A TALE OF RED ROSES

A SMASHING STORY OF LOVE AND POLITICS

By GEORGE RANDOLPH CHESTER

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SYNOPSIS.

Molly Marley, daughter of the president of the Ring City Traction Company, attracts the attention of Boss Sledge, the political owner of the city, a bluff, straightforward, domineering man, who announces his intention of marrying her almost at first sight. Molly, assisted by her friend, Fern Burbank, is carrying on a flirtation with Bert Glider, of the Maryland "Gliders," and her father favors this young man. Sledge invites himself to Molly's party, and, hearing that she likes red roses, sends her all the red roses in Ring City. Meantime a group of promoters come to Ring City, with the intention of starting a "phoney" traction line in opposition to that of Marley's company. Sledge, thinking of Molly, discourages the project, but keeps the promoters in hand. Bert Glider, hearing of the new line, goes in for real estate along the proposed line. On the morning of the party Sledge proves himself a valuable friend by rescuing Molly's dog from the pound. He offers to match his own dog against Molly's, and Molly, hating his brutality, has to admit that he is a fine fellow and "no skver." Tom Bendix, Sledge's lieutenant, explains that the promoters, headed by a Mr. Bozzam, want a "phoney" franchise, which they can sell at a clear profit to the older company. Sledge advises life insurance as a good grafting operation. Then he orders more red roses, and, fearing that Bert Glider has a chance with Molly, orders Bendix to "edge in" on Glider's business. He goes to Molly's party, makes himself both scarce and popular and only emerges when a group of darky songsters, engaged by him, begin to sing under the Marley veranda.

Sledge orders Marley to break up Bert Glider's chance with Molly and threatens to ruin Marley if he refuses. By telephone Bert proposes and Molly accepts. Sledge involves Bert in a business deal, depending on extending the old car lines for an amusement park; then tells Bert that he'll "smash" him if Bert becomes engaged to Molly.

The old street car company is to be reorganized, according to a plan of Sledge, and new investors roped in. One of those who is caught is Henry Peters, father of one of Molly Marley's best friends.

Sledge makes good his threat and smashed Bert Glider, who gets himself drunk in desperation. Molly is regally entertained, through Sledge's influence, at the great ball of Ring City, given by Senator Allerton. Sledge offers to buy her the Allerton house, if she marries him.

CHAPTER XVIII—(Continued).

"We'll take a chance."

Bendix shook his head.

"Blake's against you," he warned. "Besides that, there's an election coming off."

"We lose," Sledge rumbled. "We're due, anyhow."

"I guess you're right," agreed Bendix reluctantly. "So long as we have to lose, we might as well make it a good one. If there's any other scandal about us, we may as well arrange to have it sprung, and get it all cleaned up at once."

"Fix Lansdale today," commanded Sledge.

"I'll go see Schwarzman this noon, and, of course, have him offer the job to Lansdale, so he won't imagine it comes from us. Schwarzman, though, didn't want to change his legal department until fall. That won't do, I suppose?"

"Today," announced Sledge.

"I got you," replied Bendix, rising. "If Lansdale takes the job, he'll have to resign from the bench immediately," and no assent to this being necessary, he hurried out to make an appointment with the president of the Distillers' and Brewers' League.

Bozzam came, suave, smiling, a more polished gentleman than anybody, but not offensive with it.

"How goes it?" asked Sledge.

"Splendidly," said Bozzam. "The stock's all sold, including our own. We're ready to move on, unless we can put over a real good organization of some sort. We don't want another little one, though. Traction companies are our game."

"Get busy," remarked Sledge.

"With the original traction thought?"

A grunt of assent was Sledge's reply, as he looked out along the high board fence which bound in the narrow areaway. A thing which had once been a mop leaned in a corner by one of the scantlings, decaying.

Bozzam looked at Sledge for a moment, and being a gentleman of rare pentration, rightly concluded that his errand was over.

"Good day," he said, and started for the door.

Bendix and a big blue-eyed man with a square jaw and muscular shoulders, came in, and Bendix introduced the latter to Bozzam as Jim Gally. The two gentlemen exchanged grins as they shook hands, but neither one of them was careless enough to state that they had already met; although, as a matter of fact, Mr. Gally now possessed the exclusive bar privilege at the new amusement park.

"Stick around, Bozzam," said Sledge. "Tom, Bozzam gets his car line. Gally will fix the franchises."

Bendix, although the project and Sledge's resolution were absolutely new to him, never batted an eyelash.

"We'll get together on that at the hotel in about an hour," he told Gally and Bozzam. "Nothing ready to give out to the papers, is there, Sledge?"

"Naw!"

"You'd better explain to Bozzam what you want in the way of routes," suggested Bendix. "The franchises should be passed in secret session, Gally. Is everybody all right?"

"It's a family reunion," declared Gally. "Is that all, Sledge?"

"Wait," said Sledge, and looked out at the mop.

Everybody sat down, and there seemed to be some important topic in abeyance. They indulged in no trifling conversation, but looked out of the window. Bendix ordered drinks, which they consumed silently and solemnly. Sledge evidently had some weighty plan on his mind, for he only drank half his beer.

Davis, of the First National, came in, a pompous man, with a fish-fat double chin and pompous white side whiskers and a white waistcoat. He stood at the other side of the table, but Sledge beckoned him closer, and Davis, wearing an impenetrable air of mystery, leaned his whiskered ear far down.

"Call Marley's loans," rumbled the boss, in a tone which, at three feet away, sounded like a tuba sawmill.

"Is he shaky?" inquired Davis in a panic-stricken whisper.

"He will be," promised Sledge.

"Why, he owes the bank $55,000!" returned Davis, more panicstricken than ever, and his whispering sounded like the exhaust of a safety valve. "I'll go right away and protect the bank. What has happened to him, Mr. Sledge?"

"Nothing yet," stated Sledge. "Sit down, Davis."

Mr. Davis sat down, and the four who had been told to wait looked at one another with growing wonder, and at the impassive big man, who was still drawing inspiration from the decrepit mop.

Five minutes passed. Bendix and Bozzam and Gally sat in comfortable quiet, resting all their faculties, physical, mental and moral, but Mr. Davis fidgeted audibly. He twiddled his fingers, he fussed with his cravat, he ran slip nooses in his watch cord, he wiped his reading glasses, and put them on and took them off.

Five minutes more passed. Mr. Davis, in desperation, rang the bell for the velvet-footed Adolph, and ordered a drink. In other gatherings Mr. Bozzam would have enlivened the moment with a story, or with conversation and repartee. On occasion, he could have sung a song or recited a poem, or played seven-up, craps or tiddleywinks, all with the pleasing finish of a professional. Just now, however, he remained as placidly calm as a cake of Swiss cheese.

A step came down the narrow passageway. A raw-boned fellow appeared in the doorway. He was tall and big, and wore good clothes. His hands were coarse, and had bulbous finger tips, with extremely broad, stubby nails, but they showed no signs of recent toil. He had a wide mouth and prominent cheek bones and a low forehead. He looked like a retired coal heaver. The exigencies of politics had once made him County Treasurer, and since then he had lived in prosperous idleness.

Sledge arose, and walked around to the front of the table.

"Say, Feeder," he growled. "I've been paying you seventy-five a month for two years. That right?"

"Yes," hesitated Feeder, with a puzzled glance at the unusual crowd in the little room.

"What for?" demanded Sledge.

Mr. Feeder smiled ingratiatingly, but paled in the process.

"Campaign work," he replied.

"What for?" demanded Sledge.

"Well—I—" and more puzled than ever, he looked around the equally puzzled gathering. Even Bendix was at a loss.

"What for, I say!" suddenly thundered Sledge.

"On the level?" inquired Feeder. "I don't get this, Sledge. I don't see——"

"Tell 'em!"

"Well, if you got to have it——"

He stopped, gave another glance at his audience and stared at Sledge incredulously.

Sledge advanced a step toward him.

"I said, tell 'em."

"Here goes, then," responded Feeder, exasperated. "For keeping my mouth shut about receiving the public funds interest money for you."

"You're a liar!" boomed Sledge, and suddenly stepping forward with marvelous agility for so ponderous a man, swung his right arm, the biceps of which was like a thigh, and knocked Feeder straight through the door. "Throw him out," he directed, and sat down.

Bendix accepted that commission as readily as if it had been a suggestion to ring for another drink. A rather heavy man himself, he stepped lightly into the passageway, grabbed Feeder by the collar as he was rising, and punched him in the ear. Phil and Blondy, both gentlemanly bartenders, selected for the hardness and limberness of their shoulders, came running back as promptly as fire horses at the sound of the gong.

"Rough toss," explained Bendix briefly, handing his collar hold to Phil.

There was a rattle of chairs and tables, and the crash of two or three glasses interspersed with an occasional smack. There were exclamations from a few hangers-on, and a few inadvertent oaths from the astounded Feeder, but Phil and Blondy were voiceless, until, after battering Feeder at the curb until a policeman came up, they turned him over for a wagon call.

"What's the charge?" asked the officer.

"Pink necktie, I think," returned Phil. "But I'll find out," and he ran back to Sledge's room. "Feeder's pinched," he stated. "Want it to stick?"

"Uh-hunh!" grunted Sledge.

"Copper's fussy. He wants to know what's the charge."

Sledge took a slow survey of his witnesses, and the faintest possible suspicion of a twinkle came into his small gray eyes.

"Attempted blackmail," he chuckled.

CHAPTER XIX.

Little Henry Peters, with his morning paper in one hand and his coffee cup in the other, set down the latter so hastily that he bedded it in a griddle cake, and arose from his chair.

"Almost too late!" he groaned, fixing an accusing eye on Mrs. Peters.

"For what?" she quite naturally wanted to know.

"For that stock," he told her. "See! two hundred and twenty-five thousand out of the two hundred and fifty is already subscribed, and the paper says that the total amount will probably be taken this morning."

"My my!" sympathized Mrs. Peters, but there was no particular heartiness in her tone. Jessie looked across at her, and smiled brightly.

"Probably before I could get down there with the money it would be all gone," he complained, with his hand on the back of his chair.

"Maybe we made a mistake," conceded Mrs. Peters, buttering one of the cold cakes.

"Aren't you going to finish your breakfast, father?" inquired Jessie, willing, now that the whole thing was settled, to help him ease his burden and relax into the normal.

"While I'm losing a business chance like this?" he demanded. "It isn't too late yet, Jessie. I went to the German bank the other day, where they carried our property so long while we were paying for it, and made arrangements that we could have the money any minute. They've looked up the title, and the papers are at the bank right now, all ready for us to sign."

"Maybe the stock's all gone," Mrs. Peters only half hopefully suggested.

"We'll find out," he returned, snatching his hat. "Come on!"

Mrs. Peters looked down in dismay at her faded and mended wrapper, which had once cost 98 cents.

"I'm not dressed," she protested.

"That's all right," he complimented her. "You're dressed good enough for me, and it's nobody else's business."

"Father, she simply can't go that way," insisted Jessie.

"She can put on her long coat," he reminded them. "Nobody can tell what you have on underneath."

"She'd know, though," retorted Jessie. "Come on, mother, I'll help you dress."

"Be ready in five minutes, then," directed little Henry, looking at his watch in a fever of impatience, as he realized what golden opportunities were slipping away, minute by minute. The other little Henry Peterses of the city had beaten him to the gold mines, and he was most unhappy.

In 15 minutes, Mrs. Peters, with red eyes, came out of the bedroom, but little Henry did not notice that she had been crying. He opened the door and darted out. There was a car in the next block. Mrs. Peters stopped on the step and took a longing farewell of the place. She loved it, weatherboard by weatherboard, even to the fancy little cement triangle in the gable, with a queer pattern of atrociously colored broken glass.

"Hurry up!" called Henry, from the gate. "Do you want to miss this car?"

The car in question was crowded so full that it seemed to bulge, and half a block behind it was another one only half filled. Nevertheless, little Henry crowded his wife on the first one, and watched the fare register click in a satisfaction so profound that it neutralized his discomfort. The conductor, when he took little Henry's fare, passed by a man who had got on at the same corner, and Henry wedged out after him to tell him about it. That nickel went to make up his 7 per cent. and his increase in stock.

They arrived at the bank 10 minutes too early, and waited outside the iron gate until it opened. In a trembling hand, Mrs. Peters signed her name in the places pointed out to her, and went home in a daze, but little Henry, richer by $4000 in his bank book, jammed his hat on the back of his head and hurried over to the office of the street car company.

"Am I too late to take up any of that new stock?" he eagerly demanded.

"By half an hour," the stock clerk told him, with the necessary insolence of a man who, unaided, has accomplished a huge financial operation. "You want to wake up early to grab traction stock."

Little Henry was miserable.

"It serves me right!" he groaned. "Who took it all?"

"Mail orders, mostly," the stock clerk condescended to explain. "We're about 6000 oversubscribed."

Quite crestfallen, little Henry turned away. As he went through the outer office, Hunt followed him.

"I beg your pardon," said Hunt, smiling pleasantly. "Did you wish to buy some stock?"

"Four thousand," answered Henry, with renewed hope.

"Four thousand," repeated Hunt thoughtfully. "Um! I think I can get you that much!"

"Thank you!" returned Henry gratefully. "Can you get it right away?"

"At about 2 o'clock," promised Hunt, looking cautiously back toward the main office. "Give me your address and I'll send it around to you."

Eagerly and thankfully, little Henry wrote down his address, and Hunt, explaining that the stock was to be secured from a man who was hard up for money, cautioned little Henry to say nothing about it, and glided back into the main office, leaving the odor of extract of heliotroupe in his wake.

At 2 o'clock little Henry received his 40 shares from one John Tucker, and gave his $4000 in exchange. At approximately the same hour, clerks of John Tucker delivered stock to a widow who gave her insurance money for it, a boy who had fallen heir to enough to see him through college, a bricklayer who had worked all his life to save $3000, and a number of other members of the little Henry Peters class. This was the Sledge stock which had been voted by Attorney John Tucker, and it brought $100 per share, in cash.

Jessie Peters and Dicky Reynolds came into little Henry's place of business immediately after Henry had secured his long-coveted stock, and found him in the happiest possible state of mind.

"Hello, Dicky," he hailed young Reynolds, with more than the usual cordiality he displayed toward that young man. "I got the stock, Jessie."

"What stock is that?" asked Dicky.

"Oh, yes, the new traction. Well, it ought to be good, I guess. I understand they plan some big improvements, and we certainly need them.

"It's the most solid investment in this city," boasted little Henry. "I had to use all my influence to get these 40 shares. I don't know whether there's any left, but I'll try, if you'd like some."

"No, thanks!" laughed Dicky, exchanging a glance with Jessie, whereat she blushed. "We're going to buy that house in Willisburg, Jessie and I."

"Well, I'll declare!" exclaimed little Henry, blinking at both of them.

"Yes; that's what we came in to tell you," went on Dicky, slipping his arm about Jessie's shoulders, and drawing her comfortably to him. "We settled it in Maberly's candy store, about half an hour ago, over an ice-cream soda."

"Well, I'll declare!" repeated little Henry, still dazed.

Jessie took her father's face between her hands and kissed him.

"It's quite true, father," she assured him, blushing prettily, and turning fond eyes to Dicky. "He asked me to marry him right at a soda fountain. I didn't want to answer there, but he made me, and when I finally said 'yes', he leaned right over and kissed me in front of everybody, and they all laughed, and a Frenchman clapped his hands and said, 'Voila!'"

Dicky, laughing, stopped that furiously blushing narrative by kissing her again, whereat little Henry, though polite without, was slightly uncomfortable. He had never been so silly in public.

"I hope you will be very happy," he congratulated them, shaking Dicky by the hand. "She is a good girl, Dicky, and you must be very kind to her."

"How could I help it?" returned Dicky, taking Jessie away from her father, and restoring her to that snug place against his side.

"Now let's talk business a little bit," invited Father Peters. "You're a young man yet, Dicky, and you would be wise to take another man's advice. You mentioned to me the other day that you have a little money, and I want to see you invest it wisely."

"I made every cent of it myself," asserted Dicky, with a sidelong glance, to see if Jessie had the proper pride in him. She had

"Put it to work, like I do mine," promptly urged Henry. "Make your money make money. I'll call up my friend, and see if I can't get you some of that stock," and he started for the telephone.

"Don't do it!" called Dicky so decisively and sharply that his future father-in-law turned on him, offended. "That traction stock may be good, but my money stays in the West End Bank until we buy and furnish our home."

"All right," gave up little Henry. "Some day you'll realize the value of an older man's advice."

"I suppose so," granted Dicky, easily. "We have to go up to the house now, and break the news to our mamma."

Jessie squeezed his arm adorably for saying "our mama" and they took a car straight up to the Peters home, where they found their mama baking cookies for Minnie's baby.

"Hello, Dicky," she greeted him, wiping her hands on her apron to shake hands with Dicky, and beaming up at him with the motherly warmth he always inspired in her. "Did you get that thread, Jessie?"

Jessie colored.

"I—I forgot it," she falteringly confessed.

"Why, you went down for nothing else," protested Mrs. Peters.

"She met me," smilingly explained Dicky. "Kiss me!" and he held down his puckered lips.

She shrank from him, as if he had flaunted a spider in her face. She blushed until the white parting of her hair was red clear back to her knot, and she looked at him so distressedly and so helplessly that Jessie felt a sudden sharp tugging of compassion for her.

"Don't, Dicky!" she protested. "It isn't fair."

"That's right," agreed Dicky nicely. "We'll sit down and talk it over," and placing himself comfortably in the big, sag-seated, splint rocking chair, with the red worsted cushion in it, he calmly drew Jessie on his lap. "You see, Mama Peters, having nothing else to do on the first of next month, Jessie and I have decided to be married."

Mama Peters slowly sat down and stared at them for a long, long minute, as if they had been their own ghosts; then she suddenly put her gnarled, red, old hands to her eyes and began crying.

Jessie was on her knees beside her immediately, and had that gray head bent on her shoulder and petted it, and tears came into her own eyes.

"Don't you like me for a son?" demanded the apparently much-abused voice of Dicky.

She looked up at him, smiling through her tears, and then she and Jessie both laughed, half hysterically, at him.

"Come here and I'll kiss you," offered Mrs. Peters.

Dicky was very prompt to accept that offer; then, seeing that it was positively necessary for her to cry a little longer, he placed a chair for Jessie by her side, and walked outdoors to look at the struggling chrysanthemums.

When he returned Mrs. Peters was asking eagerly:

"How many rooms has it?"

"Seven," replied Jessie, happily. "We're going up to see it Sunday. We leave here on the 6, o'clock train in the morning and get back at 10 at night."

"How is it arranged?" asked Mrs. Peters, appealing to Dicky. "Your new house we're talking about."

"I guessed it," laughed Dicky, drawing his chair directly in front of them, and reaching over into Jessie's lap for her hand. "You step off a wide porch into a big square reception room. To the right of that is the parlor, with wide folding doors. Straight ahead of the reception hall is the dining room. The stairway goes up between the parlor and kitchen. There's a pantry between the kitchen and the dining room, and a door for ice opening on to the back porch. Upstairs there are three bedrooms and a bath."

"How about clothes closets?" asked Mama Peters, arranging that house in her mind's eye, and walking through it critically.

"A big closet in every bedroom and one in the hall. The cellar stairway opens from the kitchen. There's a cellar under the whole house. Hot-air furnace, hot and cold water, electric lights and gas."

"Any hardwood floors?" asked Jessie, with her mind on rugs.

"Borders downstairs, except in the kitchen," answered Dicky promptly.

"That's nice," approved Mama Peters, with a sigh. "But the house is too big for Jessie to take care of all by herself."

"The hired girl's already picked out," Dicky assured her, patting Jessie's hand.

"You must have been quite certain you were going to marry me," that young lady chided, straightening up, in pretended offended dignity.

"Of course I was," he retorted. "Weren't you?"

Naturally she blushed at that, and punished his hand and he kissed her, and Mama Peters almost cried again.

"It's mighty nice to move right into your own house," she declared. "I guess you don't know, Dicky, what a woman's own home is to her. It makes her feel safe. I think I'd die if we were to lose this place."

A paper boy raced up half way to the house, and threw a twisted copy of the Blade against the door and jumped the fence. With the habit of a man, Dicky went out for the paper and opened it. His face paled as he read the starins big headlines, but he stuck the paper quietly in his pocket, and talked to Jessie for a solid half-hour longer with Mama Peters, then he accepted an invitation to dinner and Jessie walked down to the gate with him.

(CONTINUED TOMORROW.)

MAN WHO HAS WALKED 11,000 MILES RESTS IN CAMDEN JAIL

Dietz Tramps Country in Appeal for Father's Pardon.

A stranger applied to the Camden police for a night's lodging yesterday. He said he was Leslie Dietz, of Wisconsin, and the police, as is usual, assigned him to a cell and promptly forgot him. But Leslie Dietz is a man with a story.

Back in 1903 a lumber company wanted to open Cameron dam, in Wisconsin. John Dietz, Leslie's father, a sturdy pioneer, held the dam was his own. The company cared little for that. They had logs that could be turned into money and they went about the matter calmly and legally. A Sheriff's posse was sent to force the opening of the dam. It came back and reported that Dietz was opposing the opening with a shotgun. Another posse was sent with similar results. Several others met the same resistance.

Finally, after two years of opposition, one posse went forth to open the dam or kill Dietz. The man blockaded his cabin and defied the posse to get him. The posse opened fire and it was returned from the wooden home of the pioneer. A deputy fell. In the home of the little family Leslie's mother became insane from fright; two of his children, a boy of 9 and a girl of 8, were killed.

When Dietz ran out of ammunition the posse entered the cabin and took them all prisoners. John Dietz was tried, convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment for killing the deputy. The rest of the family were acquitted.

Since 1905, when the prison doors closed behind his father, Leslie Dietz has wandered over the entire country seeking signatures to a petition for a pardon for him. He has walked 11,000 miles.

UNABLE TO FIGHT IN WAR, LAD ENDS LIFE

German Student Shoots Himself When Refused Permission to Join Army.

Word has been received by Alfred Levy, a Philadelphian connected with the Bell Telephone Company, that a relative had committed suicide because his widowed mother refused to permit him to enter the European war. Standing before the picture of his father, who served in the Franco-Prussian War, an 18-year-old student had blown out his brains, leaving his mother alone in the world.

The letter was written by Mrs. Bertha Stein, of Emden, Germany, sister of Mr. Levy. Mrs. Stein is now serving with her 67-year-old mother as a nurse, and Mr. Levy's brother, who is 23 years old, has been promoted to a lieutenancy and honored with the iron cross.

The boy who killed himself was Karl Stein, by marriage a nephew of Mrs. Stein. He was preparing to enter the law school of the University of Bonn. When war was declared his older brother joined the ranks.

Karl was too young for the compulsory service, but he could serve as a volunteer.

His father, who died two years ago, had been honorably discharged from the army, and news reached Emden on several occasions of the fortitude displayed in battle by the brother.

On March 15 he went into the parlor of his mother's home and gazed upon the likeness of his dead parent. While the woman was preparing the frugal noon meal, consisting of plain soup meat and bread made of potato flour, she heard a shot. She ran to the parlor and found the boy's lifeless body on the floor.