

The Ball of Fire

By GEORGE RANDOLPH CHESTER
and LILLIAN CHESTER

ILLUSTRATED BY C. D. RHODES

SYNOPSIS.

At a vestry meeting of the Market Square Church, Gaillard Sargent listens to a discussion about the sale of the church to the town. He is asked by Rev. Smith Boyd, says it is apparently a lucrative business enterprise. Allison takes Gaillard riding in his motor car. When he suggests he is entitled to see the laurels of his achievements, she asks the disturbing question: "Why?" Gaillard, returning to her Truck Jim's house from her drive with Allison, finds a note of disapproval in the eyes of Rev. Smith Boyd, who is calling there. At a lobbyist party Gaillard finds the world unrecognizably full of men, and Allison tells Jim Sargent that his own ambition is to conquer the world. Allison starts a campaign for consolidation and control of the entire transportation system of the world. Gaillard becomes popular. Allison gains control of the transportation system and arranges to storm the Vedder court (the property of Market Square Church). Gaillard visits a doctor court and meet the Boyd family, tells him that the railroad Market Square church proposes to build will be out of profits from other sources. She becomes the center of masculine attraction for the men of her aunt's social set.

CHAPTER X—Continued.

Allison went over to his wall map, with a step in which there was the spring of a boy. A. L. Vance of the United States Supplies company, which controlled beef, sugar and practically all other food products, except those mighty necessities under the aegis of the Standard Cereal company and Eldridge Babbitt's National Dairy Products consolidation, studied the buoyant Allison with a puzzled expression. He had seen Allison grow to care-burdened manhood, and suddenly Ed seemed twenty years younger. Only Eldridge Babbitt knew the secret of this miraculous rejuvenescence. Babbitt had married late in life; a beautiful young woman!

"The key to the north and south situation is here," said Allison, and he drew a firm, swift, green line down across the United States branching at each end. "George Dalrymple will be here in half an hour, and by that time I trust we may come to some agreement."

"It depends on what you want," boomed Arthur Grandin, who, sitting beside the immense Haverman, looked as if that giant had shrunk him by his mere proximity.

"Freight, to begin with," stated Allison, resuming his place at the head of the table, but not his seat. "You gentlemen represent the largest freightage interests in the United States. You all know your relative products, and yet, in order to grasp this situation completely, I wish to enumerate them. Babbitt's National Dairy Products consolidation can swing the shipment of every ounce of butter, cream, cheese, eggs and poultry handled in this country; Clark's Standard Cereal company, wheat, corn, oats, rice, barley, malt, flour, every ounce of breadstuffs or cereal goods, grown on American soil; Haverman, the Amalgamated Metals Constructive company, every pound of iron, lead and copper, and every ton of ore, from the moment it leaves the ground until it appears as an iron web in a city sky or spans a river; Grandin, the Union Fuel company, coal and wood, from Alaska to Pennsylvania, with oil and all its enormous by-products; Taylor, the American Textiles company, wool, cotton, flax, the raw and finished material of every thread of clothing we wear, or any other textile fabric we use except silk; Vance, the United States Supplies company, meat, sugar, fruit, the main blood and sinew builders of the country. Gentlemen, give me the freightage controlled by your six companies, and I'll toss the rest of the country's freightage to a beggar."

"You forgot Chisholm," Babbitt reminded him, and Babbitt Chisholm's white mutton-chops turned pink from the appreciation which glowed in his rosy-veined face.

"Allison was quite right," returned big Haverman with a dry smile. "The freightage income on money is an item scarcely worth considering."

"Give the Atlantic-Pacific this freight, and, inside of two years, the entire business of the United States, with all its ramifications, will be merged in one management, and that management ours. We shall not need to absorb, nor purchase, a single railroad until it is bankrupt."

"Sensible idea, Allison," approved Clark of the Standard Cereal company. "It's a logical proposition which I had in mind years ago."

"Allison's stroke of genius, it seems to me, consists in getting us together," smiled Haverman, hanging his arm over the back of his chair.

Banker Chisholm leaned forward on

FIRST "DICTOGRAPH" IN USE

"Ear of Dionysius" Got as Good Results as Does the Modern Invention for Use of Eavesdroppers.

Sleety is rich in Greek antiquities. Some of the best are clustered together on the outskirts of the old town of Stracouza. A very popular one is the "Ear of Dionysius," in the Latonia del Paradiso, an old quarry used as a prison by the Greeks. The walls of this quarry are over 100 feet high, and lean inward at an angle of about thirty degrees—all chisel work, done by innumerable slaves. The idea was to prevent any possibility of escape on the part of the hapless prisoners confined here, and as a further precaution Dionysius had chiseled out in the cold rock a vast cavity, very similar, as seen from without, to a human ear, by means of which he is said to have listened to the conversation of the captives. The interior of the cavity is in the shape of the letter "S," as it gradually tapers until at the extreme summit you might perceive a

man, and that expression was

erty. These men, by the sheer force of their personality, by the sheer dominance of their wills, by the sheer virility of their purposes, by the sheer dogged persistence which balks at no obstacle and hesitates at no foe, had fought and strangled and throttled their way to the top, until they stood head and shoulders above all the strong men of their respective domains, safe from protest or dispute of sovereignty, because none has risen strong enough to do them battle. They were the undefeated champions of their classes, and the life of every man in that group was an epic! Who was to be monarch of the new empire? Allison answered that question as simply as he had the others.

"The best man," he said.

There had been seven big men in America. Now there were eight. They all recognized that.

"Of course," went on Allison, "my proposition does not assume that any man here will begin by relinquishing control of his own particular branch of the International Transportation company; sugar, beef, iron, steel, oil, and the other commodities will all be under their present handling; but each branch will so support and benefit the other that the position of the consolidation itself will be impregnable against competition or the assaults of government. The advantages of control, collection and distribution, are so vast that they far outweigh any possible question of personal aggrandizement."

"Don't hedge, Allison," barked Arthur Grandin. "You expressed it right in the first place. You're putting it up to us to step out of the local champion class, and contend for the big belt."

"The prize isn't big enough," pronounced W. T. Chisholm, as if he had decided for them all. As belittled his calling, he was slower minded than the rest. There are few quick turns in banking.

"Not big enough?" repeated Allison. "Not big enough, when the Union Fuel company already supplies every candle which goes into the Sudan, runs the pumps on the Nile and the motor boats on the Yang-Tse-Kiang, supplies the oil for the lubrication of the car of Juggernaut, and works the propeller of every aeroplane? Not big enough, when already the organizations represented here have driven their industries into every quarter of the earth? What shall you say when we join to our nucleus the great steamship lines and the foreign railroads? Not big enough? Gentlemen, look here!" He strode over to the big



"I'll Jump on You Tomorrow in the Stock Exchange."

globe. From New York to San Francisco a red line had already been traced. Now he took a pencil in his hand, and placing the globe at New York, gave the globe a whirl, girdling it completely. "Gentlemen, there is your empire!"

Again the nasal voice of old Joseph G. Clark drew into the silence.

"I suggest that we discuss in detail the conditions of the consolidation," he remarked.

The bell of Allison's house phone rang.

"Mr. Dalrymple, sir," said the voice of Ephraim.

"Very well," replied Allison, "show him into the study. Babbitt, will you read to the gentlemen this skeleton plan of organization? If you'll excuse me, I'll be back in five minutes."

"Dalrymple?" inquired Taylor.

"Yes," answered Allison abstractedly, and went into the study.

He and Dalrymple looked at each other silently for a moment, with the old enmity shining between them. Dalrymple, a brisk speaking man with a protruding jaw and deep-set gray eyes, had done more than any other human being to develop the transportation systems of New York, but his gift

formed from the name of our country to denote its citizens or to apply to its interests, industries, cities, etc.

Making a Concrete Buoy.

Re-enforced concrete during the last few years has been invading many fields which hitherto have been considered as belonging exclusively to iron and steel. One of the interesting illustrations of this fact is the construction of a concrete buoy at Kingston, Jamaica.

It is stated that the cost is only about 50 per cent of the cost of a similar buoy made of steel.

To prevent the mooring chain from injuring the bottom of the buoy the latter is made concave. The manhole cover was grouted into its place after the buoy was afloat. Leakage is handled by means of a pump-bolt.

An American.

A native of any part of North or South America is literally an American, since he is a native of one of the American continents. Usage, however, has narrowed the term so that "an American" is generally understood to be a citizen of native of the United States of America, while a native of Canada, Mexico, Central or South America is known as a "Canadian," "Mexican," "Brazilian," "Guatemalan," or the like. The reason for the usage does not lie in any feeling that the United States preempts, stands for, or overshadows the other parts of the eastern hemisphere, but simply in the fact that, while Canada, Mexico, Brazil, the United States of Colombia, etc., are words which admit of adjective formation, "American" is the only adjective which can

re-ctor withdrew his thro-

ad and started to raise up, and

crack on the bottom of an open drawer, near enough to the top to give him a good long sweep for momentum. This mishap being just one degree beyond the point to which Rev. Smith Boyd had been consecrated, he ejaculated as follows:

No, it is not respectful, nor proper; nor charitable, to set down what Rev. Smith Boyd, in that stress, ejaculated; and a beautiful, gray-haired lady, beautiful with the sweetness of content and the happiness of gratified pride and the kindness of humor, who had paused at Rev. Smith Boyd's open door to inquire how soon he would be down to dinner, hastily covered her mouth with her hand, and moved away from the door, with moist blue eyes, around which twinkled a dozen tiny wrinkles born of much smiling.

When the dignified young rector came down to dinner, fully clothed and apparently in his right mind, his mother, who was the beautiful gray-haired lady with the twinkling blue eyes,

"I wish you wouldn't take that attitude," returned Allison, troubled. "It looks to you as if I were pursuing you because of that old quarrel; but I want you to know that I'm not vindictive."

"I don't think you are," replied Dalrymple, with infinite contempt. "You're just a damned hog."

A hot flush swept over Allison's face, but it was gone in an instant.

"It happens that I need the new Gulf & Great Lakes system," he went on, in a specially level voice; "and I prefer to buy it from you at a fair price."

Dalrymple put on his hat.

"It isn't for sale," he stated.

"Just a minute, Dalrymple," interposed Allison. "I want to show you something. Look in here," and he opened the library door.

Dalrymple stepped to the opening and saw, not merely seven men, middle-aged and past, sitting around a library table, but practically all the freightable necessities of the United States and practically all its money, a power against which his many million dollar railroad system was of no more opposition than a toy train.

"The transportation department to be governed by a council composed of the representatives of the various other departments herein mentioned," droned on the voice of Babbitt.

The representatives of the various other departments therein mentioned were bent in, concentrated attention on every sentence, and phrase, and word, and syllable of that important document, not omitting to pay important attention to the pauses which answered for commas; and none looked up. Dalrymple closed the door gently.

"Now will you sell?" inquired Allison.

For a moment the two men looked into each other's eyes, while the old enmity, begun while they were still in the womb of time, lay chill between them. At one instant, Dalrymple, whose jaw muscles were working convulsively, half raised his hands, as if he were minded to fall on Allison and strangle him; and it was not the fact that Allison was probably the stronger man which restrained him, but a bigger pride.

"No," he said, again with that infinite contempt in his tone. "Break me."

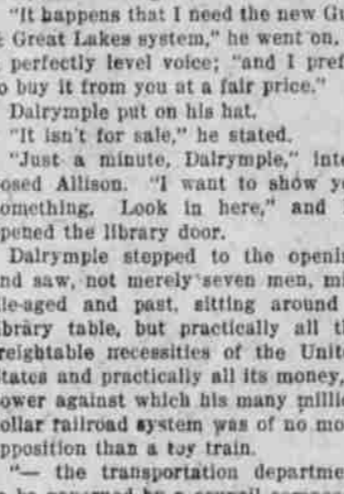
"All right," accepted Allison cheerfully, and even with relief; for his way was now free to pursue its normal course. He crossed to the door which opened into the hall, and politely bowed Dalrymple into the guidance of old Ephraim.

"Dalrymple won't sell," he reported, when he rejoined his fellow members of the International Transportation company.

Joseph G. Clark looked up from a set of jotted memoranda which he had been nonchalantly setting down during the reading.

"We'll pick it up in the stock market," he carelessly suggested.

"Can't," replied Allison, with equal carelessness. "He's entrenched with solid control, and I imagine he doesn't owe a dollar."



He Laid Aside His Dignity and Got Down on His Hands and Knees.

looked across the table and smiled indulgently at his disguise; for he was not a grown-up, tall, broad-shouldered man of thirty-two at all. In reality he was a shock-headed, slightly freckled, urchin of nine or ten, by the name of "Smitty" on the town common, and "Tod" at home.

"Aren't you becoming a trifle irritable of late, Tod?" she inquired with solicitude, wifelyly suppressing a smile which flashed up in her as she remembered that ejaculation. It was shocking in a minister, of course, but she had ever contended that ministers were, and should be, made of clay; and clay is friable.

"Yes, mother, I believe I am," confessed Rev. Smith Boyd, considering the matter with serious impartiality. Mrs. Boyd surveyed her son with a practiced eye.

"I think your appetite's dropping off a little," she commented, and then she was shrewdly silent, though the twinkles of humor came back to her eyes by and by. "I don't think you take enough social diversion," she finally advised him. "You should go out more. You should ride, walk, but always in the company of young and agreeable people. Because you are a rector is no reason for you to spend your spare time in gloomy solitude, as you have been doing for the past week."

Rev. Smith Boyd would have liked to state that he had been very busy, but he had a conscience, which was a nuisance to him. He had spent most of his spare time up in his study, with his chin in his hand.

"You are quite right, mother," he soberly confessed, and swallowed two spoonfuls of his soup. It was excellent soup, but, after taking a bit of a wafer, he laid his spoon on the edge of the plate.

"I think I'll drive you out of the house, Tod," Mrs. Boyd decided, in the same tones she had used to employ when she had sent him to bed. "I think I'll send you over to Sargent's tonight, to sing with Gaillard."

The rector of the richest church in the world flushed a trifle, and looked at the barley in the bottom of his soup. His mother regarded him quietly, and the twinkles went out of her eyes. She had been bound to get at the bottom of his irritability, and now she had arrived at it.

"I would prefer not to go," he told her stiffly, and the eyes which he lifted to her were coldly green. "I do not approve of Miss Sargent."

CHAPTER XI.

Gaillard Solves the Vedder Court Problem.

Rev. Smith Boyd, rector of the richest church in the world, dropped his last collar button on the floor, and looked distinctly annoyed. The collar button rolled under his mahogany highboy, and concealed itself carefully behind one of the legs. Rev. Smith Boyd, there being none to see, laid aside his high dignity, and got down on his knees, though not for any clerical purpose, whereas the little collar button shone so brightly that the rector's bulging eye caught the glint of it. His hand swung round, at the end of a long arm, and captured it before it could hide any further, then

History and Men.

For, as I take it, universal history, the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the history of the great men who have worked here.—Carlyle.

cider districts, where the drink is still popular. In his Cambridge reminiscences Henry Gunning says that in 1788 when he was a tutor in Herefordshire he witnessed some extraordinary feats in cider drinking. Farm laborers were allowed to drink as much as they liked, and it was not unusual for a man to put his lips to a wooden bottle containing four quarts and not remove them until he had emptied it."

—Exchange.

Fate and Character Alike.

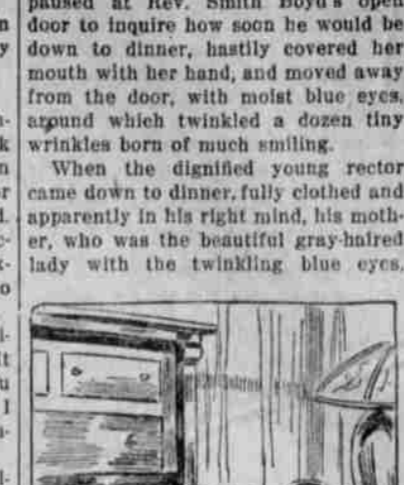
It took the world many generations to recognize and to accept the simple truth, that fate and character were the same. Even now, though it is no longer a matter of belief, but a fact, it is still with all persons who think about the matter, it is rather an idealistic theory than a practical reality. To take it into the mind and the heart, to care for it sufficiently to put it in control of the feelings, to give it, in other words, loving recognition, is to turn from wayward and contradictory theories and to make a right start in living.

Feats of Cider Drinking.

Will cider—which was drunk in England even in the days of the Romans—decrease in popularity as a result of imposing the new taxation? A century or so ago enormous quantities were consumed, more particularly in

text—Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which, being interpreted, is, God with us.—Matthew 1:23.

The blessed season of the year has approached again when, in a peculiar sense, we contemplate the nativity of our Lord and Savior. The fact that there is no certainty as to the exact month, or day of the month, when he was born, will never militate against the observance of the 25th of December as Christmas day. Would that it were observed with more reverence than it is, and with more thought of him than of Santa Claus, the pagan god, in whose name the world passes round its gifts. Nevertheless, it is of him that his people think, and they are glad of a special opportunity to press his name and his claims upon all who will give heed to them.



Rev. James M. Gray, D.D., Dean of Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.

Was He Born of a Virgin?

It is the feature of his virgin birth that our text emphasizes, and that we have chosen to dwell upon in this discourse. Some of the destructive critics of the Bible as they are called, deny this. They are those who would empty it of the supernatural altogether and hence destroy faith in it as a divine revelation. Why they deny it is simply because they do not want to believe it. They have no proof to the contrary, but have just made up their minds that it is not so. Our proof is the statements of the Bible. The earliest promise of a redeemer in Genesis 3:15 foreshadows it. The prophet Isaiah predicts it in chapter 7 of his prophecy at verse 14, and both Matthew in this place, and Luke in the first chapter of his Gospel, verses 26-35, corroborate it.

Of course, it need not have been so. We do not say that God might not have brought his son into the world some other way, and that he still might have accomplished redemption for us; but if we question the record at this point, we make it liable to be questioned at any point, and then the door is opened to deny Christ and to deny redemption altogether.

Reasonableness of It.

When you come to think of it why should not the Son of God have been born in just this way? If he were a pre-existent Divine Person as we know him to be, then some kind of a birth were necessary. It must have been by natural generation or of a virgin, and how could it have been in the natural way on account of sin? Jesus must be sinless to be a Savior of sinners, and how could he be sinless unless he had a virgin birth?

Oh, what a mystery this is! God clothing himself with our nature—that is the meaning of "Immanuel." And yet while the two natures in Christ are united they are not identical. There was a time simply when deity became man, it was not so eternally. And yet notwithstanding this union there is no human nature in God. Men are by nature human and only human, for there was only one incarnation of the divine, and that was Christ.

Meaning of the Two Natures.

But it was necessary that Christ should be human, else how otherwise could he have sympathized with us in our infirmity, and borne our sins in his own body on the tree? And it was necessary that he should have been divine, for how otherwise could his death have had sufficient efficacy for such redemption?

Oh, who will receive him today by faith as the divine-human Savior? This is to know the peace and joy of salvation, and to enter upon the new year no longer as a servant of sin but as a servant of righteousness and of God.

And was there ever greater urgency than now to do this? The awful commotion in the world cannot be without meaning for the future; and perhaps the very near future.

But it is not only in the likelihood of sudden death to thousands upon thousands of our fellow men that we find urgency for this appeal, but in an event of much greater moment that stands back of all these things, and that is the coming of our Lord. He who came the first time as a babe and cradled in a manger, will come the second time, as the glorified Son of God and riding upon the clouds of heaven. He came before to save, he will come again to judge. "Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation," as we read in Hebrews 2:28. But unto them not looking for him, but instead, crying "Peace and Safety," i. e., peace and safety in the world's methods of bringing it about, will find "sudden destruction coming upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape." We read this in Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians at the fifth chapter. Would to God that more would read it, and believe it.

Not Conducive to Sleep.

Porter, this birth has been slept in! "No, sah; I ussah you, sah. Merely occupied. It's the one over the wheels, sah."—Puck.

For Iron Rust on Napkins.

Moisten the spots with soft water, rub cream of tartar and then salt on both sides and place in the sun to dry.

Making Complete Change.

One sure way to change a knocker to a jester is to lead the conversation around so as to get him to talking about himself.

Need of New Thought.

We lose vigor through thinking continually the same set of thoughts, thought is new life.—Baleeted.

Nothing to Be Ashamed Of.

A man should never be ashamed to say he has been in the wrong, which is but saying, in other words, that he is wiser today than he was yesterday. — Pope.

INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

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

LESSON FOR DECEMBER 19

FALL AND CAPTIVITY OF ISRAEL.

LESSON TEXT—II Kings 17, 18, 19.

GOLDEN TEXT—He that after being reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed.—Prov. 29:1.

In the sweep of our six years' cycle of study we prefer to consider this lesson first and use the Christmas story (Luke 2:1-26) to illustrate the love of God which Israel (the last ten tribes) so basely outraged ere it passed into oblivion.

The Stiff-Necked People, vv. 6-13. The fact (v. 6) of Israel's captivity has always appealed to the interest and the imaginations of men. The cause of the captivity was threefold: (1) They "had sinned" (v. 7). It was not a single offense but a course of action which was performed (a) openly, "walked" (v. 8). For 215 years following Solomon's reign they had been openly idolatrous and trespassed upon God's grace, (b) "Secretly" (v. 9), Hosea's reign was the same as that of his 18 predecessors. Doubtless he was a good diplomat and politician, though his vacillation between Egypt and Assyria brought ruin, but in God's sight the secret acts and practices of the people were open and known (Ps. 139:1-2; Heb. 5:11). Many today do in secret things "that were (are) not right." A clearer line of demarcation between the church and the world is sadly needed, (3) They were consecrated to evil (vv. 10, 11). To cover our sins is not to prosper (Prov. 28:13), but if we confess our sins God's Son will forgive them by the forgiveness of his atonement (Ps. 32:1-5; 1 John 1:9). Israel cared not, however, for his forgiveness, despite the fact it was that "brought them up out of the land of Egypt." It is passing strange that Israel should so fully violate the express commands of God (Lev. 26:1; Deut. 26:21; Ex. 20:2-5, etc.). Some claim they did not possess the law, it being of a later date, a self-evident foolish proposition, but even so, how can men of our time violate so many of the plain precepts of the "word of God." Does this prove that the Bible does not exist? The answer to this query is a sufficient answer to the destructive critics, Israel "sets up idols" (v. 19) and "burnt sacrifices" (see Deut. 12:31), which things they did "to provoke the Lord to anger." (3) They abandoned themselves to evil. As though to remove all possibility of reformation they not alone "served idols" (v. 12) but they sold themselves to do that which was evil" (v. 17).

II. The Sovereign God, vv. 14-18. God's character and will had been fully set before the nation (Ex. 29:3-5). Repeated warnings (v. 13) had been given by faithful prophets, also repeated forgivings, yet Israel is (1) willful, they "would not hear" (v. 14), but deliberately followed in their fathers' footsteps, (2) Proud and vain (vv. 14, 15) and (3) utterly abandoned (v. 17), and hence must receive the judgment of God's righteous anger (see Ex. 20), or else God is not righteous. He repeatedly sought to turn them aside, but they slew his faithful prophets (Matt. 21:33-35). God is calling in mercy with long suffering in this present evil age; unbelief in God and his word is still prevalent; skepticism and loose morals everywhere abound, and shall God in our age and call forever? (Prov. 29:1; 1 Pet. 3:9-10).

III. The Savior of Men, Luke 2:20. God's love for Israel was manifest (made plain) through his loving acts and the messages of warning proclaimed by his prophets. But we have a more marvelous revelation of his love in the person of his Son whose birthday we are about to observe. Samaria lost its "crown of pride," but we may receive a crown of righteousness as the "sons of God" (John 1:12; II Tim. 4:8), but not so unless we obey (John 14:23) his word.

Let us therefore take up the angelic praise (1) "Glory to God in the highest," "highest heavens, highest degree and quality of praise of him who is infinitely wise and loving.

(2) "On earth peace" with God, with man, in the individual heart and among the nations.

Peace of conscience because of sins forgiven, in fact, all blessings, happiness and prosperity because of peace due to victory over sin which is the destroyer of peace.

(3) "God will toward men," those with whom God is well pleased, and God has good will only toward all men.

Instit in Too Much.

The trouble with the man who blows his own horn is that he so often insists on being the whole orchestra.

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