

Kazia bent over to kiss Roman's forehead. Then Piotr came out of his daze. He caught her roughly and drew her back.

"No!"

"Piotr!"

"You're not fit to touch him." She turned and went slowly into

the kitchen. Piotr followed. He confronted her and Mark. "You

can go now, both of you." "Oh, Piotr, not now!" Kazla began

pleadingly. "The Matka needs me and-"

"We need nothing from you. We weren't good enough for you once. You left us to be a fine lady. Now we don't want you."

"But I came back and you wouldn't let me stay."

"Yes, when you found that Jim Whiting couldn't give you what you wanted. You thought you could use as then-as he did." He nodded toward Mark. "How," his teeth bared in an ugly accusing leer, "how did the Hunky girl get to be such a fine lady?"

"Be still!" Mark stepped close to him, sternly. "Isn't there any decency in that cracked mind of yours? Remember she came to them," he pointed toward the little bedroom, "when they needed some one. You were out filling the streets with your blackguardly cant. And whose money do you think had to keep them alive because you wouldn't do a man's work?"

"A man's work!" Piotr laughed, a horrible startling cackle. "To a cracked just tired."

sible. He rose and crept silently into the room where Roman lay. A single candle was burning low in its socket. By its faint flickering glow the waxen face and folded hands seemed not crack. dead, but only at peace. Mark looked

long at him, as though Roman held the answer to his questions. Once he leaned over, whispering. "What have you found, Roman? Is

in which mistakes can be paid for? .. I want to pay."

CHAPTER XXV.

Payment,

It was two days after the funeral. Mark had seen Kazia but for a few minutes, merely long enough to learn her new plans, and then Hanka had been present. Kazia proposed to take care of her, and that they might not stances-I have no reason to love him. have to be apart, to give up her fine I have refrained from telling only for position at the hospital; she thought she could obtain a new one that would to say this? I have no wish to be course, to find a new apartment. All day Hanka had been alone in the can not refuse."

dismantled flat, thinking not of him who had gone but of the woman who had assumed her protection. Often she looked up, she wore again the her head shook in troubled gesture. strange rapt expression. Hanka had not lost the habit of seeing and understanding many things from her shadowy corner. Not out of grief

for the dead, she knew, had the look that haunted her come into Kazia's eyes.

The dinner was over, the dishes washed and put away; this being part of Hanka's share in the new division thing." of labor. She went into the little bedroom whither Kazia had gone to dress. But at the door she stopped, unnoticed, looking at the figure that lay motionless and face downward on the bed. She started to steal away, then turned again and went timidly to the bedside. She laid a gentle hand on Kazia's hair. "Little Kazia," she murmured, half frightened at her boldness, "what is

troubling you?" "Nothing, Matka," came the muf fled answer.

"Is it because of me? I don't want to be a burden. I can go." "No, no! You musn't leave me. I'm

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that? You lay in the hollow of my lanthropist, plerced to the heart. That would be misery for me always. You around her. The man made directly hand. With a breath I could have de- is to say, Quinby retired from the stroyed your reputation. But I kept realm of beneficence and his rival silence, I advanced your interests, I reigned absolute once more.

held you tenderly in my heart. Wom-A heavy troubled silence was in the an, you have bewitched me. I want little room. Kazia stood passively by the table, waiting for Mark to speak. Hanka understood at least his last After a long while he raised his eyes

words and she understood his tone. to hers, She crept closer and through the crack

of the sitting room door saw Kazla elude Quinby's outstretched arms.

At the same moment she heard a halting step on the stairway. She opened the outer door and went out

to meet Mark Truitt, whispering excitedly to him in Polish. When he, astonished by her appearance and emotion, would have spoken, she clapped a hand over his mouth, and clutching him by a sleeve, drew him

into the hall. She pointed through the I-hadn't you given me enough?" Again Quinby reached toward Kazia and again she recoiled.

"Don't-don't touch me'

"Why do you rebuff me? You're not an ignorant child. You must have it simple there? Is there a new birth known what my interest in the hos- out. pital and in you this year has meant. You wouldn't have taken my help un less you were willing to give me what I want."

"What is it-what is it you want?" "I want you to be to me what you more. have been to Truitt."

"And if-if I refuse?"

"I have never yet told that I caught Truitt and a sun-browned woman alone in an Ottawa hotel under circumyour sake. I---Why do you force me take up only her days. She had, of brutal to you. Seeing you has turned my happy-you said yourself we've broken head. But you will not-surely you

> She dropped back into a chair, covering her face with her hands. When

> "You said," she whispered chok-

ingly, "you said-you would pay." "Yes, yes!" he cried eagerly. "You are trying to rob Mark Truitt

-to force him out of the company. Will you-give that up?" Still in the

same broken whisper. "Even that. You are worth every-

"And will you give me time---to send him away-and never let him know?" "It is for you to make conditions. Ah! my dear-

In triumph Quinby stepped toward her and bent over to take her hand. "Don't do that!" said a volce behind

Quinby whirled. For a long silent minute the trio faced one another,

Then Mark, white of face, hands working convulsively, went slowly to the stupefied Quinby, who seemed turned to stone. He did not resist even when Mark's hand leaped up and caught him cruelly by the throat.

Kazia came to herself. She sprang

"Don't hurt him. He's not worth

Gently, without taking his eyes from

Quinby, released from the cruel hand

Quinby stopped. "This," he said

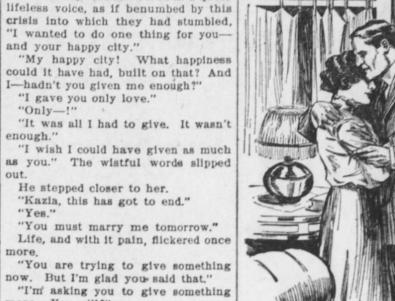
and eyes, started across the room.

Mark whirled upon him once more.

He was pressed back until his back

wouldn't want that. . . . And this-it for the doctor. seems I've always known it would come. It was a chance I took for a where Mark Truit lives?" few months' happiness. I've had my happiness. . . . You haven't harmed a friendly smile on the stranger. "I

harmed me." "Kazia-" But the hoarse cry died away. There was nothing to say. His humiliation was complete. Magdalen that she was,



He Felt Her Body Relax-Her Head Rested Heavily on His Shoulder.

he looked up to her from depths of self-abasement she could never know. The voice was growing unsteady again. "When I think how it might have ended-if you hadn't come tonight-! I'm glad you came-to save me from -- that. . . . And now--I think

CHAPTER XXVI.

The Penitent

It was a red sunrise, that Sabbath morning, and the ruddy glow lingered in the eastern sky long after the sun had swung clear above the hills. A slanting shaft found his window and fell upon him as he dreamed. He

He awoke slowly, reluctantly, drifting toward consciousness through a golden haze that vibrated with far-

away dwindling harmonies. "Where have I heard that before?" After a little he remembered-a youth, full of dreams and credulous, joyously facing his great adventure. "And tomorrow I set out on a new

to the luxuriousness of the old life-

But the bent old man at the south

"Good morning, father," he said at

"Good morning, Mark." Simon

"Yes. Your dream has come true.

If you live until tomorrow night you'll

"I wish," Simon thought, "I could

It was a real suffering Simon sensed,

no hour so heavy as on that Sabbath

adventure. It was a long way from

"Do you," he demanded, "know

"Why, yes." The doctor bestowed me-I beg you to believe you haven't guess I do."

"Can you show me how to find it?" "Yes." Hedges glanced toward the woman; she was entering the station. "I can do better. I can take you there." "If you will." And the stranger promptly entered the buggy.

The doctor clucked to his horse and turned hospitably, with conversational intent, to his guest. But the latter forestalled him.

"Live here?" "Between whiles."

"Ha!" The stranger smiled, a brief wintry smile. "Doctor, I see. Do you know Truitt?"

"Well," Hedges spat ruminatively, that's a pretty risky thing to say of any man, but I guess----

"What do they think of him here?" "They think he's a great man-and it's his own-"

"He's a great mechanic," said the guest shortly.

"I," drawled the doctor, "know more about men than mechanics, but--'

"What do you think of him?" the guest interrupted again.

The doctor, hoping to complete at least one sentence, quickened his drawl, "He's a man who's either losing himself or finding himself, I'm not sure-"

"Meaning?"

"You wouldn't," chuckled the doctor, "have time for the explanation." He drew up before the little cottage. 'He lives here."

"Hardly!" the visitor retorted. "I take the three o'clock train. Much obliged." He sprang, more briskly than his rotundity promised, out of the buggy.

The doctor drove away still chuckling. The chuckle would not have died even had he known his passenger to be none other than that Henley whose star, flashing with comet-like swiftness and brilliancy above the horizon of speculation, had in two years achieved full planetary dignity and importance. But the doctor was not a student of Wall street astronomy.

"Humph!" The luminary surveyed the weather-beaten little cottage with its unkempt yard and near-by smithy. "So he lives here. Affectation, of course!"

He strode up the path and saluted the old man on the stoop.

"Mr. Truitt lives here, I believe?"

"I'm Simon Truitt. But I reckon ve want Mark, Mr. Henley."

"Ha! You know me. His father, suppose?"

"Yes. I saw ye once, years ago, when he was in the hospital."

"I remember," said Henley, who had forgotten that incident completely. "Is ruitt about

from the world. I want to make you a law. I want happiness-and I can't have it, knowing that for all I've taken from you I've given nothing." She tried to smile; the sight of it

cut to his heart. "Every reason but the one. But I'm glad you wouldn't lie to me now." The smile faded. "You see. I can't." "Kazia, dear," he pleaded, "we

"Kazia, you poor romantic fool! Did

you think any amount of money was

word? When I think what-oh, how

could you think of it!"

and your happy city."

"Only-!"

enough."

"Yes."

more. You will?"

"I gave you only love."

worth that-even if he had kept his

"I wanted," she answered in a queer

started wrong-let's begin over again. you had better-go. . . ." Let's give love a new birth."

His voice rang with a longing she could not understand, but he could not touch her. She shook her head spir-

itlessly. "There can be no new birth so long as there is memory. You could never forget that I-that I am not clean."

"Do you think me so small as to hold my own fault against you? It is my sin, too." He stepped closer, reach- stirred restively. ing out his arms to take her. "Come, dear, your poor little reasons aren't enough.

She shrank away from his clasp, trembling. Into the tired white face came a look of fear and despair. She glanced this way and that, as though she sought an escape. Her hands went to her face. Then she forced them

down and her eyes to his. "I thought-I thought you under-

"Why do you ask it?" "Because I've hurt you enough. I did hurt you when I let you-led you to sin, even though we kept it a secret

brain that isn't to betray and gouge and drive-" He broke off. "Do you mean it was her money?" "Who else would have cared?"

Plotr went back into the death room. clutched his mother by the shoulder and shook her cruelly. "Tell me," he cried in her tongue, "have you taken money from her-that woman-when I told you what she was?"

The Matka shrank back from his wehemence. "I had to-to buy things to keep him alive."

Piotr, releasing her, stared, his mouth working queerly. "Even you're against me."

He went again slowly into the kitchen, taking up his hat from the

"What Have You Found, Roman? Is It Simple, There?"

table. He did not stop until he reached the door. There he turned, facing Kazla.

"You can have her now. I'm going." "He's crazy," Mark muttered. "Don't

mind him."

now. I must take care of the Matka. at all. I can make it impossible for Will you please telephone to the hos- you to find work in this city." pital that I shan't be back tonight?"

"But I can't leave you alone here, while Piotr's at large. I'm going out to arrange for tomorrow. Then I'll come back here."

"It may be best," she agreed. rapped lightly. Receiving no answer.

he tried the door. It opened and he entered quietly. Hanka lay on a narrow cot, in the

sleep of exhaustion. In a chair by the not lose by it." table, head pillowed on one arm. Kazia, too, slept. She stirred uneasily as he entered, then became still. He lonely watch.

The night seemed endless. To sit ure to be guardian of your welfare, kindred monsters. The air was dark- you mustn't think I refuse just for doctor and therefore alien to Bethel gums in his old days has led him to motionless, looking at the relaxed for- to lift you out of the sordid struggle ened with poisoned barbs of satire your sake. I'd do what you want- The woman stood on the otherwise de- refer to his misfortune cheerfully by torp fgure she made, became impos- for existence. And have I not proved and derision. There fell a great phi- since you want it so much-only it serted platform, looking uncantainly calling his words "gumdrops"

"Heart tired. Is it because of himmet the wall. The grip tightened. your lover?" Quinby's face grew purple. He "I have no lover."

squirmed and tried to cry out, but only Kazia rose wearily, and going to the a hoarse gurgle resulted. mirror, began to take down her hair. The thick soft tresses fell tumbling to her feet and caught Mark's arm, around her. Hanka, in troubled wonbreaking his grip. der, watched the round arm that wielded the comb, the smooth firm shoulders. At Kazia's age Hanka had already begun to wither into an un-Quinby, Mark freed his arm from her comeliness that men passed by undeclasp. But he did not touch Quinby siring. She went over to the dressing again. The first murderous impulse woman and touched timidly the firm, died. He turned contemptuously away

still youthful flesh. "You are like your mother."

"What was she like?"

"She was like you." Kazia did not smile. "Men saw her and wanted her." The comb became still. "Did shedid she love my father?"

"Such a love I have never seen." It had been dark almost an hour when the bell rang. Hanka heard Kazia going to the door and a startled exclamation answered by a mellifluous voice Hanka did not know. The visitor was admitted and taken into the sitting room. To the kitchen came the murmur of Kazia's voice and his, chiefly his.

He had been there but a few minutes when his voice changed. It became eager, with an undertone that perturbed Hanka strangely, Once Kazia uttered a low hurt cry. Hanka rose and crept along the little hall She crouched in the darkness near the sitting room door, listening intently and wishing she had not been so stupid about English. "Am I an ogre?" the mellifluous voice was saying.

"I do not love you."

"It is not a question of love. I am not old, but I have lived long enough to prick that illusion. We scientists know what love is."

"I don't care for you in any way," Kazia answered coldly. "Mr. Quinby, you oughtn't to be here. A man in your position-"

"My dear lady, let me remind you that the interest of a man in my position is not to be rejected lightly. With

a word I gave you the best position your profession offers a woman. With With an effort she recalled herself a word I can take it away. I can reto the situation. "You had better go lieve you of the necessity of working

> "Threats-" "My dear lady!" the stranger's voice protested, "I would not do that. I would harm no one. I am a tender-

hearted man. I, too, suffer, if by chance others suffer through me." The voice. Two hours later he returned and vibrant with emotion, would have wrung tears of sympathy from a stone. But Hanka, as we have seen, could

that those who enlist my interest do as he thought, for the interment of

"So you think I am for sale?" "Forgive me, my dear," said Quinby, "but that is gross. Say rather that, the public memory was long and laid went on.

weakly, "is a trap." "Set by yourself." Mark turned to Kazia with a helpless mirthless laugh. 'What is my cue? Shall I kick him down stairs-or spring his dirty trap?" "Let him go," she answered listessly. Mark shook his bead. "Not without paying. He said," grimly, "he was willing to pay." "I'm not afraid of you," Quinby mut-

from him.

"Stop!"

tered a feeble defiance. "What can you say of me that isn't true of you?" "Ah!" Mark drew a sharp whistling

breath. Quinby shrang back, his hands going protectively to his aching throat. "Now you shall pay. You-" He broke off with a gesture of disgust. "I find I've no stomach for blackmail just now. I'll telephone Henley to come over. He'll know how to handle this situation."

Then Quinby was indeed fear-struck. He clutched Mark's arm tightly. "Don't tell him!" he quavered. "We can settle this ourselves. I didn't really intend to force you out of the company, only to-to frighten you a little."

Mark jerked his arm free. "So you're a coward as well as a fraud! But I knew that before. This is too sickening. You'd better go."

Quinby started again to go. "Wait!"

Quinby waited.

"You seem to be afraid of Henley. You have reason. Tomorrow at tenthirty you have an engagement to meet him at his office-I have just made it of it; it would have been infinitely for both of you. At eleven I will meet him. You know best what Henley in his present mood will do if he gets wind of your latest adventure in philanthropy. Now go."

Quinby went. The next morning. prompt on the hour, he kept his engagement with Henley.

A weakness for epigrams has denot weep. "I am only trying to show After a discreet interval-long enough, tiptoed to another chair and began his since you have struck a responsive more stress on the fateful twins of "You mustn't reproach yourself.

there to here. . stood. . . . I-I wasn't clean-before any man, given the choice, travel his we sinned. The doctor who helped road a second time?" me, I-" She could say no more. He rose and went to the window.

Suspicion had not prepared him for Two years had passed, crowded with this. He stared foolishly at her, showeffort, crowned with achievement. ing how he recoiled from the fact her From the window where he stood, still broken words had revealed. He did seeking to recover the lost harmonies, not then think it strange that the he could see the beginning of his shame of a woman he did not love happy city, all ready for the great ex-

should stab so deeply. periment. "Kazia, how could you-how could He bathed and dressed-in the new you!

After a while he forgot his own pain a little in pity for the silent stricken and descended to the kitchen. The woman. Again his arms reached out for her and would not be denied. "It must make no difference." His now at which the Truitts generally sternness was all for himself. "What

am I to blame you? You sold your body to live. I gave my soul to feel served as cook. others squirming under my feet. You hurt only yourself. I've hurt every window had forgotten breakfast. For been a coward years ago when we salutation. first loved, you would never have been tempted. Your sin is only a part of last.

mine. It is you who have most to forgive." turned reluctantly from the window. Slowly she raised her head to look "I was jest thinkin' it'll be 20 years at him. "And you," came a broken incredulous whisper, "and you would there's that."

marry me-even now ?" "All the more now!" For an instant a faint pitiable hope.

have seen it all-steel made in Bethel." defying knowledge, shone in her eyes. 'Have I been mistaken? Only love could ignore-ah! don't lie to me now. lightly, absently. It wouldn't be kindness. Is it just pay Ever since Mark had returned. -or love?"

He tried to look away from her and could not. Her eyes held his, seeking might be said. But the word would not through them to hunt out the last come to his unschooled lins. truth hidden in his soul. With a rough convulsive movement he drew her give him something."

head down on his shoulder. "How can I know what it is? It must be love, since I need you and want to make you happy. If it isn't now, surely love will come when we start right. Kazia, don't refuse me

this chance to make up to you a little of the harm I've done you." Her answer was a stifled sob. He felt her body relax; her head rested

heavily on his shoulder. She released herself. He did not try to hold her. They faced each other

His soul quivered with the cruelty easier for him if she had been the unfaithful one. His words echoed

mockingly in his ears, torturing him with their hopeless futility. "You will not?" "You couldn't say it-and I don't

want pay." The sight of her had become more

than he could endure. He turned away feated more than one fair project. and dropped into a chair, letting his of letting another's suffering pay for head fall to the table.

After a little he felt her hand gently the dead past-Jeremiah Quinby smoothing his hair. And soon she besought to revive the paleontological gan to speak in a voice unsteady at propaganda. He found that for once first but gathering strength as she

I wonder, would "He's at church."

> "Church! Surely not a habit?" "He goes gener'ly, since he come back.'

"Hmm! Something new for Truitt." Henley frowned. "And my time's short. I suppose I may as well save some of it by going over the plant now. There's no objection, I suppose?"

"No; I," Simon ventured uncertainly, "I was jest about to go over bathroom that was his one concession myself."

"I'll be glad of your company," Henley graciously replied. "Shall we pleasant odor of frying ham met his start?" nostrils; there was a hotel in Bethel

An hour later Henley emerged from the shadowy finishing mill, blinking had their meals, but sometimes, of a hard in the midday's sunshine and tryleisurely Sabbath morning, Simon still ing to revise his estimate of the situation.

He followed Simon out on a tiny cape that jutted into the river. one I touched. I hurt you. If I hadn't a little Mark watched him without whence they could see other evidences of Truitt's lucidity-the hospital, the bank, the store, the cluster of homes gleaming white on the hillside.

And Henley saw-not as the experts had seen, happy if they perceived all that had been reduced to fact-but tomorrow ye went away-an' now with the eyes of one whose greatness was to see what might be, what could be. And as he looked part, at least, of Truitt's dream was unfolded before him. The valley a teeming, throbbing Breakfast ready, they sat down and citadel of industry. The city clamberegan the meal in silence. Mark ate ing over the slopes, capturing the heights, reclaiming other slopes from the forest, until in length and breadth, Simon had been vaguely sensible of a in numbers and importance, it rivaled suffering to which some solacing word that other fastness where he, the mas-

ter, had been known only as a lieutenant. The creator in him, not yet killed, but only obscured by the madness of exploitation, thrilled at the sight. no day without its hour of payment,

"He sees big," he muttered. "He sees big. I didn't think it was in him." He stood on the point, scanning thoughtfully the noble valley, forgetting his silent companion. "He's picked out a great site. . . ." And then to Henley came a vision of his

That city and citadel his, creature of his genius and might, doing his bidding, yielding him homage and tribute, carrying forth his fame to the paling of lesser men's reputations, cap-Ital of an empire-his empire.

"By God!" he breathed aloud. "By God! . And it's possible-how did the builders of cities overlook this place? . . . It would be better than doing faker's tricks with stocks and bonds.

An old man in Indianapolis, who has lost all his teeth, takes his "toothlessness" philosophically.

It is difficult for him to articulate valley road, drew up at the station as he did in the days of his youth. until the eleven o'clock train, having and he admits that gums are not quite discharged its Bethel passengers, sped as useful as teeth when it comes to

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Gumdrops.

From across the town came a mellow clamor, the voice of the new

church bell calling the faithful. The clamor ceased and after an interval resumed for a few last taps beown. fore he rose and went into the house for his hat and cane. When he emerged again he found Simon sitting on the

"Goin' to church ?"

"I guess I'd better." "Yes. Courtney likes ye to. Do ye," Simon asked suddenly, "still be-

lieve what he preaches?" Mark hesitated a moment. "I suppose I never did. I'd like to, but I can't. It takes a certain quality of

morning.

mind, I suppose-or early habit. I can't quite see-" There was that in Mark's tone which made Simon look up quickly. "I can't see the logic our sins.'

"Ye'll be late," Simon suggested.

Doctor Hedges, driving along the

onward. The passengers were two, a ; talking. chord in my breast, it will be my pleas- production than on ichthyosauri and know you'd love me if you could. And man and a woman, strangers to the In fact his sole dependence on his

front stoop. in a heavy throbbing silence.