

THE REAL MAN

By FRANCIS LYNDE

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CHAPTER XIV—Continued.

Stanton was still wrestling with his problem when the "handsome couple" returned from the play. The trust field captain saw them as they crossed the lobby to the elevator and again marked the little evidences of familiarity. "That settles it," he mused, with an outburst of the pugnazian jaw. "She knows more about Smith than anybody else in this neck of woods—and she's got it to tell!"

Stanton began his inquisition for better information the following day, with the bejeweled lady for his ally. Miss Richlander was alone and unfriended in the hotel—and also a little bored. Hence she was easy of approach; so easy that by luncheon time the sham promoter's wife was able to introduce her husband. Stanton lost no moment investigative. For the inquiring purpose, Smith was made to figure as a business acquaintance, and Stanton was generous in his praises of the young man's astounding financial ability.

"He's simply a wonder, Miss Richlander!" he confided over the luncheon table. "Coming here a few weeks ago, absolutely unknown, he has already become a prominent man of affairs in Brewster. And so discreetly reticent! To this good day nobody knows where he comes from, or anything about him."

"No?" said Miss Verda. "How singular!" But she did not volunteer to supply any of the missing biographical facts.

"Absolutely nothing," Stanton went on smoothly. "And, of course, his silence about himself has been grossly misinterpreted. I have even heard it said that he is an escaped convict."

"How perfectly absurd!" was the smiling comment.

"Isn't it? But you know how people will talk. They are saying now that his name isn't Smith; that he has merely taken the commonest name in the category as an alias."

"I can contradict that, anyway," Miss Richlander offered. "His name is really and truly John Smith."

"You have known him a long time, haven't you?" inquired the lady with the headlight diamonds.

"Oh, yes; for quite a long time, indeed."

"That was back in New York state?" Stanton slipped in.

"In the East, yes. He comes of an excellent family. His father's people were well-to-do farmers, and one of his great-uncles on his mother's side was on the supreme bench in our state; he was chief justice during the later years of his life."

"What state did you say?" queried Stanton craftily. But Miss Verda was far too wide-awake to let him surprise her.

"Our home state, of course. I don't believe any member of Mr. Smith's immediate family on either side has ever moved out of it."

Stanton gave it up for the time being, and was convinced upon two points. Smith might have business reasons for secrecy—he might have backers who wished to remain completely unknown in their fight against the big land trust; but if he had no backers the



"—he is an Escaped Convict."

other hypothesis clinched itself instantly—he was in hiding; he had done something from which he had run away.

It was not until after office hours that Stanton was able to reduce his question to its simplest terms, and it was Shaw, dropping in to make his report after his first day's work as clerk and stenographer in the High Line headquarters, who cleared the air of at least one fog bank of doubts.

"I've been through the records and the stock-books," said the spy, when, in obedience to orders, he had locked the office door. "Smith is playing a lone hand. He flimflammed Kinzie for his first chunk of money, and after that it was easy. Every dollar invested in High Line has been dug up right here in the Timanyoni. Here's the list of stockholders."

Stanton ran his eye down the string of names and swore when he saw Maxwell's subscription of \$25,000. "Damn it!" he rasped; "and he's Fairbairn's own son-in-law!"

"So is Starbuck, for that matter; and he's in for twenty thousand," said Shaw. "And, by the way, Bill is a man who will bear watching. He's hand-in-glove with Smith, and he's onto all of our little crooks and turns. I heard him telling Smith today that he owed it to the company to carry a gun."

Stanton's smile showed his teeth. "I wish he would; carry one and kill somebody with it. Then we'd know what to do with him."

The spy was rolling a cigarette and his half-closed eyes had a murderous glint in them.

"Me, for instance?" he inquired cynically.

"Anybody," said Stanton absentmindedly. He was going over the list of stockholders again and had scarcely heard what Shaw had said.

"That brings us down to business, Mr. Stanton," said the ex-railroad clerk slowly. "I'm not getting money enough out of this to cover the risk—my risk."

The man at the desk looked up quickly.

"What's that you say? By heavens, Shaw, I've spoken once, and I'll do it just this one time more: you sing small if you want to keep out of jail!"

Shaw had lighted his cigarette—and was edging toward the door.

"Not this trip, Mr. Stanton," he said coolly. "If you've got me, I've got you. I can find two men who will go into court and swear that you paid Pete Simms money to have Smith snatched, that day out at Simms' place at the dam! I may have to go to jail, as you say; but I'll bet you five to one that you'll beat me to it!" And with that he snapped the catch on the locked door and went away.

Some three hours after this rather hostile clash with the least trustworthy but by far the most able of his henchmen, Crawford Stanton left his wife chatting comfortably with Miss Richlander in the hotel parlors and went reluctantly to keep an appointment which he had been dreading ever since the early afternoon hour when a wire had come from Copah directing him to meet the "Nevada Flyer" upon its arrival at Brewster. The public knew the name signed to the telegram as that of a millionaire statesman; but Stanton knew it best as the name of a hard and not overscrupulous master.

The train was whistling for the station when Stanton descended from his cab and hurried down the long platform. A white-jacketed porter was waiting to admit him to the presence when the train came to a stand, and as he climbed into the vestibule of the luxurious private car, Stanton got what comfort he could out of the thought that the interview would necessarily be limited by the ten minutes' engine-changing stop of the fast train.

Stanton, ten minutes later, made a flying leap from the moving train. At the cab rank he found the motor car which he had hired for the drive down from the hotel. Climbing in, he gave a brittle order to the chauffeur. Simultaneously a man wearing the softest of hats lounged away from his post of observation under a nearby electric pole and ran across the railroad plaza to unhitch and mount a wiry little colt pony. Once in the saddle, however, the mounted man did not hurry his horse. Having overheard Stanton's order giving, there was no need to keep the motor car in sight as it sputtered through the streets and out upon the backgrounding mesa, its ill-smelling course ending at a lonely roadhouse in the mesa hills on the Topaz trail.

When the hired vehicle came to a stand in front of the lighted barroom of the roadhouse, Stanton gave a waiting order to the driver and went in. Of the dog-faced barkeeper he asked an abrupt question, and at the man's jerk of a thumb toward the rear, the promoter passed on and entered the private room at the back.

The private room had but one occupant—the man Lanterby, who was sitting behind a round card table and vainly endeavoring to make one of the pair of empty whisky glasses spin in a complete circuit about a black bottle standing on the table.

"You are an ass, Billy," he asserted. "I never was in love with Verda Richlander, nor she with me."

"Speak for yourself and let it hang there, John. You can't speak for the woman—no man ever can. What I'm hoping now is that she doesn't know anything about you that Stanton could make use of."

Again the High Line's new secretary turned to stare at the black backgrounded window.

"You mean that she might hear of—of Miss Corona?" he suggested.

"You've roped it down, at least," said the friendly enemy. "Stanton'll tell her—he'll tell her anything and everything that might make her turn loose any little bit of information she may have about you. As I said a minute ago, I'm hoping she hasn't got anything on you, John."

Smith was still facing the window when he replied. "I'm sorry to have to disappoint you, Starbuck. What Miss Richlander could do to me, if she chooses, would be good and plenty."

The ex-cowboy mine owner drew a long breath and felt for his tobacco sack and rice paper.

"All of which opens up more talk trails," he said thoughtfully. "Since you wouldn't try to take care of yourself, and since your neck happens to be the most valuable asset Timanyoni has, just at present, I've been butting in, as I told you. Listen to my tale of woe, if you haven't anything better to do. Besides the Miss Rich-ranches episode there are a couple of others. Want to hear about 'em?"

Smith nodded.

"All right. A little while past dinner this evening, Stanton had a hurry call to meet the 'Nevada Flyer.' Tailed onto the train there was a private luxury car, and in the private car sat a gentleman whose face you've seen plenty of times in the political cartoons, usually with cuss-words under it. He is one of Stanton's bosses; and Stanton was in for a wigging—and got it. I couldn't hear, but I could see through the car window. He had Stanton standing on one foot before the train pulled out and let Crawford make his get-away. You guess, and I'll guess, and we'll both say it was about this Escalante snap which is aiming to be known as the Escalante fizzle. Ain't it the truth?"

Again Smith nodded, and said, "Go on."

"After number five had gone Stanton broke for his autocab, looking like he could bite a nail in two. I happened to hear the order he gave the shover, and I had my cuss-words hitched over at Bob Sharkey's joint. Naturally, I ambled along after Crawford, and while I didn't beat him to it, I got there soon enough. It was out at Jeff Barton's roadhouse on the Topaz trail, and Stanton was shut up in the back room with a sort of tin-horn 'bad man' named Lanterby."

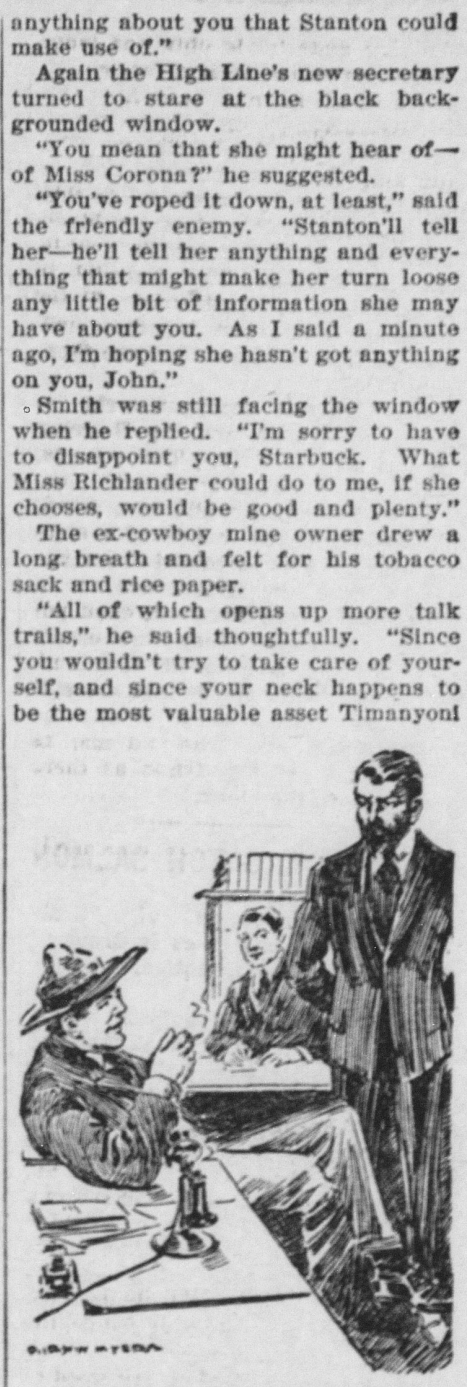
"You listened?" said Smith still without eagerness.

"Right you are. And they fooled me. Two schemes were on tap: one pointing at Williams and the dam, and the other at you. These were both 'last resorts'; Stanton said he had one more string to pull first. If that broke—well, I've said it half a dozen times already, John: you'll either have to hire a bodyguard or go heded. I'm telling you right here and now, that bunch is going to get you, even if it costs money!"

"You say Stanton said he had one more string to pull; he didn't give it a name, did he?"

"No, but I've got a notion of my own," was the ready answer. "He's trying to get next to you through the women, with the Miss Rich-pasture for his can opener. But when everything else fails, he is to send a passport to Lanterby, one of two passwords. 'Williams' means dynamite and the dam; 'Jake' means the removal from the map of a fellow named Smith. Nice prospect, isn't it?"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



"Stanton Fixed It Some Way."

Smith turned away and stared at the blackened square of outer darkness lying beyond the office window.

"She could, Billy—but she won't," he answered.

"You can dig up your last dollar and bet on that, can you?"

"Yes, I think I can."

"H'm; that's just what I was most afraid of."

"Don't be an ass, Billy."

"I'm trying mighty hard not to be, John, but sometimes the ears will grow on the best of us—in spite of the devil. What I mean is this: I saw you two when you came out of the Hophra dining room together last night, and I saw the look in that girl's eyes. Do you know what I said to myself right then, John? I said: 'Oh, you little girl out at the Hillcrest ranch—good-by, you!'"

Smith's grin was half antagonistic. "You are an ass, Billy," he asserted. "I never was in love with Verda Richlander, nor she with me."

"Speak for yourself and let it hang there, John. You can't speak for the woman—no man ever can. What I'm hoping now is that she doesn't know anything about you that Stanton could make use of."

War Activities Affect Clothes

New York.—War relief work has given an unusual stimulation to the clothes industry. The dressmakers were not in a happy frame of mind during the spring. They felt as if ill luck were hitting them all along the line. There was an offensive against the center and the ends.

First, there were the enormous prices that had to be paid to the French designers for the gowns that were sent to this country as inspirations for new work. Added to the prices was the serious danger of not being able to get the clothes that were ordered through the lack of transportation that came after the government dismissed the German ambassador.

The renewed activity of the submarine campaign was liable to make Mr. Ginty and French gowns comrades on the sands of the sea.

When the prices had been paid by the dressmakers for the proved gowns and the transportation had sprung secure, America declared war, and the economy cry was raised.

The dressmakers and the shopkeepers who sell clothes had not had sufficient time to realize a profit on their vast expenses for French gowns in March, and the majority of them decided, possibly unwisely, that they would hold sweeping sales in order to clear out whatever they had before economy brought about a crash in commerce. The shops were also compelled to pay their salaries during this troublous time, and they believed that they could do this more easily by holding sales. They would get cash, and they would keep the workrooms busy by alterations.

New Clothes for Quiet People.

By the time a great many people who deal in women's apparel considered themselves on the verge of nervous prostration through the strain of the spring, there came into the whole clothes situation a glimmer of light that has broadened into a strong ray of sunshine.

It has created optimism in all quarters. It came through war relief activities. That seems an astounding thing to have happened, but it is another phase of the proverb, "It is an ill wind that blows nobody good."

It makes an interesting chapter in the history of women's apparel during the great war. Something similar to it happened in England, not in France,



These are lovely frocks for summer days. The first is a lingerie of dimity and lace. The skirt is trimmed in two sections, and the slim bodice has a wide Martha Washington kerchief of white. The small bows on the sleeves are of blue taffeta. The second is of silk with an odd skirt. The material is French blue faille, and the skirt is plaited in an exaggerated manner to a tight-fitting bodice of white crepe which has wide Mandarin sleeves. The scarf is attached to the back of the waist and is weighted with jet tassels. The third is an apple green frock for open country. It is of georgette crepe trimmed with green and white checked silk. There is a deep white fichu that runs to the waist. The front of the coat is slightly braided and trimmed with buttons and loops.

where the entire thing happened where it only could happen, in this tremendously prosperous country.

The beginning of the war has been written in chapters of activity on this side and fighting on the other side. Literally, millions of women insisted upon doing their bit. The drive of the Red Cross, which was nationwide; the extraordinary grouping together of various units for sane and instant relief; the hospital work, the arrangement for providing comfort kits for the navy, the league work of rolling bandages, are merely a few of the dominant activities which interest women this summer.

While those who are rich and fashionable have put their shoulders to the wheel with tremendous energy and enthusiasm, the appeal for workers has gone into the byways and hedges of social life.

The summer, therefore, is a season to be filled with intense activity and a great national grouping of women from every rank and file of human life on this continent, all met together under one flag.

This extraordinary condition connecting the buying of new clothes and the doing of war relief work, appears to the apparel people in all the glory of an unexpected Christmas present. The city centers are humming with women on every kind of errand bent, stopping at restaurants for lunch, shopping in the hottest days for new clothes to carry them through the appointments of the next month; and the sewing rooms of those who make their increased number of blouses, skirts and underwear that this sudden call to arms has brought about.

The government of the United States steps in also as a buyer of huge amounts. It is ordering clothes for the enlisted woman of the naval reserve force. Already it has asked for 1,000 blue serge suits, smartly made, 2,000 white cotton drill suits, 1,000 separate white skirts, 1,000 straw hats, and another 1,000 dark blue felt hats.

Government Sets Styles.

The tendency in all the new clothes is toward the silhouette adopted by the government for its enlisted women. Skirts are narrow and of reasonable length, blouses are simple, with wide turnover collars of lace or white wash material, and jackets are short and made on a mannish model, depending on the cut for distinction.

Those who do not care for suits are fitting out their wardrobes with cotton frocks. Even at the smartest hotels in the heart of great centers, fashionable women are appearing in checked ginghams with broad straw hats.

This is a fashion which has never been tolerated in the majority of great American cities. Such clothes have always been kept for the suburban towns and the country, and when a woman found it necessary to go on the street of a great city during the heat of the day, she felt that tradition demanded that she subject herself to the discomfort of a suit. She preferred to pass away from moisture in a blue serge coat and skirt, then roam the streets in a checked cotton gown and white shoes.

Now, the embargo on such costumery is lifted. The only one costume which is comfortable and is yet taboo in city streets is the separate skirt with the white shirtwaist. There must be a coat or wrap of some kind to cover the sharp juxtaposition of two fabrics and two colors.

One of the great Western houses reports that it has been necessary to provide the greatest amount of frocks and suits for war work for women during this summer than ever before. The reason is the somersault in the summer regime. Women will not spend

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