

The Turmoil

By
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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 inconceivable and unconsidered figure in the "New House" of the Sheridans. He sees Mary Vertrees looking at him from an 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 his net. Mary frankly encourages Jim Sheridan's attentions, and Bibbs hears he is to be sent back to the machine shop. Mary tells her mother about the banquet and shocks her mother by talking of Jim as a matrimonial possibility. Jim tells Mary Bibbs is not a lunatic—"just queer." He proposes to Mary, who half accepts him.

Will Old Man Sheridan be able to inspire Bibbs with his own belief in Bigness and win the young man to the business standard? Or will Bibbs prove his practical father that there is a place in the world for poetry and music and devote the elder to let him devote his life to poetry and writing?

CHAPTER VIII—Continued.

He seated himself in a chair at his son's side and, leaning over, tapped Bibbs confidentially on the knee. "This city's got the greatest future in America, and if my sons behave right by me and by themselves they're going to have a mighty fair share of it—a mighty fair share. I love this town. I love it like I do my own business, and I'd fight for it as quick as I'd fight for my own family. It's a beautiful town. Look at our wholesale district; look at any district you want to; look at the park system we're putting through, and the boulevards and the public statuary. And she grows. God! how she grows!"

He had become intensely grave; he spoke with solemnity. "Now, Bibbs, I can't take any of it—nor any gold or silver nor buildings nor bonds—away with me in my shroud when I have to go. But I want to leave my share in it to my boys. I've worked for it; I've been a builder and a maker; and two blades of grass have grown where one grew before, whenever I laid my hand on the ground and willed 'em to grow. I've built big, and I want the buildin' to go on. And when my last hour comes I want to know that my boys are ready to take charge. Bibbs, when I'm up above I want to know that the big share I've made mine, here below, is growin' bigger and bigger in the charge of my boys."

He leaned back, deeply moved. "There!" he said, huskily. "I've never spoken more what was in my heart in my life. I do it because I want you to understand—and not think me a mean father. I never had to talk that way to Jim and Roscoe. They understood without any talk, Bibbs."

"I see," said Bibbs. "At least I think I do. But—" Sheridan raised his hand. "If you see the least bit in the world, then you understand what I meant to start one of my boys and have him come back on me the way you did, and have to be sent to a sanitarium because he couldn't stand work. Now, let's get right down to it, Bibbs. I've had a whole lot of talk with old Doc Gurney about you, one time and another, and I reckon I understand your case just about as well as he does, anyway."

"Now, why did work make you sick instead of brace you up and make a man of you the way it ought of done? I pinned old Gurney down to it. I says, 'Look here, ain't it really because he just plain laid it?' 'Yes,' he says, 'that's it. If he'd enjoyed it, it wouldn't 'a' hurt him.' And that's about the way it is."

"Yes," said Bibbs, "that's about the way it is."

"Well, then, I reckon it's up to me not only to make you do it, but to make you like it!" Bibbs shivered. And he turned upon his father a look that was almost ghostly. "I can't," he said, in a low voice. "I can't."

Sheridan jumped up, his patience gone. To his own view, he had reasoned exhaustively, had explained fully and had pleaded more than a father should, only to be met in the end with the unreasoning and mysterious stubbornness which had been Bibbs' baffling characteristic from childhood. "By George, you will!" he cried. "You'll go back there and you'll like it! Gurney says it won't hurt you if you like it, and he says it'll kill you if you go back and hate it; so it looks as if it was about up to you not to hate it. Well, Gurney's a fool! Hatin' work doesn't kill anybody; and this isn't goin' to kill you, whether you hate it or not. I've never made a mistake in a serious matter in my life, and it wasn't a mistake my sendin' you there in the first place. And I'm goin' to prove it—I'm goin' to send you back there and vindicate my judgment. Gurney says

it's all 'mental attitude.' Well, you're goin' to learn the right one! He says in a couple of more months this fool thing that's been the matter with you'll be disappeared completely and you'll be back in as good or better condition than you were before you ever went into the shop. And right then is when you begin over—right in that same shop! Nobody can call me a hard man or a mean father. I do the best I can for my children, and I take the full responsibility for bringin' my sons up to be men. Now, so far, I've failed with you. But I'm not goin' to keep on failin'. I never tackled a job yet I didn't put through, and I'm not goin' to begin with my own son. I'm goin' to make a man of you. By God! I am!"

Bibbs rose and went slowly to the door, where he turned. "You say you give me a couple of months?" he said. Sheridan pushed a bell-button on his desk. "Gurney said two months more would put you back where you were. You go home and begin to get yourself in the right 'mental attitude' before those two months are up! Good-by!" "Good-by, sir," said Bibbs, meekly.

CHAPTER IX.

Bibbs' room, that neat apartment for transients to which the "lamidal" George had shown him upon his return, still bore the appearance of temporary quarters, possibly because Bibbs had no clear conception of himself as a permanent incumbent. However, he had set upon the mantelpiece the two photographs that he owned; one, a "group" twenty years old—his father and mother, with Jim and Roscoe as boys—and the other a "cabinet" of Edith at sixteen. And upon a table were the books he had taken from his trunk: Sartor Resartus, Virginius Puerisque, Huckleberry Finn, and Aferwhites. There were some other books in the trunk—a large one, which remained unremoved at the foot of the bed, adding to the general impression of transiency. It contained nearly all the possessions as well as the secret life of Bibbs Sheridan, and Bibbs sat beside it, the day after his interview with his father, raking over a small collection of manuscripts in the top tray. Some of these he glanced through dubiously, finding little comfort in them; but one made him smile. Then he shook his head ruefully indeed, and ruefully began to read it. It was written on paper stamped "Hood Sanitarium," and it bore the title, "Leisure."

For a profession adapted solely to the pursuit of happiness in thinking, I would choose that of an invalid; his money is time and he may spend it on Olympus. The world must be on the other side of the wall, and the wall must be so thick and so high that he cannot hear the roaring of the furnace fires and the screaming of the whistles. Peace—

Having read so far as the word "peace," Bibbs suffered an interruption interesting as a coincidence of contrast. High voices sounded in the hall just outside his door; and it became



evident that a woman's quarrel was in progress, the parties to it having begun in Edith's room, and continuing it vehemently as they came out into the hall.

"Yes, you better go home!" Bibbs heard his sister vociferating, shrilly. "You better go home and keep your mind a little more on your husband!" "Edie, Edie!" he heard his mother remonstrating, as peacemaker. "You see here!" This was Sibyl, and her voice was both acid and tremulous. "Don't you talk to me that way! I came here to tell Mother Sheridan what I'd heard, and to let her tell Father Sheridan if she thought she ought to, and I did it for your own good."

laughter tooted loudly. "Yes, you did! You didn't have any other reason! Oh no! You don't want to break it up between Bobby Lamborn and me because—"

"Edie, Edie! Now, now!" "Oh, hush up, mamma! I'd like to know if he oughtn't to come here, what about his not going to her house. How—"

"I've explained that to Mother Sheridan," Sibyl's voice indicated that she was descending the stairs. "Married people are not the same. Some things that should be shielded from a young girl—"

This seemed to have no very soothing effect upon Edith. "Shielded from a young girl!" she shrieked. "You seem pretty willing to be the shield! You look out Roscoe doesn't notice what kind of a shield you are!"

Sibyl's answer was inaudible, but Mrs. Sheridan's flurried attempts at pacification were renewed.

"Oh, hush up, mamma, and let me alone! If you dare tell papa—"

"Well, we'll see. You just come back in your own room, and we'll—"

"No! I won't talk it over! Stop pulling me! Let me alone!" And Edith, flinging herself violently upon Bibbs' door, jerked it open, swung round it into the room, slammed the door behind her, and threw herself, face down, upon the bed in such a riot of emotion that she had no perception of Bibbs' presence in the room. Gasping and sobbing in a passion of tears, she beat the coverlet and pillows with her clenched fists. "Sneak! Sneak-in-the-grass! Cat!"

Bibbs saw that she did not know he was there, and he went softly toward the door, hoping to get away before she became aware of him; but some sound of his movement reached her, and she sat up, startled, facing him. "Bibbs! I thought I saw you go out a while ago."

"Yes. I came back, though. I'm sorry—"

"Did you hear me quarreling with Sibyl?"

"Only what you said in the hall. You lie down again, Edith. I'm going out."

"No; don't go." She applied a handkerchief to her eyes, emitted a sob, and repeated her request. "Don't go. I don't mind you; you're quiet, anyhow. Mamma's so fussy, and never gets anywhere. I don't mind you at all, but I wish you'd sit down."

"All right." And he returned to his chair beside the trunk. "Go ahead and cry all you want, Edith," he said. "No harm in that!"

"Sibyl told mamma—oh!" she began, choking. "Mary Vertrees had mamma and Sibyl and I to tea, one afternoon two weeks or so ago, and she had some women there that Sibyl's been crazy to get in with, and she just laid herself out to make a hit with 'em, and she's been running after 'em ever since, and now she comes over here and says they say Bobby Lamborn is so bad that, even though they like his family, none of the nice people in town would let him in their houses. In the first place, it's a falsehood, and I don't believe a word of it; and in the second place I know the reason she did it, and, what's more, she knows I know it! I won't say what it is—not yet—because papa and all of you would think I'm as crazy as she is snaky; and Roscoe's such a fool he'd probably quit speaking to me. But it's true! Just you watch her; that's all I ask. Just you watch that woman. You'll see!"

As it happened, Bibbs was literally watching "that woman." Glancing from the window, he saw Sibyl pause upon the pavement in front of the old house next door. She stood a moment, in deep thought, then walked quickly up the path to the door, undoubtedly with the intention of calling. But he did not mention this to his sister, who, after delivering herself of a rather vague jeremiad upon the subject of her sister-in-law's treacheries, departed to her own chamber, leaving him to his speculations.

Mary Vertrees was at that moment wondering what internal excitement Mrs. Roscoe Sheridan was striving to master. But Sibyl had no idea that she was allowing herself to exhibit anything except the gayety which she conceived proper to the manner of a casual caller. She was no more self-conscious than she was finely intelligent. Sibyl followed her impulses with no reflection or question—it was like a bound on the gallop after a master on horseback. She had not even the instinct to stop and consider her effect. If she wished to make a certain impression she believed that she made it. She believed that she was believed.

"My mother asked me to say that she was sorry she couldn't come," Mary said, when they were seated.

Sibyl ran the scale of a cooling similitude of laughter, which she had been brought up to consider the polite thing to do after a remark addressed to her by any person with whom she was not on familiar terms. It was intended partly as a courtesy and partly as the foundation for an impression of sweetness.

"Just thought I'd fly in a minute," she said, continuing the cooling to relieve the last doubt of her geniality. "I wanted to tell you how much I enjoyed meeting those nice people at tea that afternoon. You see, coming here a bride, I've had to depend on my husband's friends almost entirely. Mr. Sheridan has been so engrossed in business ever since he was a mere boy, why, of course—"

She paused, with the air of having completed an explanation.

"Of course," said Mary, sympathetically accepting it.

"Yes. I've been seeing quite a lot of the Kittersbys since that afternoon," Sibyl went on. "They're really delightful people. Indeed they are! Yes—"

She stopped with unconscious abruptness, her mind plainly wandering to another matter; and Mary perceived that she had come upon a definite errand.

"Mrs. Kittersby and her daughter were chatting about some of the people here in town the other day," said Sibyl, repeating the coiding and protracting it. "They said something that took me by surprise! We were talking about our mutual friend, Mr. Robert Lamborn—"

Mary interrupted her promptly. "We shouldn't consider Mr. Robert Lamborn a friend of ours."

To her surprise, Sibyl nodded eagerly, as if greatly pleased. "That's just the way Mrs. Kittersby talked!" she cried, with a vehemence that made Mary stare. "Yes, and I hear that's the way all you old families here speak of him!"

Mary looked aside, but otherwise she was able to maintain her composure. "I had the impression he was a friend of yours," she said, adding, hastily, "and your husband's."

"Oh, yes," said the caller, absently. "He is, certainly. A man's reputation for a little gayety oughtn't to make a great difference to married people, of course. It's where young girls are in question. Then it may be very, very dangerous. There are a great many things safe and proper for married people that might be awfully imprudent for a young girl. Don't you agree, Miss Vertrees?"

"I don't know," returned the frank Mary. "Do you mean that you intend to remain a friend of Mr. Lamborn's, but disapprove of Miss Sheridan's doing so?"

"That's it exactly!" was the naive and ardent response of Sibyl. "What I feel about it is that a man with his reputation isn't at all suitable for Edith, and the family ought to be made to understand it. I tell you," she cried, with a sudden access of vehemence, "her father ought to put his foot down!"

Her eyes flashed with a green spark; something seemed to leap out and then retreat, but not before Mary had caught a glimpse of it, as one might catch a glimpse of a thing darting forth and then scuttling back into hiding under a bush.

"Of course," said Sibyl, much more composedly, "I hardly need say that it's entirely on Edith's account that I'm worried about this. I'm as fond of Edith as if she was really my sister, and I can't help fretting about it. It would break my heart to have Edith's life spoiled."

This time was off the key, to Mary's ear. Sibyl tried to sing with pathos, but she flatted.

"And Edith's life would be spoiled," Sibyl continued. "It would be a dreadful thing for the whole family. She's the very apple of Father Sheridan's eye, and it would be a horrible thing for him to have her marry a man like Robert Lamborn; but he doesn't know anything about him, and if somebody doesn't tell him, what I'm most afraid of is that Edith might get his consent and hurry on the wedding before he finds out, and then it would be too late. You see, Miss Vertrees, it's very difficult for me to decide just what it's my duty to do."

"I see," said Mary, looking at her thoughtfully. "Does Miss Sheridan seem to care very much about him?"

"He's deliberately fascinated her," returned the visitor, beginning to breathe quickly and heavily. She was launched now; her eyes were furious and her voice shook. "He went after her deliberately, the way he does everything; he's as cold-blooded as a fish. All he cares about is his own pleasure, and lately he's decided it would be pleasant to get hold of a piece of real money—and there was Edith! And he'll marry her! He told me so last night. He said he was going to marry her the first minute he could persuade her to it—and little Edith's all ready to be persuaded!" Sibyl's eyes flashed green again. "And he swore he'd do it," she panted. "He swore he'd marry Edith Sheridan, and nothing on earth could stop him!"

And then Mary understood. Her lips parted and she stared at the babbling creature incredulously, a sudden vivid picture in her mind, a canvas of unconscious Sibyl's painting. Mary beheld it with pity and horror; she saw Sibyl clinging to Robert Lamborn, raging, in a whisper, perhaps—for Roscoe might have been in the house, or servants might have heard. She saw Sibyl entreating, beseeching, threatening despairingly, and Lamborn—tired of her—first evasive, then brutally letting her have the truth; and at last, infuriated, "swearing" to marry her rival. If Sibyl had not babbled out the word "swore" it might have been less plain.

The poor woman blundered on, wholly unaware of what she had confessed. "You see," she said, more quietly, "whatever's going to be done ought to be done right away. I went over and told Mother Sheridan what I'd heard about Lamborn, but Mother Sheridan's under Edith's thumb, and she's afraid to ever come right out with anything. Father Sheridan'd never in the world let Lamborn come near the house again if he knew his reputation. So, you see, somebody's got to tell him. It isn't a very easy position for me, is it, Miss Vertrees?"

"No," said Mary gravely.

"Well, to be frank," said Sibyl, smiling, "that's why I've come to you."

"To me!" Mary frowned.

Sibyl ripped and cooed again. "There isn't anybody else made such a hit with Father Sheridan in his life as you have. And of course we all hope you're not going to be exactly an outsider in the affairs of the family!" (This sally with another and louder effect of laughter.) "And if it's

my duty, why, in a way, I think it might be thought yours, too."

"No, no!" exclaimed Mary, sharply. "Listen," said Sibyl. "Now suppose I go to Father Sheridan with this story, and Edith says it's not true; but suppose I could say: 'All right, if you want proof, ask Miss Vertrees. She came with me, and she's waiting in the next room right now.'"

"No, no," said Mary quickly. "You mustn't—"

"Listen just a minute more," Sibyl urged, confidently. She was on easy ground now, to her own mind, and had no doubt of her success. "Miss Vertrees, listen! Don't you see we ought to do it, you and I? Do you suppose



Robert Lamborn cares the snap of his finger for her? Do you suppose a man like him would look at Edith Sheridan if it wasn't for the money?" And again Sibyl's emotion rose to the surface.

"I tell you he's after nothing on earth but to get his finger in that old man's money-pile, over there, next door. He'd marry anybody to do it. Marry Edith?" she cried. "I tell you he'd marry their nigger cook for that!"

She stopped, afraid—at the wrong time—that she had been too vehement, but a glance at Mary reassured her, and Sibyl decided that she had produced the effect she wished. Mary was not looking at her; she was staring straight before her at the wall, her eyes wide and shining. She became visibly a little paler as Sibyl looked at her.

"After nothing on earth but to get his finger in that old man's money-pile, over there next door!" The voice was vulgar, the words were vulgar—and the plain truth was vulgar! How it rang in Mary Vertrees' ears! The clear mirror had caught its own image clearly in the flawed one at last.

Sibyl put forth her best bid to clench the matter. She offered her bargain. "Now, don't you worry," she said, sunnily, "about this setting Edith against you. She'll get over it after a while. And another thing—I guess you won't mind Jim's own sister-in-law speaking of it. Of course, I don't know just how matters stand between you and Jim, but sisters-in-law can do lots of things to help matters on like that. There's lots of little things can be said, and lots—"

She stopped, puzzled. Mary Vertrees had gone from pale to scarlet, and now, still scarlet indeed, she rose, without a word of explanation, or any other kind of word, and walked slowly to the open door and out of the room.

Sibyl was a little taken aback. She supposed Mary had remembered something neglected and would return in a moment; but it was rather a rude excess of absent-mindedness not to have excused herself, especially as her guest was talking. And Mary's return being delayed, Sibyl looked at her watch and frowned; went to a window and stood looking out upon the brown lawn, then came back to the chair she had abandoned, and sat again. There was no sound in the house.

A strange expression began imperceptibly to alter the planes of her face, and slowly she grew as scarlet as Mary—scarlet to the ears. She went into the hall, glanced over her shoulder oddly; then she let herself softly out of the front door, and went across the street to her own house.

Roscoe met her upon the threshold, gloomily. "Saw you from the window," he explained. "You must find a lot to say to that old lady."

"What old lady?"

"Mrs. Vertrees. I been waiting for you a long time, and I saw the daughter come out, fifteen minutes ago and post a letter, and then walk on up the street. Don't stand out on the porch," he said, crossly. "Come in here. There's something it's come time I'll have to talk to you about. Come in!"

But as she was moving to obey he glanced across at his father's house and started. He lifted his hand to shield his eyes from the setting sun, staring fixedly. "Something's the matter over there," he muttered, and then, more loudly, as alarm came into his voice, he said, "What's the matter over there?"

could be seen that she was crying bitterly. She lifted both arms to Roscoe, summoning him.

"By George!" gasped Roscoe. "I believe somebody's dead!"

And he started for the new house at a run.

CHAPTER X.

Sheridan had decided to conclude his day's work early that afternoon, and at about two o'clock he left his office with a man of affairs from foreign parts, who had traveled far for a business conference with Sheridan and his colleagues. Herr Favre, in spite of his French name, was a gentleman of Bavaria. It was his first visit to our country, and Sheridan took pleasure in showing him the sights of the country's finest city.

They arrived at the Pump Works, and for an hour Herr Favre was personally conducted and personally instructed by the founder and president, the buzzing queen bee of those buzzing hives.

"Now I'll take you for a spin in the country," said Sheridan, when at last they came out to the car again. "We'll take a breezer." But, with his foot on the step he paused to hail a neat young man who came out of the office smiling a greeting. "Hello, young fellow!" Sheridan said, heartily. "On the job, are you, Jimmie? Ha! They don't catch you off of it very often. I guess, though I do hear you go automobile ridin' in the country sometimes with a mighty fine-lookin' girl settin' by beside you!" He roared with laughter, clapping his son upon the shoulder. "That's all right with me—if it is with her! So, Jimmie? Well, when we go in to move into your new warehouses? Monday?"

"Sunday, if you want to," said Jim. "No!" cried his father, delighted. "Don't tell me you're goin' to keep your word about dates! That's no way to do contractin'! Never heard of a contractor yet didn't want more time."

"They'll be all ready for you on the minute," said Jim. "I'm going over both of 'em now, with Links and Sherman, from foundation to roof. I guess they'll pass inspection, too!"

"Well, then, when you get through with that," said his father, "you go and take your girl out ridin'. By George! you've earned it! You tell her you stand high with me!" He stepped into the car, waving a wagging farewell, and, when the wheels were in motion again, he turned upon his companion a broad face literally shining with pride. "That's my boy Jimmie!" he said.

"Fine young man, yes," said Herr Favre. "I got two o' the finest boys," said Sheridan, "I got two o' the finest boys God ever made, and that's a fact, Mr. Farver! Jim's the oldest, and I tell you they got to get up the day before if they expect to catch him in bed! My other boy, Roscoe, he's always to the good, too, but Jim's a wizard. You saw them two new-process warehouses, just about finished? Well, Jim built 'em. I'll tell you about that, Mr. Farver." And he recited this history, describing the new process at length; in fact, he had such pride in Jim's achievement that he told Herr Favre all about it more than once.

"Fine young man, yes," repeated the good Muenchener, three-quarters of an hour later. They were many miles out in the open country by this time.

"He is that!" said Sheridan, adding, as if confidentially: "I got a fine family, Mr. Farver—fine children. I got a daughter now; you take her and put her anywhere you please, and she'll shine up with any of 'em. There's culture and refinement and society in this town by the carload, and here lately she's been gettin' right in the thick of it—her and my daughter-in-law, both. I got a mighty fine daughter-in-law, Mr. Farver. I'm goin' to get you up for a meal with us before you leave town, and you'll see—and, well, sir, from all I hear the two of 'em been holdin' their own with the best. Myself, I and the wife, never had time for much of that kind o' doin's, but it's all right and good for the children; and my daughter she's always kind of taken to it. I'll read you a poem she wrote when I get you up at the house. She wrote it in school and took the first prize for poetry with it. I tell you they don't make 'em any smarter in that girl, Mr. Farver. Yes, sir; take us all round, we're a pretty happy family; yes, sir. Roscoe hasn't got any children yet, and I haven't ever spoke to him and his wife about it—it's kind of a delicate matter—but it's about time the wife and I saw some gran'children growin' up around us. I certainly do banker for about four or five little curly-headed rascals to take on my knee. Boys, I hope, o' course; that's only natural. Jim's got his eye on a mighty splendid-lookin' girl; lives right next door to us. I expect you heard me joshin' him about it back yonder. She's one the ole blue-bloods here, and I guess it was a mighty good stock—to raise her! She's one these girls that stand right up and look at you! And pretty! She's the prettiest thing you ever saw! Good size, too; good health and good sense. Jim'll be just right if he gets her. I must say it tickles me to think o' the way that boy took hold o' that job back yonder. Four mouths and a half! Yes, sir—"

And then, at that instant there came into Big Jim Sheridan's life a great tragedy. Will this man, who had the courage to fight for power and wealth, be brave enough to withstand a frightful jolt?

(TO BE CONTINUED)