

# The TURMOIL

NOVEL  
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"MONSIEUR BEUCAIRE"  
"THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN"  
"PENROD" ETC.

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### SYNOPSIS.

Sheridan's attempt to make a business man of his son Bibbs by starting him in the machine shop ends in Bibbs going to a sanitarium, a nervous wreck. On his return Bibbs is met at the station by his sister Edith. He finds himself an inconsiderable and unconsidered figure in the "New House" of the Sheridans. He sees Mary Vertrees looking at him from a summer house next door. The Vertreeses, old town family and impoverished, call on the Sheridans, newly-rich, and afterward discuss them. Mary puts into words her parents' unspoken wish that she marry one of the Sheridan boys. At the Sheridan housewarming banquet Sheridan spreads himself. Mary frankly encourages Jim Sheridan's attentions, and Bibbs hears he is to be sent back to the machine shop.

Lacking sympathy and understanding of a fine nature, isn't it possible that a slave-driving father could practically force his frail, dreaming son to suicide by making him do work which he is fitted to do neither mentally nor physically? Would the father likely feel guilty of murder in such circumstances?

### CHAPTER VII—Continued.

"Bibbs!" Edith's voice was angry, and her color deepened suddenly as she came into the room, preceded by a scent of violets much more powerful than that warranted by the actual bunch of them upon the lapel of her coat.

Bibbs did not turn his head, but wagged it solemnly, seeming depressed by the poem. "Pretty young, isn't it?" he said. "There must have been something about your looks that got the prize, Edith; I can't believe the poem did it."

She glanced hurriedly over her shoulder and spoke sharply, but in a low voice: "I don't think it's very nice of you to bring it up at all, Bibbs. I didn't want them to frame it, and I wish to goodness papa'd quit talking about it; but here, that night, after the dinner, didn't he go and read it aloud to the whole crowd of 'em! I thought I'd die of shame!"

Bibbs looked grieved. "The poem isn't that bad, Edith. You see, you were only seventeen when you wrote it."

"Oh, hush up!" she snapped. "I wish it had burnt my fingers the first time I touched it. Then I might have had sense enough to leave it where it was. I had no business to take it, and I've been ashamed—"

"No, no," he said, comfortingly. "It was the very most flattering thing ever happened to me. It was almost my last flight before I went to the machine shop, and it's pleasant to think somebody liked it enough to—"

"But I don't like it!" she exclaimed. "I don't even understand it—and papa made so much fuss over its getting the prize. I just hate it! The truth is I never dreamed it'd get the prize."

"You have to live it down, Edith. Perhaps abroad and under another name you might find—"

"Oh, hush up! I'll hire someone to steal it and burn it the first chance I get." She turned away petulantly, moving to the door. "I'd like to think I could hope to hear the last of it before I die!"

"Edith!" he called, as she went into the hall.

"What's the matter?"

"I want to ask you: Do I really look better, or have you just got used to me?"

"What on earth do you mean?" she said, coming back as far as the threshold.

"When I first came you couldn't look at me," Bibbs explained, in his impersonal way. "But I've noticed you look at me lately. I wondered if I'd—"

"It's because you look so much better," she told him, cheerfully. "This month you've been here's done you no end of good. Anybody could look at you now, Bibbs, and not—not get—"

"Slek?"

"Well—almost that!" she laughed. "And you're getting a better color every day, Bibbs; you really are. You're really getting along splendidly."

"I—I'm afraid so," he said, ruefully. "Afraid so! Well, if you aren't the queerest! I suppose you mean father might send you back to the machine shop if you get well enough. I heard him say something about it the night of the—"

"The jingle of a distant bell interrupted her, and she glanced at her watch. 'Bobby Lamborn! I'm going to motor him out to look at a place in the country. Afternoon, Bibbs!'"

When she had gone, Bibbs moaned pessimistically from shelf to shelf, his eye wandering among the titles of the books. The library consisted almost entirely of handsome "uniform editions." They made an effective decoration for the room, all these big, expensive books, with a glossy binding here and there twinkling a reflection of the flames that crackled in the splendid Gothic fireplace.

There came a chime of bells from a clock in another part of the house, and white-jacket appeared beamingly in the doorway, bearing furs. "Awready, Mist' Bibbs," he announced. "You ma say wrap up wawm f' you'r ride, an' she cain' go with you today, an' not f'git go see you' pa at fo' 'clock. Aw ready, sub."

He equipped Bibbs for the daily drive Doctor Gurney had commanded; and in the manner of master of ceremonies unctuously led the way. In the hall they passed the Moor, and Bibbs paused before it while white-jacket opened the door with a flourish and waved condescendingly to the chauffeur in the car which stood waiting in the driveway.

"It seems to me I asked you what you thought about this 'statue' when I first came home, George," said Bibbs, thoughtfully. "What did you tell me?"

"Yessuh!" George chuckled, perfectly understanding that for some unknown reason Bibbs enjoyed hearing him repeat his opinion of the Moor. "You ast me when you firs' come home, an' you ast me nex' day, an' mighty near ev'ry day all time you been here; an' las' Sunday you ast me twicet." He shook his head solemnly. "Look to me mus' be some'm mighty lamidal' 'bout 'at statue!"

"Mighty what?"

"Mighty lamidal!" George burst out laughing. "What do 'at word mean, Mist' Bibbs?"

"It's exactly the word for the statue," said Bibbs, with conviction, as he climbed into the car. "It's a lamidal statue."

"Hi!" George exclaimed. "Man! Man! Listen! Well, sub, she mighty lamidal statue, but lamidal statue heap o' trouble to dus'!"

"I expect she is!" said Bibbs, as the engine began to churn; and a moment later he was swept from sight.

George turned to Mist' Jackson, who had been listening benevolently in the hallway. "Same he aw-ways say, Mist' Jackson—I expect she is! Ev'ry day he try f' git me talk 'bout 'at lamidal statue, an' aw-ways, las' thing he say, 'I expect she is! You know, Mist' Jackson, if he git well, 'at young man go' be pride o' the family, Mist' Jackson. Yes sub, right now I pick 'im fo' firs' money!"

"Look out with all 'at money, George!" Jackson warned the enthusiast. "White folks 'n 'is house know 'im heap longer 'n you. You the only man bettin' on 'im!"

"I risk it!" cried George, merrily. "I put her all on now—ev'ry cent! 'At boy's go' be flower o' the flock!"

This singular prophecy, founded somewhat recklessly upon gratitude for the meaning of "lamidal," differed radically from another prediction concerning Bibbs, set forth for the benefit of a fair auditor some twenty minutes later. Jim Sheridan, skirting the edges of the town with Mary Vertrees beside him, in his own swift machine, encountered the invalid upon the highroad. The two cars were going in opposite directions, and the occupants of Jim's had only a swaying glimpse of Bibbs sitting alone on the back seat—his white face startlingly white against cap and collar of black fur—but he flashed into recognition as Mary bowed to him.

Jim waved his left hand carelessly. "It's Bibbs, taking his constitutional," he explained.

"Yes, I know," said Mary. "I bowed to him, too, though I've never met him. In fact, I've only seen him once—no, twice. I hope he won't think I'm very bold, bowing to him."

"I doubt if he noticed it," said honest Jim.

"Oh, oh!" she cried. "What's the trouble?"

"I'm almost sure people notice it when I bow to them."

"Oh, I see!" said Jim. "Of course they would ordinarily, but Bibbs is funny."

"Is he? How?" she asked. "He strikes me as anything but funny."

"Well, I'm his brother," Jim said, deprecatingly, "but I don't know what he's like, and, to tell the truth, I've never felt exactly like I was his brother, the way I do Roscoe. Nobody could ever get him to do anything; you can't get him to do anything now. He never had any life in him; and honestly, I believe Bibbs Sheridan is the laziest man God ever made! I hate to say it, but Bibbs Sheridan 'll never amount to anything as long as he lives."

Mary looked thoughtful. "Is there any particular reason why he should?" she asked.

"Good gracious!" he exclaimed. "You don't mean that, do you? Don't you believe in a man's knowing how to earn his salt, no matter how much money his father's got? Hasn't the business of this world got to be carried on by everybody in it? Are we going to lay back on what we've got and see other fellows get ahead of us? If we've got big things already, isn't it every

man's business to go ahead and make 'em bigger? Isn't it his duty? Don't we always want to get bigger and bigger?"

"Ye-es—I don't know. But I feel rather sorry for your brother. He looked so lonely—and sick."

"He's gettin' better every day," Jim said. "Doctor Gurney says so. There's nothing much the matter with him, really—it's nine-tenths imaginary. 'Nerves!' People that are willing to be busy don't have nervous diseases, because they don't have time to imagine 'em."

"You mean his trouble is really mental?"

"Oh, he's not a lunatic," said Jim. "He's just queer. Sometimes he'll say something right bright, but half the time what he says is 'way off the subject, or else there isn't any sense to it at all. For instance, the other day I heard him talkin' to one of the darkeys in the hall. The darkey asked him what time he wanted the car for his drive, and anybody else in the world would have just said what time they did want it, and that would have been all there was to it; but here's what Bibbs says, and I heard him with my own ears. 'What time do I want the car?' he says. 'Well, now, that depends—' that depends,' he says. He talks slow like that, you know. 'I'll tell you what time I want the car, George,' he says, 'if you'll tell me what you think of this statue!' That's exactly his words! Asked the darkey what he thought of that Arab Edith and mother bought for the hall!"

Mary pondered upon this. "He might have been in fun, perhaps," she suggested.

"Askin' a darkey what he thought of a piece of statuary—of a work of art! Where on earth would be the fun of



"Pretty Young, Isn't It?" He Said.

that? No, you're just kind-hearted—and that's the way you ought to be, of course."

"Thank you, Mr. Sheridan!" she laughed.

"See here!" he cried. "Isn't there any way for us to get over this Mister and Miss thing? A month's got thirty-one days in it; I've managed to be with you a part of pretty near all the thirty-one, and I think you know how I feel by this time—"

She looked panic-stricken immediately. "Oh, no," she protested, quickly. "No, I don't, and—"

"Yes, you do," he said, and his voice shook a little. "You couldn't help knowing."

"But I do!" she denied, hurriedly. "I do help knowing. I mean— Oh, wait!"

"What for? You do know how I feel, and you—well, you've certainly wanted me to feel that way—or else pretended—"

"Now, now," she lamented. "You're spoiling such a cheerful afternoon!"

"Spilling it!" He slowed down the car and turned his face to her squarely. "See here, Miss Vertrees, haven't you—"

"Stop! Stop the car a minute." And when he had complied she faced him as squarely as he evidently desired her to face him. "Listen. I don't want you to go on, today."

"Why not?" he asked, sharply. "I don't know."

"You mean it's just a whim?"

"I don't know," she repeated. Her voice was low and troubled and honest, and she kept her clear eyes upon his.

"Will you tell me something?"

"Almost anything."

"Have you ever told any man you loved him?"

And at that, though she laughed, she looked a little contemptuous. "No," she said. "And I don't think I ever shall tell any man that—or ever know what it means. I'm in earnest, Mr. Sheridan."

"Then you—you've just been flirting with me!" Poor Jim looked both furious and crestfallen.

"Not one bit!" she cried. "Not one word! Not one syllable! I've meant every single thing!"

"I don't—"

"Of course you don't!" she said. "Now, Mr. Sheridan, I want you to start the car. Now! Thank you. Slowly, till I finish what I want to say. I have never flirted with you. I have deliberately courted you. One thing more, and then I want you to take me straight home, talking about the weather all the way. I said that I do not believe I shall ever 'care' for any

man, and that is true. I doubt the existence of the kind of 'caring' we hear about in poems and plays and novels. I think it must be just a kind of emotional talk—most of it. At all events, I don't feel it. Now, we can go faster, please."

"Just where does that let me out?" he demanded. "How does that excuse you for—"

"It isn't an excuse," she said, gently, and gave him one final look, wholly desolate. "I haven't said I should never marry."

"What?" Jim gasped.

She inclined her head in a broken sort of acquiescence, very humble, unfathomably sorrowful.

"I promise nothing," she said, faintly.

"You needn't!" shouted Jim, radiant and exultant. "You needn't! By George! I know you're square; that's enough for me! You wait and promise whenever you're ready!"

"Don't forget what I asked," she begged him.

"Talk about the weather? I will! God bless the old weather!" cried the happy Jim.

### CHAPTER VIII.

Through the open country Bibbs was borne flying between brown fields and sun-flecked groves of gray trees, to breathe the rushing, clean air beneath a glorious sky. Upon Bibbs' cheeks there was a hint of actual color, but undeniably his phantom. This apparition may have been partly the result of a lady's bowing to him upon no more formal introduction than the circumstance of his having caught her looking into his window a month before. It seemed to Bibbs that she must have meant to convey her forgiveness. Nor did he lack the impression that he would long remember her as he had just seen her; her veil tumultuously blowing back, her face glowing in the wind—and that look of gay friendliness tossed to him like a fresh rose in carnival.

By and by, upon a rising ground, the driver halted the car, then backed and tacked, and sent it forward again with its nose to the south and the smoke. They passed from the farm lands, and came, in the amber light of November late afternoon, to the farthest outskirts of the city. The sky had become only a dingy thickening of the soiled



"It's Bibbs Taking His Constitutional."

air; and a roar and clangor of metals beat deafeningly on Bibbs' ears. Now the car passed two great blocks of long brick buildings, hideous in all ways possible to make them hideous. And big as these shops were, they were growing bigger, spreading over a third block, where two new structures were mushrooming to completion in some hasty cement process of a stability not over-reassuring. Bibbs pulled the rug closer about him, and not even the phantom of color was left upon his cheeks as he passed this place, for he knew it too well. Across the face of one of the buildings there was an enormous sign: "Sheridan Automatic Pump company, Inc."

Thence they went through streets of wooden houses, all grimed, and adding their own grime from many a sooty chimney; flimsy wooden houses of a thousand flimsy whimsies in the fashioning, built on narrow lots and nudging one another closely. Along these streets there were skinny shade trees, and here and there a forest elm or walnut had been left; but these were dying. Some people said it was the scale; some said it was the smoke; and some were sure that asphalt and "improving" the streets did it; but Bigness was in too big a hurry to bother much about trees.

Onward the car bore Bibbs through the older parts of the town where the few solid old houses not already demolished were in transition; some were being made into apartment buildings; others had gone uproariously into trade; one or two peeped humorously over the tops of office buildings of one story in the old front yards. Altogether, the town here was like a boarding-house hash the Sunday after Thanksgiving; the old ingredients were discernible.

This was the fringe of Bigness' own sanctuary, and now Bibbs reached the roaring holy of holies itself. Magnificent new buildings, already dingy, loomed hundreds of feet above him; newer ones, more magnificent, were rising beside them, rising higher; the

streets were laid open to their entrails and men worked underground between pallsades, and overhead in metal cobwebs like spiders in the sky. Trolley cars changed and shrieked their way round swarming corners; motor cars of every kind and shape known to man babbled frightful warnings and frantic demands; hospital ambulances clamored wildly for passage; steam whistles signaled the swinging of titanic tentacle and claw; riveters rattled like machine guns; the ground shook to the thunder of gigantic trucks; and the conglomerate sound of it all was the sound of earthquake playing accompaniments for battle and sudden death.

And in the hurrying crowds, swirling and sifting through the brooding-nazim camp of iron and steel, one saw the camp followers and the pagan women—there would be work today and dancing tonight. For the Puritan's dry voice is but the crackling of a leaf underfoot in the rush and roar of the coming of the new Egypt.

Bibbs was on time. He knew it must be "to the minute" or his father would consider it an outrage; and the big chronometer in Sheridan's office marked four precisely when Bibbs walked in. Coincidentally with his entrance five people who had been at work in the office, under Sheridan's direction, walked out. They departed upon no visible or audible suggestion, and with a promptness that seemed ominous to the newcomer. As the massive door clicked softly behind the elderly stenographer, the last of the procession, Bibbs had a feeling that they all understood that he was a failure as a great man's son, a disappointment, the "queer one" of the family, and that he had been summoned to judgment—a well-founded impression, for that was exactly what they understood.

"Sit down," said Sheridan.

It is frequently an advantage for deans, schoolmasters and worried fathers to place delinquents in the sitting posture. Bibbs sat.

Sheridan, standing, gazed enigmatically upon his son for a period of silence, then walked slowly to a window and stood looking out of it, his big hands, loosely hooked together by the thumbs, behind his back. They were soiled, as were all other hands down town, except such as might be still damp from a basin.

"Well, Bibbs," he said at last, not altering his attitude, "do you know what I'm goin' to do with you?"

Bibbs, leaning back in his chair, fixed his eyes contemplatively upon the ceiling. "I heard you tell Jim," he began, in his slow way. "You said you'd send him to the machine shop with me if he didn't propose to Miss Vertrees. So I suppose that must be your plan for me. But—"

"But what?" said Sheridan, irritably, as the son paused.

"Isn't there somebody you'd let me propose to?"

That brought his father sharply round to face him. "You beat the devil! Bibbs, what is the matter with you? Why can't you be like anybody else?"

"Liver, maybe," said Bibbs, gently.

"Boh! Even ole Doc Gurney says there's nothin' wrong with you organically. No. You're a dreamer, Bibbs;



"Sit Down," Said Sheridan.

that's what's the matter, and that's all the matter. Oh, not one o' these big dreamers that put through the big deals! No, sir! You're the kind o' dreamer that just sets out on the back fence and thinks about how much trouble there must be in the world! That ain't the kind that builds the bridges, Bibbs; it's the kind that borrows fifteen cents from his wife's uncle's brother-in-law to get ten cent's worth o' plug tobacco and a nickel's worth o' quinine!"

He put the finishing touch to this etching with a snort, and turned again to the window.

"Look out there!" he bade his son. "Look out o' that window! Look at the life and energy down there! Look at the big things young men are doin' in this town!" He swung about, coming to the mahogany desk in the middle of the room. "Look at what your own brothers are doin'! Look at Roscoe! Yes, and look at Jim! I made Jim president o' the Sheridan Realty company last new year's, and it's an example to any young man—or ole man, either—the way he took hold of it. Last July we found out we wanted two more big warehouses at the pump

works—wanted 'em quick. Contractors said it couldn't be done; said nine or ten months at the soonest; couldn't do it any other way. What'd Jim do? Took the contract himself; found a fellow with a new cement and concrete process; kept men on the job night and day, and stayed on it night and day himself—and, by George! we begin to use them warehouses next week! Four months and a half, and every inch fire-proof! I tell you Jim's one o' these fellers that make miracles happen! I tell you these young business men I watch just do my heart good! They don't set around on the back fence—no, sir! They're puttin' their life-blood into it, I tell you, and that's why we're gettin' bigger every minute, and why they're gettin' bigger, and why it's all goin' to keep on gettin' bigger!"

He slapped the desk resoundingly with his open palm, and then, observing that Bibbs remained in the same impassive attitude, with his eyes still fixed upon the ceiling in a contemplation somewhat plaintive, Sheridan was impelled to groan. "Oh, Lord!" he said. "This is the way you always were. I don't believe you understand a darn word I been sayin'! You don't look as if you did. By George! it's discouragin'!"

"I don't understand about getting—about getting bigger," said Bibbs, bringing his gaze down to look at his father placatively. "I don't see just why—"

"What?" Sheridan leaned forward, resting his hands upon the desk and staring across it incredulously at his son.

"I don't understand—exactly—what you want it all bigger for?"

"Great God!" shouted Sheridan, and struck the desk a blow with his clenched fist. "A son of mine asks me that! You go out and ask the poorest day laborer you can find! Ask him that question—"

"I did once," Bibbs interrupted; "when I was in the machine shop. I—"

"What'd he say?"

"He said, 'Oh, hell!'" answered Bibbs, mildly.

"Yes, I reckon he would!" Sheridan swung away from the desk. "I reckon he certainly would! And I got plenty sympathy with him right now, myself!"

"It's the same answer, then?" Bibbs' voice was serious, almost tremulous.

"Damnation!" Sheridan roared. "Did you ever hear the word prosperity, you lunny? Did you ever hear the word ambition? Did you ever hear the word progress?"

He flung himself into a chair after the outburst, his big chest surging, his throat tumultuous with guttural incoherences. "Now then," he said, huskily, when the anguish had somewhat abated, "what do you want to do?"

Taken by surprise, Bibbs stammered. "What-what do I—what—"

"If I'd let you do exactly what you had the whim for, what would you do?"

Bibbs looked startled; then timidity overwhelmed him—a profound shyness. He bent his head and fixed his lowered eyes upon the toe of his shoe, which he moved to and fro upon the rug, like a culprit called to the desk in school.

"What would you do? Loaf?"

"No, sir," Bibbs' voice was almost inaudible, and what little sound it made was unquestionably a guilty sound. "I suppose I'd—I'd try to— to write."

"Write what?"

"Nothing important—just poems and essays, perhaps."

"I see," said his father, breathing quickly with the restraint he was putting upon himself. "That is, you want to write, but you don't want to write anything of any account."

"You think—"

Sheridan got up again. "I take my hat off to the man that can write a good ad," he said, emphatically. "The best writin' talent in this country is right spang in the ad business today. You buy a magazine for good writin'—look on the back of it! Let me tell you I pay money for that kind o' writin'. Maybe you think it's easy. Just try it! I've tried it, and I can't do it. I tell you an ad's got to be written so it makes people do the hardest thing in this world to get 'em to do: it's got to make 'em give up their money! You talk about 'poems and essays.' I tell you when it comes to the actual skill o' puttin' words together so as to make things happen, R. T. Bloss, right here in this city, knows more in a minute than George Waldo Emerson ever knew in his whole life!"

"You—you may be—"

Indistinctly, the last word smothered in a cough.

"Of course I'm right! And if it ain't just like you to want to take up with the most out-o'-date kind o' writin' there is! 'Poems and essays!' My Lord, Bibbs, that's, women's work! Why, look at Edith! I expect that poem o' hers would set a pretty high-water mark for you, young man, and it's the only one she's ever managed to write in her whole life! And Edith's a smart girl; she's got more energy in her little finger than you ever give me a chance to see in your whole body, Bibbs. I'm not sayin' a word against poetry. I wouldn't take ten thousand dollars right now for that poem o' Edith's; and poetry's all right enough in its place—but you leave it to the girls. A man's got to do a man's work in this world."

Can't you see the serious effect of such parental tactics in dealing with the melancholy Bibbs as Old Sheridan pursues? Isn't it easy to imagine the lonely young fellow's going down to the river and making an end of his misery?