

The Ball of Fire
of GEORGE RANDOLPH CHESTER
and LILLIAN CHESTER
ILLUSTRATED by C.D. RHODES

SYNOPSIS.

At a vestry meeting of the Market Square church Gail Sargent listens to a discussion about the sale of the church tenements to Edward E. Allison, local traction king, and when asked her opinion of the church by Rev. Smith Boyd, says it is apparently a lucrative business enterprise. Allison takes Gail riding in his motor car. When he suggests he is entitled to rest on the laurels of his achievements, she asks the disturbing question: "Why?" Gail, returning to her Uncle Jim's home from her drive with Allison, finds gold disapproval in the eyes of Rev. Smith Boyd, who is calling there. At a belated party Gail finds the world uncomfortably full of men, and Allison tells Jim Sargent that his new ambition is to conquer the world. Allison starts a campaign for consolidation and control of the entire transportation system of the world.

CHAPTER V—Continued.

He allowed himself four hours for sleep that night, and the next afternoon headed for Denver. On the way he studied maps again, but the one to which he paid most attention was a new one drawn by himself, on which the various ranges of the Rocky Mountains were represented by scrawled, lead-penciled spirals. Right where his thin line crossed these spirals at a converging point, was Yando chasm, a pass created by nature, which was the proud possession of the Inland Pacific, now the most prosperous and direct of all the Pacific systems; and the Inland, with an insolent pride in the natural fortune which had been found for it by the cleverest of all engineers, guarded its precious right of way as no jewel was ever protected. Just east of Yando chasm there crossed a little "one-horse" railroad, which, starting at the important city of Silverknob, served some good mining towns below the Inland's line, and on the north side curved up and around through the mountains, rambling wherever there was freight or passengers to be carried, and ending on the other side of the range at Nugget City, only twenty miles north of the Inland's main line, and a hundred miles west, into the fair country which sloped down to the Pacific. This road, which had its headquarters in Denver, was called the Silverknob and Nugget City; and into its meeting walked Allison, with control.



His course here was different from that in Jersey City. He ousted every director on the board, and elected men of his own. Immediately after, in the director's meeting, he elected himself president, and, kindly consenting to talk with the reporters of the Denver newspapers, hurried back to Chicago, where he drove directly to the head offices of the Inland Pacific.

OLD AS THE ETERNAL HILLS

R. E. Morse, the Outlaw, Lurked in Shadows in Garden of Eden, and Is Still With Us. If Adam were still alive he would be about the same age as R. E. Morse. Adam met him after he was banished from the garden of Eden. Eve also knew him after she ate the forbidden fruit. Pharaoh must have been well acquainted with him, as he met him repeatedly. He was with Joseph's brethren a long time after they sold Joseph into Egypt. Saul, David, Solomon and all the kings of old knew him well. And in the New Testament we find men who also knew him. Judas, who betrayed the Lord and afterward killed himself; Peter, who denied his Master, and so on all the way through the Bible and up to the present time. We all know him or have met him. Could we by any power annihilate R. E. Morse, how happy we should make the world! But no one cares to profit by the experience of others, and therefore all must learn by the one

CHAPTER VI.

Music resounded in the parlors of Jim Sargent's house: music so sweet and compelling in its harmony that Aunt Grace slipped to the head of the stairs to listen in mingled ecstasy and pride. Up through the hallway floated a clear, mellow soprano and a rich, deep baritone, blended so perfectly that they seemed twin tones. Aunt Grace, drawn by a fascination she could not resist, crept down to where she could see the source of the melody. Gail, exceptionally pretty to-night in her simple dove-colored gown with its one pink rose, sat at the piano, while towering above her, with his chest expanded and a look of perfect peace on his face, stood Rev. Smith Boyd.

Enraptured, Aunt Grace stood and listened until the close of the ballad. Leading through her music for the next treat, Gail looked up at the young doctor, and made some smiling remark. Her shining brown hair, waving about her forehead, was caught up in a simple knot at the back, and the delicate color of her cheeks was like the fresh glow of dawn. Rev. Smith Boyd bent slightly to answer, and he, too, smiled as he spoke; but as he happened to find himself gazing deep into the brown eyes of Gail, the smile began to fade, and Aunt Grace Sargent, scared, ran back up the stairs and into her own room, where she took a book, and held it in her lap, upside down. The remark which Gail had made was this: "You should have used your voice professionally."

CHAPTER VI.

Had They Spoiled Her? Music resounded in the parlors of Jim Sargent's house: music so sweet and compelling in its harmony that Aunt Grace slipped to the head of the stairs to listen in mingled ecstasy and pride. Up through the hallway floated a clear, mellow soprano and a rich, deep baritone, blended so perfectly that they seemed twin tones. Aunt Grace, drawn by a fascination she could not resist, crept down to where she could see the source of the melody. Gail, exceptionally pretty to-night in her simple dove-colored gown with its one pink rose, sat at the piano, while towering above her, with his chest expanded and a look of perfect peace on his face, stood Rev. Smith Boyd.

perfect blending which is the most delicate of all exhilarations. In the melody itself there was an appealing sympathy, and, in that moment, these two were in as perfect accord as their voices. There is something in the music of the human tone which exerts a magnetic attraction like no other in the world; which breaks down the barriers of antagonism, which sweeps away the walls of self-entrenchment, which attracts and draws, which explains and does away with explanation. This was the first hour they had spent without a clash, and Rev. Smith Boyd, his eyes quite blue tonight, brought another stack of music from the rack.

The butler, an aggravating image with only one joint in his body, paraded solemnly through the hall, and back again with the card tray, while Gail and the rest sang "Juana" from an old college songbook, which the Reverend Boyd had discovered in high place. Aunt Grace came down the stairs and out past the doors of the music salon. There were voices of animated greeting in the hall, and Aunty returned to the door just as the rector was spreading open the book at "Sweet and Low."

"Where's the baby?" demanded handsome Dick Doolley, heading for the stairs. "Shilly, you mustn't!" cried Lucile, and started after him. "Flakes should be asleep at this hour." "I came in for the sole purpose of teaching Flakes the turkey trot," declared handsome Dick, and ran away, followed by Lucile.

Lucile's becoming passe, criticized Ted. "She's flirting with Rodney for the second time." "Can you blame her?" defended Arly Fosland. She was sitting in the deep corner of her favorite couch, nursing a slender ankle, and even her shining black hair, to say nothing of her shining black eyes, seemed to be snapping with wicked delight.

LAUGHING AT SERIOUS THINGS

Attitude of the World Has Long Been a Matter of Complaint Among the Realists. Many creative dramatists seek to draw men and women with remorseless realism. Now, it is exactly this remorselessness of the artist which gets him into trouble with a number of different sections of our world. He is unflinching in his portrayal, and men do not like unflinching portrait painters.

A flush came into her cheeks, and paled again. Gail changed her garments and let down her waving hair and, disdaining the help of her maid, performed all the little nightly duties, to the putting away of her clothing. Then, in a perfectly neat and orderly boudoir, she sat down to take herself seriously in hand.

There was a knock at the door and, on invitation, the tall and stately Mrs. Helen Davies came in, frilled and ruffled for the night. She found the dainty, little guest boudoir in green tinted dimness. Gail had turned down all the lights in the room except the green lamps under the canopy, and she sat on the divan, with her brown hair rippling about her shoulders, her knees clasped in her arms, and her dainty little boudoir slippers peeping from her flowing pink negligee, while the dim green light, suited to her present reflections, only enhanced the clear pink of her complexion. Mrs. Davies moved over to the other side of Gail, where she could surround her, and laid the brown head on her shoulder.

Gail, whose quick intelligence no movement escaped, lay comfortably on Aunt Helen's shoulder, and a clear laugh rippled out. She could not see the smile of satisfaction and relief with which Aunt Helen Davies received that laugh. "My dear, I am quite well pleased with you," she said. "You have a brilliant future before you."



She Sat With Her Brown Hair Rippling Around Her Shoulders.

cellent matrimonial material of which you have a choice, but, with your extraordinary talents and beauty, my advice is just to the contrary. You should delay until you have had a wider opportunity for judgment. You have not as yet shown any marked preference, I hope.

"No, Aunt Helen." "You are remarkably wise," complimented Aunt Helen, a bit of appreciation which quite checked Gail's impulse to giggle. "In the meantime, it is just as well to study your opportunities. Of course there's Dick Rodney, whom no one considers seriously, and Willis Cunningham, whose one and only drawback is such questionable health that he might persistently interfere with your social activities. Houston Van Ploom, I am frank to say, is the most eligible of all, and to have attracted his attention is a distinct triumph. Mr. Allison, while rather advanced in years—"

CHAPTER VII.

Still Picking Out the World. The map of the United States in Edward E. Allison's library began, now, to develop little streaks, but they were boldly marked, and they hugged, with extraordinary closeness, the pencil mark which Allison had drawn from New York to Chicago and from Chicago to San Francisco. There were long gaps between them, but these did not seem to worry him very much. It was the little streaks, sometimes scarcely over an inch high that drew with such evident pleasure from day to day, and now, occasionally, as he passed in and out, he stopped by the big globe and gave it a contemplative whirl.

The green gave a much better effect of moonlight on the floor. She called herself back out of the mists of her previous thought. Who was this Gail, and what was she? There had come a new need in her, a new awakening. Something seemed to have changed in her, to have crystallized. Whatever this crystallization was, it had made her know that marriage was not to be looked upon as a mere inevitable social episode. Her thoughts flew back to Aunt Helen. Her eyelashes brushed her cheeks, and the little smile of sarcasm twitched the corners of her lips.

Aunt Helen's list of eligibles. Gail reviewed them now deliberately; not with the thought of the social advantages they might offer her, but as men. She reviewed others whom she had met. For the first time in her life, she was frankly and self-consciously interested in men; curious about them. She had reached her third stage of development; the fairy prince age, the "I suppose I shall have to be married one day" age, and now the age of conscious awakening. She wondered, in some perplexity, as to what had brought about her sense; rather, and she knitted her pretty brows, who had brought it about?

The library clock chimed the hour, and startled her out of her reverie. She turned on the lights, and sat in front of her mirror to give her hair one of those extra brushings for which it was so grateful, and which it repaid with so much beauty. She paused deliberately to study herself in the glass. Why, this was a new Gail, a more potent Gail. What was it Allison had said about her potentialities? Allison. Strong, forceful, aggressive Allison. He was potent himself. A thrill of his handclasp clung with her yet, and a slight flush crept into her cheeks.

Aunt Grace had worried about Jim's little cold, and the distant mouse she thought she heard, and the silver chest, and Lucile's dangerous-looking new horse, until all these topics had faded, when she detected the unmistakable click of a switch button near by. It must be in Gail's suite. Hadn't the child retired yet? She lay quite still pondering that mighty question for ten minutes, and then, unable to rest any longer, she slipped out of bed and across the hall. There was no light coming from under the doors of either the boudoir or the bedroom, so Aunt Grace peeped into the latter apartment, then she tiptoed softly away. Gail, in her cascade of pink flufferies, was at the north window, kneeling, with her earnest face upturned to one bright, pale star.

"Not if I say it's all right," and the words were Tim's only proof. His tone was perfectly level, and there was no glint in his eyes. Offended dignity had nothing to do with business. "Give me one week's notice, and the Vedder Court property will be condemned for the city terminal of the Municipal Transportation Company. Appraisal, thirty-one million."

The Trouble With Art. Men are without great dreams in these days, and art is elaborate and fussy and self-conscious. The technical part of the work is predominant. One sees the artist holding up a mirror to himself as he works. Pygmalion congratulates the statue upon the fact that he carved it, instead of being lost in the love of creating. It is as though a lover should sing of himself instead of singing of his lady. The subtle poison of self-advertisement has crept in and peers like a satyr from the picture and from the statue.

INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

By E. O. SELLERS, Acting Director of Sunday School Course of Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.

LESSON FOR NOVEMBER 28

AMOS, THE FEARLESS PROPHET.

LESSON TEXT—Amos 6:1-15. GOLDEN TEXT—He that hath my word let him speak my word faithfully.—Jer. 23:28.

Among the prophets Amos bulks large. His message (B. C. 787 ?) is most thoroughly modern and its application to our present day problems deserves careful consideration. Read the entire book prayerfully. Chapters 1 and 2 enumerate the sins of the nation and of Israel: 3-6 contain addresses of the prophet: 7:1-9, 10 records his visions and the conclusion. 9:11-15 is a Messianic prophecy. The modern prophet of social service and those who neglect a proper consideration of "applied Christianity," both ought to ponder well this passage.

I. Jehovah's Lamentation, vv. 1-3. The words of this lesson are those of Jehovah spoken to the house of Israel but apply to all people of all ages. Verse one is a prophecy of the master's grief over the holy city (Luke 13:34; 19:41). Outwardly rich and opulent, in Jehovah's sight the nation had already fallen (v. 2 R. V.) and there "is none (present tense) to raise her up." Israel is personified as a maiden sorely wounded. Spoken decades before, Israel did fall and has risen no more. But there is a possibility of mercy. There is here a command and a promise and those who obey the command will obtain the promise of life.

To "seek ye me" (v. 4) is to turn the face to him rather than to turn the back. It implies the forsaking of all evil thoughts, yea, our own thoughts and ways and to turn unto him who will abundantly pardon (Isa. 55:6-7; Deut. 30:28). There is life for the most outbreathing and outrageous sinner if he will seek the Lord.

II. The Prophet's Exhortation, vv. 4-9.

The places mentioned in verse five had each been made sacred by God's presence and subsequently degraded by idolatry. Bethel especially so. (Gen. 12:8; 28:10-18; 1 Kings 12:29-29). These new religions and the false worshiping were beguiling even the sincere and unwary, hence the warning. We need to beware of the many fold "new cults" lest we depart from the faith of our fathers. America is standing upon a social and religious crater in many ways similar to ancient Israel. God is either a consuming fire (Heb. 12:28-29; Mark 9:43-49) to the impenitent or else a minister of grace to those who repent. Verse seven is a suggestion regarding the rulers of that day and finds far too many counterparts in our own times. In verse 4 Jehovah exhorts the people to "seek him and live." In verse 6 the prophet utters the same cry. Now (v. 8) the appeal is to seek him because to do so is wisdom. (a) It is he "that maketh the stars," the earth, yea, everything, and it is well to be on his side (Ps. 19). (b) He "turneth the shadow of death into morning" (R. V.) (see Ps. 30:5). Who can comprehend the vast host of his saints for whom this has been done? (c) He "maketh the day dark with the night" (R. V.). This he is doing repeatedly. The God who set the day in its turn can also turn it aside; he has done it both past and present. (d) He "calleteth for the waters—and poureth them out upon the face of the earth." This is both poetical and scientific. God delivers the rain and upon him we all depend. It is the part of wisdom as well as of life to be on the side of the self-existent, eternal Jehovah against whom man's strength is as nothing (v. 9).

III. The Word of Application, vv. 10-15.

Sinners always hate the man who rebukes their sin. Scripture is not needed to prove this fact, for we see it today. We are specifically warned against the praise of the wicked (Luke 6:26) and any true and upright witness for Christ knows that he is abhorred by those whose lives are crooked. (John 3:18, 20). Verse 11 (A. V.) sounds very much like many of the strictures that are being made regarding the acts of some of the rich of today. How frequently we behold mansions built from the proceeds of oppression deserted by the ones who anticipated their occupancy. How few fortunes are really expended and enjoyed by those who make the accumulation. The manner by which we accumulate, our conduct towards the just (Acts 7:52), our acceptance of bribes, and our neglect of the needy and the poor is all known to God. (v. 12). "Therefore," even as today it is difficult and costly to get justice in our courts, even as iniquity is rapidly growing in the earth, about all the prudent man can do is to hold his peace, to wait upon God and watch for him. He it is who must call with trumpet voice (Isa. 53:1) even though he does now speak with human lips. The fourth exhortation to "seek" (v. 14) is to search after the good, though the time be an "evil one."

The individual is to seek good, to hate evil, and do all in his power to "establish justice in the gate," viz; so far as in his power lies, exalt to the positions of rulers and governors those who also "seek good, not evil."

The result will be that Jehovah, the God of hosts, "will be with us" even in this evil time (See Gen. 39:2, 3, 23; Phl. 1:8-9).

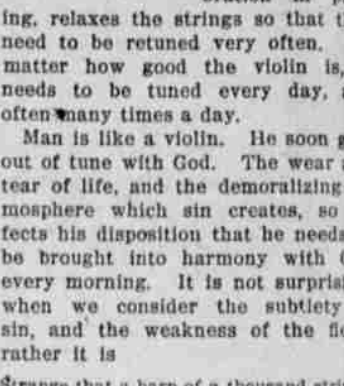
True goodness is to "hate evil and love the good" (Ps. 97:10; Rom. 10:9). By this test we may know if we really hate sin, if we are truly righteous, if this is the path of blessedness (Heb. 1:6). Our nation needs the Jehovah of Amos, a sense of sin and a realization that sinners are lost.

Daily Bible Reading

By REV. HOWARD W. POPE, Evangelist and Bible Teacher, Extension Dept. Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.

TEXT—Give attention to reading.—Timothy 4:13.

How one shall read the Bible depends largely on what he is reading it for. The Bible is an all-around book, and serves many purposes, but it is well to have in mind some definite purpose in all one's reading. There is the devotional use of the Bible. All stringed instruments quickly get out of tune. The action of the atmosphere, and the constant vibration in play-



ing, relaxes the strings so that they need to be retuned very often. No matter how good the violin is, it needs to be tuned every day, and often many times a day. Man is like a violin. He soon gets out of tune with God. The wear and tear of life, and the demoralizing atmosphere which sin creates, so affects his disposition that he needs to be brought into harmony with God every morning. It is not surprising, when we consider the subtlety of sin, and the weakness of the flesh, rather it is

Strange that a harp of a thousand strings, should keep in tune so long. Nothing will bring the believer into touch with God so soon as a little taste of the Divine Word. For devotional purposes the Psalms are perhaps the best, because they cover so wide a range of experience. Here we find aspiration and confession, joy and sorrow, adoration and praise. Here we behold the calm confidence which grows out of a sublime faith. "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." Again we meet the bitter anguish which comes from ingratitude, or unrequited love, or the ecstasy of sin forgiven as in Psalm 32, or the passionate plea for mercy in Psalm 51, or the shout of triumph in Psalm 68. It is doubtful if there is any experience in life for which we cannot find a duplicate in the psalter, and, noting how the man after God's own heart behaved in similar emergencies, we are unconsciously led into the same feeling.

In the morning read Psalm 19, and at even Psalm 8. If you are going on a journey, Psalm 121 is appropriate. If it be Sunday, 122. If in perplexity, read Psalm 37. If you are grateful, choose, 105, or 106, or 107. If your heart needs searching, Psalm 139 will accomplish it. "O Lord, thou hast searched me and know me," and after a sublime description of God's omniscience, closing with the prayer which only an honest heart can utter: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." If it is comfort you need, you will find it in abundance in either of the following Psalms, 34, 91 or 103.

The gospels are also excellent for devotional reading because there we come in contact with the words and works of Jesus. We see how he lived in the home and by the wayside, in the carpenter's shop, and by the open grave. We see him in public life and in private ministry always the same, never hurried, nor worried, always thinking of others and never of himself. We see him playing with the children, watching the hens in the door yard, and the birds on the trees, the growing grains and fading flowers. In everything he saw God's love and care, and from all things natural he drew some spiritual lesson for his own and others' comfort. The epistles are especially helpful to mature Christians as revealing the relation of the believer to his fellow man; to the church, and state, and the perishing world.

If it be asked how much one should read at a time for devotional purposes, let me answer with an illustration. I once saw a picture of the disciples on the way to Emmaus. The master has just left them and the two are looking at each other in glad astonishment. One of them is holding both hands over his heart as he says with rapture, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" He can almost feel his heart burn still as he recalls the memory of that blessed walk.

If you ask how long one shall read his Bible for devotional purposes, I answer, read until your heart burns, until your soul thrills with the consciousness of God's approval. You may read a chapter or a book or a single verse, no matter how much or how little, but read if you can, until you are consciously in touch with God, and then, with the father's morning kiss upon your lips, you are ready to meet the outside world.

Some people feel that they cannot spare the time for the morning walk, but I question whether any child of God can afford to do without it. Our souls need to be fed daily as well as our bodies, and the Bible is the soul's proper food. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Good From Common Things. It was out of the common thing that the precious thing was brought; and it is out of the common things of daily life, presented obediently to Jesus and laid at his feet, that he brings his own glorious gifts, so that our whole lives become one great sacrament.—Hay Aitken.