

The TURMOIL

NOVEL
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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 finds himself an inconsiderable and unconsidered figure in the "New House" of the Sheridans. The Verreases, old-town family next door and impoverished, calls on the Sheridans, newly-rich, and Mary afterward puts into words her parents' unspoken wish that she marry one of the Sheridan boys. Mary frankly encourages Jim Sheridan's attentions. Jim tells Mary Bibbs is not a "lunatic." "Just queer," he proposes to Mary, who half accepts him. Sheridan tells Bibbs he must go back to the machine shop as soon as he is strong enough, in spite of Bibbs' plea to be allowed to write. Edith, Bibbs' sister, and Sibyl, Roscoe Sheridan's wife, quarrel over Bobby Lamborn. Sibyl goes to Mary for help to keep Lamborn from marrying Edith, and Mary leaves her in the room alone. Bibbs has to break to his father the news of Jim's sudden death. All the rest of the family helpless in their grief, Bibbs becomes temporary master of the house. At the funeral he meets Mary and rides home with her. Bibbs purposely interrupts a tête-à-tête between Edith and Lamborn. He tells Edith that he overheard Lamborn making love to Roscoe's wife. Doctor Gurney finds Bibbs well enough to go back to the machine shop. Mary and Bibbs meet by accident and form a pleasant friendship. Roscoe Sheridan and his wife quarrel desperately about Bobby Lamborn. Bibbs goes to work. Old man Sheridan hurts his hand. Edith and Sibyl quarrel again over Lamborn, who is ordered off the premises by Edith's father.

Old Man Sheridan was a slave-driver though he didn't recognize himself as such. He drove his wife. He drove his sons. He drove his daughter. He drove himself. His wife was like putty. There was too much of himself, too much iron, in Edith and in Bibbs to be handled easily. Growing out of this situation, two tragic incidents break into the life of the slave-driver. This installment is a real thriller.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Bibbs continued to live in the shelter of his dream. These were turbulent days in the new house, but Bibbs had no part whatever in the turbulence—be seemed an absent-minded stranger, present by accident and not wholly aware that he was present. He would sit, faintly smiling over pleasant imaginings and dear reminiscences of his own, while battle raged between Edith and her father, or while Sheridan unleashed jeremiads upon the sullen Roscoe, who drank heavily to endure them. He was sorry for his father and for Roscoe, and for Edith and for Sibyl, but their sufferings and outcries seemed far away.



change in Bibbs, and why the zinc eater was not putting a lump in its operator's gizzard as of yore. Sibyl was not delirious—she was a thin little ego writhing and shrieking in pain. Life had hurt her, and had driven her into hurting herself; her condition was only the adult's terrible exaggeration of that of a child after a bad bruise—there must be screaming

and telling mother all about the hurt and how it happened. Sibyl babbled herself hoarse when Gurney withheld morphine. She went from the beginning to the end in a breath. No protest stopped her; nothing stopped her.

"You ought to let me die!" she wailed. "What harm have I ever done to anybody that you want to keep me alive? Just look at my life! I only married Roscoe to get away from home, and look what it got me into! . . . I wanted to have a good time—and how could I? Where's any good time among these Sheridans? They never even had wine on the table! I thought I was marrying into a rich family, where I'd meet attractive people I'd read about, and travel, and go to dances—and, oh, my Lord! all I got was these Sheridans! I did the best I could; I just tried to live. . . . Things were just beginning to look brighter, and then I saw how Edith was getting him away from me. And what could I do? What can any woman do in my fix? I couldn't stand it! I went to that icicle—that Verreese girl—and she could have helped me a little, and it wouldn't have hurt her. Let her wait!" Sibyl's voice, hoarse from babbling, became no more than a husky whisper, though she strove to make it louder. She struggled half upright, and the nurse restrained her.

"I'd get up out of this bed to show her she can't do such things to me! I was absolutely ladylike, and she walked out and left me there alone! She'll see! She started after Bibbs before Jim's casket was fairly underground, and she thinks she's landed that poor loon—but she'll see! She'll see! And Edith needn't have told what she told Roscoe—it wouldn't have hurt her to let me alone. And he told her I bored him—telephoning him I wanted to see him. He needn't have done it. He needn't—needn't!" Her voice grew fainter, for that while, with exhaustion, though she would go over it all again as soon as her strength returned. She lay panting. Then, seeing her husband standing disheveled in the doorway, "Don't come in, Roscoe," she murmured. "I don't want to see you." And as he turned away she added, "I'm kind of sorry for you, Roscoe."

Her antagonist, Edith, was not more coherent in her own wallings, and she had the advantage of a mother for listener. She had also the disadvantage of a mother for duenna, and Mrs. Sheridan, under her husband's sharp tutelage, proved an effective one. Edith was reduced to telephoning Lamborn from shops whenever she could juggle her mother into a momentary distraction over a counter.

Edith was incomparably more in love than before Lamborn's expulsion. Her whole being was nothing but the determination to hurdle everything that separated her from him. She was in a state that could be altered by only the lightest and most delicate diplomacy of suggestion, but Sheridan, like legions of other parents, intensified her passion and fed it hourly fuel by opposing to it an intolerable force. He swore she should cool, and thus set her on fire.

Edith planned neatly. She fought hard, every other evening, with her father, and kept her bed between times to let him see what his violence had done to her. Then, when the mere sight of her set him to breathing fast, she said pitifully that she might bear her trouble if she went away; it was impossible to be in the same town with Lamborn and not think always of him. Perhaps in New York she might forget a little. She had written to a school friend, established quietly with an aunt in apartments—and a month or so of theaters and restaurants might bring peace. Sheridan shouted with relief; he gave her a copious check, and she left upon a Monday morning, wearing violets with her mourning, and having kissed everybody goodby except Sibyl and Bibbs. She might have kissed Bibbs, but he failed to realize that the day of her departure had arrived, and was surprised, on returning from his zinc eater that evening, to find her gone. "I suppose they'll be married there," he said, casually.

Sheridan, warming his stockinged feet at the fire, jumped up, fuming. "Either you go out o' here, or I will, Bibbs!" he snorted. "I don't want to be in the same room with the particular kind of idiot you are! She's through with that riffraff; all she needed was to be kept away from him a few weeks, and I kept her away, and it did the business. For heaven's sake, go on out o' here!"

gesture; he could not "take time to remember," he said, that he must be careful, and he had also a curious indignation with his hurt; he refused to pay it the compliment of admitting its existence.

The Saturday following Edith's departure Gurney came to the Sheridan building to dress the wounds and to have a talk with Sheridan which the doctor felt had become necessary. But he was a little before the appointed time and was obliged to wait a few minutes in an anteroom—there was a directors' meeting of some sort in



"Good-by."

Sheridan's office. The door was slightly ajar, leaking cigar smoke and oratory, the latter all Sheridan's, and Gurney listened.

"No, sir; no, sir; no, sir!" he heard the big voice rumbling, and then, breaking into thunder, "I tell you NO! Some o' you men make me sick! You'd lose your confidence in Almighty God if a doodlebug flipped his hind leg at you! You say money's tight all over the country. Well, what if it is? There's no reason for it to be tight, and it's not 'goin' to keep our money tight! You're always runnin' to the woodshed to hide your nickels in a crack because some fool newspaper says the market's a little skeery! You listen to every street-corner croaker and then come and set here and try to scare me out of a big thing. We're in on this—understand? I tell you there's never was better times. These are good times and big times, and I won't stand for any other kind o' talk. This country's on its feet as it never was before, and this city's on its feet and 'goin' to stay there!" And Gurney heard a series of whacks and thumps upon the desk. "Bad times!" Sheridan vociferated, with accompanying thumps. "Rabbit talk! These times are glorious, I tell you! We're in the promised land, and we're 'goin' to stay there! That's all, gentlemen. The loan goes!"

The directors came forth, flushed and murmurous, and Gurney hastened in. His guess was correct; Sheridan had been thumping the desk with his right hand. The physician scolded wearily, making good the fresh damage as best he might; and then he said what he had to say on the subject of Roscoe and Sibyl, his opinion meeting, as he expected, a warmly hostile reception. But the result of this conversation was that by telephonic command Roscoe awaited his father, an hour later, in the library at the new house.

"Gurney says your wife's able to travel," Sheridan said brusquely, as he came in.

"Yes," Roscoe occupied a deep chair and sat in the dejected attitude which had become his habit. "Yes, she is." "Edith had to leave town, and so Sibyl thinks she'll have to, too!" "Oh, I wouldn't put it that way," Roscoe protested, drearily.

"No, I hear you wouldn't!" There was a bitter tinge in the father's voice, and he added: "It's a good thing she's 'goin' abroad—if she'll stay there. I shouldn't think any of us want her here any more—your least of all!" "It's no use your talking that way," said Roscoe. "You won't do any good."

takes herself out o' the way and lets you and all the rest of us alone." "It's no use, father, I tell you. I know what Gurney was going to say to you. I'm not going back to the office. I'm done!"

"Wait a minute before you talk that way!" Sheridan began his sentry-go up and down the room. "I suppose you know it's taken two pretty good men about sixteen hours a day to set things straight and get 'em runnin' right again, down in your office?"

"They must be good men," Roscoe nodded indifferently. "I thought I was doing about eight men's work. I'm glad you found two that could handle it."

"Look here! If I worked you it was for your own good. There are plenty of men drive harder'n I do, and—" "Yes. There are some that break down all the other men that work with 'em. They either die, or go crazy, or have to quit, and are no use the rest of their lives. The last's my case, I guess—complicated by domestic difficulties!"

"You set there and tell me you give up?" Sheridan's voice shook, and so did the gesticulating hand which he extended appealingly toward the despondent figure. "Don't do it, Roscoe! Don't say it! Say you'll come down there again and be a man! This woman ain't 'goin' to trouble you any more. The work ain't 'goin' to hurt you, if you haven't got her to worry you, and you can get shut of this nasty whisky-guzzlin'; it ain't fastened on you yet. Don't say—"

"It's no use on earth," Roscoe mumbled. "No use on earth."

"Look here! If you want another month's vacation—"

"I know Gurney told you, so what's the use talking about vacations?"

"Gurney!" Sheridan vociferated the name savagely. "It's Gurney, Gurney, Gurney! Always Gurney! I don't know what the world's comin' to with everybody runnin' around squealin'. The doctor says this, and the doctor says that! It makes me sick! How's this country expect to get its work done if Gurney and all the other old nanny-goats keep up this blattin'! So he says you got 'nervous exhaustion induced by overwork and emotional strain.' They always got to stick the work in if they see a chance! I reckon you did have the 'emotional strain,' and that's all's the matter with you. You'll be over it soon's this woman's gone, and quit's the very thing to make you quit frettin' about her."

"Did Gurney tell you I was fit to work?"

"Shut up!" Sheridan bellowed. "I'm so sick o' that man's name I feel like shootin' anybody that says it to me!" He fumed and chafed, swearing indistinctly, then came and stood before his son. "Look here; do you think you're doin' the square thing by me? Do you? How much you worth?"

"I've got between seven and eight thousand a year clear of my own, outside the salary. That much is mine whether I work or not."

"It is? You could 'a' pulled it out without me, I suppose you think, at your age?"

"No. But it's mine, and it's enough."

"My Lord! It's about what a congressman gets, and you want to quit there! I suppose you think you'll get the rest when I kick the bucket, and all you have to do is lay back and wait! You let me tell you right here, you'll never see one cent of it. You go out o' business now, and what would you know about handlin' it five or ten or twenty years from now? Because I intend to stay here a little while yet, my boy! They'd either let it away from you or you'd sell for a nickel and let it be split up and—"

He whirled about, marched to the other end of the room, and stood silent a moment. Then he said, solemnly: "Listen. If you go out now, you leave me in the lurch, with nothin' on God's green earth to depend on but your brother—and you know what he is. I've depended on you for it all since Jim died. Now you've listened to that dam' doctor, and he says maybe you won't ever be as good a man as you were, and that certainly you won't be for a year or so—probably more. Now, that's all a lie. Men don't break down that way at your age. Look at me! And I tell you, you can shake this thing off. All you need is a little get-up and a little gumption. Men don't go away for years and then come back into moving businesses like ours—they lose the strings. And if you could, I won't let you—if you lay down on me now, I won't—and that's because if you lay down you prove you ain't the man I thought you were." He cleared his throat and finished quietly: "Roscoe, will you take a month's vacation and come back and go to it?"

"No," said Roscoe, listlessly. "I'm through."

"All right," said Sheridan. He picked up the evening paper from a table, went to a chair by the fire and sat down, his back to his son. "Goodby." Roscoe rose, his head hanging, but there was a dull relief in his eyes. "Best I can do," he muttered, seeming about to depart, yet lingering. "I figure it quit a good deal like this," he said. "I didn't know my job was any strain, and I managed all right, but from what Gur—from what I hear, I was just up to the limit of my nerves from overwork, and the—trouble at home was the extra strain that's fixed me the way I am. I tried to brace, so I could stand the work and the trouble too, on whisky—and that put the dash to me! I—I'm not hitting it as hard as I was for a while, and I reckon pretty soon if I can get to feeling a little more energy, I better try to quit entirely—I don't know I'm all in—and the doctor says so. I thought I was running along fine up to a few months ago, but all the time

I was ready to bust, and didn't know it. Now, then, I don't want you to blame Sibyl, and if I were you I wouldn't speak of her as 'that woman,' because she's your daughter-in-law and going to stay that way. She didn't do anything wicked. It was a shock to me, and I don't deny it, to find what she had done—encouraging that fellow to hang around her after he began trying to flirt with her, and losing her head over him the way she did. I don't deny it was a shock and that I'll always be a hurt inside of me I'll never get over. But it was my fault; I didn't understand a woman's nature." Poor Roscoe spoke in the most profound and desolate earnest.

"A woman craves society, and earnest, and meeting attractive people, and traveling. Well, I can't give her the other things, but I can give her the traveling—real traveling, not just going to Atlantic City or New Orleans, the way she has, two, three times. A woman has to have something in her life besides a business man. And that's all I was. I never understood till I heard her talking when she was so sick, and I believe if you'd heard her then you wouldn't speak so hard-heartedly about her; I believe you might have forgiven her like I have. That's all. I never cared anything for any girl but her in my life, but I was so busy with business I put it ahead of her. I never thought about her, I was so busy thinking business. Well, this is where it's brought us to—and now when you talk about 'business' to me I feel the way you do when anybody talks about Gurney to you. The word 'business' makes me dizzy—it makes me honestly sick at the stomach. I believe if I had to go downtown and step inside that office door I'd fall down on the floor, deathly sick. You talk about a 'month's vacation'—and I get just as sick. I'm rattled—I can't explain—I haven't got any plans—can't make any, except to take my girl and get just as far away from that office as I can—and stay. We're going to Japan first, and if we—"

His father rustled the paper. "I said goodby, Roscoe."

"Goodby," said Roscoe, listlessly.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Sheridan waited until he heard the sound of the outer door closing; then he rose and pushed a tiny disk set in the wall. Jackson appeared.

"Has Bibbs got home from work?"

"Mist' Bibbs? No, suh."

"Tell him I want to see him, soon as he comes."

"Yesuh."

Sheridan returned to his chair and fixed his attention fiercely upon the newspaper. He found it difficult to pursue the items beyond their explanatory rubrics—there was nothing unusual or startling to concentrate his attention.

"Motorman Puts Blame on Brakes, Three Killed When Car Slides." "Burglars Make Big Haul." "Board Works Approve Big Car-line Extension." "Hold-up Men, Injure Two. Man Found in Alley, Skull Fractured." "Sleeking Story Told in Divorce Court." "Plan New Eighteen-story Structure." "Schoolgirl Meets Death Under Automobile." "Negro Cuts Three. One Dead." "Life Crushed Out. Third Elevator Accident in Same Building Causes Action by Coroner." "Declare Militia Will be Menace. Polish Societies Protest to Governor in Church Rioting Case." "Short \$3,500 in Accounts, Trusted Man Kills Self With Drug." "Found Frozen. Family Without Food or Fuel. Baby Dead When Parents Return Home From Seeking Work." "Minister Returned From Trip Abroad Lectures on Big Future of Our City. Sees Big Im-



"You're My Last Chance."

provement During Short Absence. Says No European City Holds Candle." (Sheridan nodded approvingly here.) Bibbs came through the hall whistling, and entered the room briskly. "Well, father, did you want me?"

"Yes. Sit down," Sheridan got up, and Bibbs took a seat by the fire, holding out his hands to the crackling blaze, for it was cold outdoors. "I came within seven of the shop record today," he said. "I handled more strips than any other workman has any day this month. The nearest to me is sixteen behind."

wasn't right in sending you there—I would just like to hear him! And you—ain't you ashamed of makin' such a fuss about it? Ain't you?"

"I didn't go at it in the right spirit the other time," Bibbs said, smiling brightly, his face ruddy in the cheerful firelight. "I didn't know the difference it meant to like a thing."

"Well, I guess I've pretty thoroughly vindicated my judgment. I guess I have," said the shop-boy, who had been hurt by it, and it wasn't exactly what I said it would be. Ain't that so?"

"Looks like it!" Bibbs agreed, gayly. "Well, I'd like to know any place I been wrong, first and last! Instead o' burtin' you, it's been the makin' of you—physically. It's started you out to be the huskiest one o' the whole family. Now, then, mentally—that's different. I don't say it unkindly, Bibbs, but you got to do something for yourself mentally, just like what's been done physically. And I'm 'goin' to help you."

Sheridan decided to sit down again. He brought his chair close to his son's, and, leaning over, tapped Bibbs' knee confidentially. "I got plans for you, Bibbs," he said.

Bibbs instantly looked thoroughly alarmed. He drew back. "I—I'm all right now, father."

"Listen," Sheridan settled himself in his chair, and spoke in the tone of a reasonable man reasoning. "Listen here, Bibbs. I had another blow today, and it was a hard one and right in the face, though I have been expectin' it some little time back. Well, it's got to be met. Now I'll be frank with you. As I said a minute ago, mentally I couldn't ever called you exactly strong. You got will power, I say that for you. I never knew 'by or man that could be stubborn—never one in my life! Now, then, you've showed you could learn to run that machine best of any man in the shop, in no time at all. That looks to me like you could learn to do other things. I don't deny but what it's an encouragin' sign. I don't deny that, at all. Now, then, I'm 'goin' to give you a raise. I wanted to send you straight on up through the shops—a year or two, maybe—but I can't do it. I lost Jim, and now I've lost Roscoe. He's quit. He's laid down on me. If he ever comes back at all, he'll be a long time pickin' up the strings, and, anyway, he ain't the man I thought he was. I can't count on him. I got to have somebody I know I can count on. And I'm down to this; you're my last chance. Bibbs, I got to learn you to use what brains you got and see if we can't develop 'em a little. Who knows? And I'm 'goin' to put my time in on it. I'm 'goin' to take you right downtown with me, and I won't be hard on you if you're a little slow at first. And I'm 'goin' to do the big thing for you. I'm 'goin' to make you feel you got to do the big thing for me, in return. I'm 'goin' to make an appeal to your ambition that'll make you dizzy! He tapped his son on the knee again. "Bibbs, I'm 'goin' to start you off this way. I'm 'goin' to make you a director in the Pump Works company; I'm 'goin' to make you vice president of the Realty company and a vice-president of the Trust company."

Bibbs jumped to his feet, blanched. "Oh, no!" he cried.

Sheridan took his dismay to be the excitement of sudden joy. "Yes, sir! And there's some pretty fat little salaries goes with those vice-presidencies, and a pinch o' stock in the Pump company with the directorship. You thought I was pretty mean about the shop—oh, I know you did—but you see the old man can play both ways. And so right now, the minute you're begun to make good the way I wanted you to, I deal from the new deck. And I'll keep on handin' it out bigger and bigger every time you show me you're big enough to play the hand I deal you. I'm startin' you with a pretty big one, my boy!"

"But I don't—I don't—I don't want it!" Bibbs stammered.

Sheridan looked perplexed. "What's the matter with you? Didn't you understand what I was tellin' you?"

"I know, I know! But I can't take it."

"What's the matter with you?" Sheridan was half amazed, half suspicious. "Your head feel funny?"

"I've never been quite so sane in my life," said Bibbs, "as I have lately. And I've got just what I want. I'm living exactly the right life. I'm earning my daily bread, and I'm happy in doing it. My wages are enough. I don't want any more money, and I don't deserve any—"

"Damnation!" Sheridan sprang up. "You've turned Socialist! You been listening to these fellows down there, and you—"

"No, sir. I think there's a great deal in what they say, but that ain't it."

Sheridan tried to restrain his growing fury, and succeeded partially. "Then what is it? What's the matter?"

"Nothing," his son returned, nervously. "Nothing—except that I'm content. I don't want to change anythin'."

"Why not?"

"Bibbs had the incredible folly to try to explain. "I'll tell you, father, if I can. I know it may be hard to understand—"

"Yes, I think it may be," said Sheridan, grimly. "What you say usually is a little that way. Go on!"

Do you think the old man will head Bibbs, or will he put the young man out of his life and cut him off?