

HOME

THE NOVEL OF THE YEAR

BY GEORGE CHAMBERLAIN

CHAPTER XXXI—(Continued.)
 UTTERLY exhausted, he sank into their embrace. They held him as though in a cradle.

The rush of the waters began to slacken. They stretched out over the valley and crept up its sides. They did not flow so much now as rise. The valley became a moving sea. On its flowing surface beasts, fowls and reptiles struggled, mad-eyed, for life. Here and there a bloated carcass, brought down from the living and brought screams of terror from the swimming horses and gasping swimmers from the struggling cattle.

From the middle of the sea rose the old plantation house, still high and dry as its mound. It seemed very tiny—a toy house on a lonely islet.

A great, open white umbrella lined with green sailed gaily along. It caught in the branches of Gerry's tree. Uprooted cotton bushes floated by and cane, snapped off, sometimes torn up in whole hills, banked up against the tree and formed a vast, unstable island toward which swam the gabled stock.

From the mouth of the cleft in the river came a thundering waterfall. It had burst through the walls of the ditch and even ascended a section of the rocky crag against which the stones had been buttressed. The ditch was gone. It could never be again, for the water was tearing the channel of the cleft deeper and deeper. The turbid flood descended the side of the valley, accumulated down toward the river. The valley would be left naked, stripped of the source of life.

Gerry's tree had crawled away from the main current. In a vast eddy it approached the mound whereon squatted the old plantation house. Donna Maria stood at the edge of the waters. Her two hands were clenched and held above her head. Thin wisps of hair hung about her face. Her face was distorted. She was cursing Gerry, cursing the day he had opened his ditch. She swept her arms over the terrible scene and death on the cliff. Below them were more houses, and under these the tiled roofs of still other houses just topped the flood. The houses were what was left of the past reconstruction.

From the shore canoes in search of food began to shoot out on to the quiescent waters. One of them happened upon Gerry's tree, and then upon Gerry. Ger-

ry's eyes opened and then closed again. He scarcely felt the arms that lifted him. They carried him to the old inn, the miserable little inn he had left behind on that glorious morning of so long ago.

CHAPTER XXXII.

ASHARDY attack of fever followed Gerry's exposure and immersion. The old woman of the inn knew no medicines, but she knew fever. She piled blankets on Gerry and let him sweat it out. On the third day nature, assisted by his magnificent physique, finally routed the attack. Gerry began to feel hungry. He called the old woman and ordered food. For once food in Piranha was plentiful. Mandios, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, as well as fowl, mutton and mutton, and package, had stocked the town as it had never been stocked before. Gerry ate heartily.

Then he began to think. The nightmare was all true. From his window he looked out on the slowly receding waters of the greatest flood the San Francisco had ever seen. Fazenda Flores was no more. With it three years of his life had been wiped out. Outwardly he was back where he had begun. But inwardly he was gone away from the starting point of three years ago. Alix had waited for him, but he had not waited for her. He had given himself to Margarita and to Margarita's son, Margarita and the Man were dead, but the fact of his gift of himself remained. What had he but the shell, the husk of himself, to take back to Alix?

He called the old woman. He asked her if she remembered him. She looked at him. "No, master," she said, "I do not remember you. You are like the foreman who was drowned, but he is dead."

"Gerry shook his head. "Not dead," he said. "Only disappeared."

"You are not he," said the old woman. "He could not talk words that one could understand."

Gerry nodded gravely. He felt as though words could never make him smile again. "I have learned," he said. "Now tell me what became of the things I left here?"

The old woman checked off each item and then shrugged her shoulders. She led him to a little dark room whose only light came from the interstices of the tiled roof. As his pupils expanded he began to make out one after another of the bags that had made up his traveling kit.

"There is a letter," she said, and went off to fetch it. Gerry dragged the bags out into the light. Their locks were all sealed with the seal of the American Consulate at Pernambuco. He started knocking off the brittle wax. The old woman came back with the letter and handed it to him. He tore it open. It was a note from the consul saying that by order of Gerry's wife his things had been sealed and left at the inn, and telling him where to find the keys. The room he learned from the old woman, had been paid for regularly, at first by the month, then by the year. She felt no resentment at his return, only resignation. "You are the only man I know that has come back," she said quietly and with a sigh.

"Fear nothing," said Gerry kindly. "You have been faithful. You may consider the room engaged by me for the next 10 years."

He carried his bags into the room overlooking the river and then lay down. He was too tired after the fever to open them. He knew that the opening of those dust-covered bags with their rusted metal fittings was going to be another ordeal.

The next day Gerry sat before his unpacked bags. He had turned out all their

contents. On the bed, the floor, the table and the chairs were piled such an array of linen and shoes and suits of various cut and weight as he had once deemed the minimum with which a man could decently travel. Now they seemed to him wasteful and futile. The clothes did not carry his mind back as he had expected. The starch in the linen had gone yellow. He had always hated yellow collars. The suits struck him as belonging to some one else—all except one. One sturdy suit of tweed had a cut that was different from the others. He had always worn it, and it seemed to have a personal note—the note he had expected to find in the bags and had shrunk from.

When he remembered, this suit had been made by his own tailor. He had worn it during a flying visit to Red Hill. He had had it on the day he left New York. He had worn it that morning in Alix's room. Red Hill came back to him. He saw her there, the shimmering blue of her dress, her crown of hair and her thin fingers busy with it. He felt again the stir of the clear air as it had streamed in through the open window.

How calm Alix had been under his arraignment. How curious had been her eyes as she raved at him. Would she have been calm and curious like that if she had really loved him? He remembered the shameful things he had said before he could dash her into an answering temper. He heard again the scratching of a pen as he had heard it that morning, standing in the hall outside her door. How blind he had been! She had been writing to Alix—writing to him in the white heat of anger. He had driven her to it with his shameful words. He had left her no other answer. And after all, she had waited. Gerry put his hands to his forehead. It was wet with cold sweat. He got up and went out.

The worst of the flood was over. Gerry engaged a search party. All day long they sought for her child. Towards night they found them, the little boy tight clasped in his mother's arms. Gerry laid them tenderly in the canoe and in silence the party crawled back to the river to Piranha. No one looked curiously at the burden they carried up through the main street. Eyes were tired of the familiar sight of the wailing, the alighted tears, were long since spent. They buried them that night. Gerry went back to his room. He could not rest. He sat for a long time looking out on the starry river. Then unconsciously he picked up the old tweed suit and hung it carefully on a chair. The rest of his scattered things he swept up ceremoniously upon the floor and threw himself full length on the bed. He was exhausted and slept.

He was up early the next morning. He made the old woman bring water and bathed in his room. "It is water," she said. "For many days there will be poison in the river." Gerry did not answer. He closed the door and went through his old notions and trappings with great care. He heard he had always kept close clipped. Now he shaved it off. The tan of his face looked like a mask above the fresh white of his newly shaved joints and chin. He picked out the best of his linen and dressed. Lastly he put on the old tweed suit. It fell naturally to the lines of his body, all except the waistband of the trousers. He drew the back straps as close as it would go. Still the trousers were a little loose at the waist. At first he was puzzled, then he understood. He looked at himself in the broken mirror, a gorgeous but sadly tarnished frame that hung on the wall. His shoulders seemed to carry the coat better than before. He could hear Jones & Jones say:

"What does the frequently heard term, 'food value,' mean? Restating the matter, 'What is the value of food?' It is of value first in keeping us warm; second and third, in keeping our muscles strong and active; and fourth, in helping children to grow and grown-ups to repair it daily wear and tear of the body."

FOOD VALUE

What Is Food Value?

By VIRGINIA E. KIRT

Food can be likened in its value to coal in a furnace, for just as you build a fire to keep your house warm and comfortable to live in, so you eat food to keep yourself warm and comfortable to live with. When you may eat it may be hot, cold or medium. It may burn up at once, or not burn well at all on account of the stone and slate in it; or it may last as long as you could reasonably expect. So it is with the food we eat. Some of it gives us heat and energy, and some of it will not burn well and has to be disposed of as useless waste the same as stone and slate. "Food value," "food value," refers, then, to some comparison of these body fuels from which we get food or heat or energy.

For example, you would have to eat an ounce of head of cabbage to get the amount of which is its flavor and inorganic salts to procure the same amount of "food value" that one medium-sized potato would give.

Two tablespoons of uncooked rice are equivalent in "food value" to 12 large oysters.

Your prunes are equal in this respect to one large fresh turnip.

And of what use is it to know all these equivalent "food values?" It teaches first that the watery foods—tomatoes, cabbages, turnips, oysters—are not of as much use to our body on a cold day as the more solid foods—potatoes, rice, onions, dried prunes and beans. Secondly, it teaches economy; that tomatoes at 8 cents a can and oysters at 12 cents a dozen give you only the pleasure of flavor (which to be sure is also a food value), while rice at 5 or 6 cents a pound and potatoes at 8 cents a quarter peck give you heat for your body and repair material for your worn-out tissues.

Think over the economy that has been serving your family, or eating at your home, and decide whether you get too much "slate and stone" in your food; find out whether you are eating food that "fills." Since you can correct your diet if it is wrong, it will be "fun" to know.

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Man Struck by Train Dies

Julian Finjohn, 59 years old, a chef, living at 552 Spring street, was struck by Philadelphia and Baltimore and Washington train last night at 62d street. He failed to hear the approach of the train. He died on the way to the University Hospital.

Do You Know This?

1. How many schools are there in the town in which you live? (Five credits.)
 2. What is the largest school in your town? (Five credits.)
 3. What is the smallest school? (Five credits.)

FARMER SMITH,
 EVENING LEDGER:

I wish to become a member of your Rainbow Club. Please send me a beautiful Rainbow Button free. I agree to DO A LITTLE KINDNESS EACH AND EVERY DAY—SPREAD A LITTLE SUNSHINE ALL ALONG THE WAY:

Name.....
 Address.....
 Age.....
 School I attend.....

"No wonder, you dear child, for you

"A splendid fit, sir. You can't pick it up anywhere."

Gerry turned from the glass with a look that was restless. He had seemed to bind his limbs and chest, but he would not take them off. He sat at the window and watched the little stern wheeler splash up to the bank. Luckily for her, she had been three days late in starting up the river; else that trip would have been her last. Gerry tried to exert himself and change his position, but getting on board, but he felt listless. Why should he hurry back? Alix had waited, was waiting, but not for him. He had not waited for her. He must go back and tell her, of course; but what then?

A cavalier came down the street. At its head was carried a litter and on the litter lay Alan. He had refused to ride in a hammock again. Behind him rode Lieber and Kemp. Gerry drew back from the window and watched them make their way to the little stern wheeler. She had brought little freight, there was none for her to take away. By a o'clock she gave a long shriek of warning and half an hour later she warped out into the river and changed its downward stream. At the last moment Gerry had sent down to Alan a note addressed to Alix.

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