

A TALE OF RED ROSES

By
**GEORGE
RANDOLPH
CHESTER**

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Bert came in from the conservatory for the glimpse of her which he was to be permitted, and naturally he spoiled the picture by starting to dart upstairs, an action which had the result of sending not only Molly and Fern, but the admiring maids scurrying back to the boudoir, the door of which sacred apartment they locked and bolted and would have barred had there been any means to do so. Bert, quite properly defeated, came back down the stairs and joined Marley.

"A bridegroom doesn't amount to much anyhow," he conventionally admitted.

"And a husband to less," supplemented Marley. "You'll discover by and by, my boy, that the lords of creation are only lords by proxy."

"You're trying to scare me," protested Bert.

"No, only to encourage you," insisted Marley. "The happiest man in the world is one who finds a wife capable of directing him and generous enough to let him think he is doing it all himself."

"That's a new idea to me," pondered Bert complacently through condensation only as he stroked his carefully curled mustache and reflected upon his own ability.

"The worst of it is you have to grow old to realize it," Marley gently intimated. "I was a smart man until my wife died. Won't you have a drink?"

"No, thanks," refused Bert, walking disconsolately to the library. "I promised Molly the minister shouldn't smelt it on my breath."

"Afterward, then," laughed Marley, and, returning to his den, closed the door just as the bell of his extension telephone rang.

"Hello, Marley!" hailed the voice of Willie Walters. "Had your franchise canceled and regranted?"

"Don't need it," replied Marley, reflecting instantly that he was out of the franchise worry, but curious nevertheless. "What do you mean?"

"The Allerton bill was put through its final passage last night," explained Walters.

"Oh, yes, the Allerton bill," smiled Marley. "I knew all about that."

"You don't seem to have got in early on the advantages," remarked Walters, scenting a story. "It's a law now, operative from its passage."

"It won't hurt anybody," chuckled Marley. "There wasn't much of importance in it."

"No?" queried Walters. "Just enough to make a political corpse of Allerton. They'll embroider that fifty year franchise clause on his shroud."

"Franchise clause? I don't understand."

"I thought you didn't know the provisions of the bill," went on Walters, delighted to have unearthed a new angle to the story. "The thing is so beautifully juggled that it automatically extends all franchises granted within the last ten years to an extra fifty years of lifetime on the same terms as their original charters."

"Good!" returned Marley. "All my franchises have been renewed within the last ten years."

"Now I know you've been asleep," rejoiced Walters, not that he had any enmity for Marley, but merely that he liked a good story. "The bill specifically does not apply to renewals, but to original franchises. Why, yours absolutely expires in three years, if that's the case; moreover, the franchises at the end of that time belong to Sledge's company."

"Impossible!" gasped Marley.

"Get your alarm clock fixed," advised Walters. "Monday night the council in secret session granted franchises to Sledge's company covering every street in the city, including—now, listen—including those streets now covered by franchises when those franchises expire."

For just a moment Marley felt the strength leaving him, a spasmodic impulse due to an entirely automatic mental impression that he still owned the old company.

"It's a bald faced steal!" he hotly charged, indignant at Sledge's wholesale appropriation.

"It's a pippin'" agreed Walters.

"Fact of the matter is, Marley, that unless you completed that consolidation with Sledge at the expiration of three years he can make you tear up your rolling stock and other trash. Did you consolidate?"

"No," laughed Marley, and for a moment Walters professionally hoped that he had been mentally unbalanced by the news. "No, Walters," Marley chuckled when he had succeeded in controlling his voice; "I didn't consolidate. I sold out."

"On the level?" queried Walters incredulously. "To whom? How much? Did you get the cash?"

"I got the cash, but that's all I'll answer," laughed Marley. "I might reveal somebody else's secrets if I told you more," and despite the pleas-

other statement.

He turned from the telephone, still chuckling, but suddenly noticed that his hand was trembling as if it had been palsied. His body seemed to have realized before his mind the overwhelming disaster which he had escaped.

Why, if he had not sold out at the exact minute he did his stock today would be worse than worthless. The entire company would not bring more than the junk heap value of its worn out equipment. He could not have met the mortgage on his house, he could not have paid a dollar of his debts, he would have been left without a penny, and he would have dragged down into bankruptcy hundreds of poor families like Henry Peters, who had their all invested in his enterprise. True, they were ruined anyhow or would be, but he had a curiously unmoral sense that, by stepping out from under before the crash came and by being no longer at the head of the doomed company, he was passing along the moral responsibility of their downfall to the up state syndicate and to Sledge. Thank God, he was safe.

Again his bell rang.

"Marley?" queried a tense person.

"Yes," he acknowledged, trying to place the voice as that of some newspaper man of his acquaintance and feeling again that comfortable sense of escape.

"This is Goldman," rasped the voice. "Say, Marley, we're in a pickle."

"What's the matter?" inquired Marley, watching his right hand curiously. It wobbled spasmodically where it lay on the table, and he seemed to have no control over it.

"Firm revoked my authority to act two days ago. Just got their notification."

"Yes?" queried Marley, with a strange inability quite to grasp the meaning of this.

"Well," went on Goldman, "I'm sending out your stock by a messenger boy. You may as well tear up that check. It's no good."

CHAPTER XVII. The Minister Comes.

"HONEST, I can't giggle about anything any more," regretted Fern, rescuing a discarded rose of Molly's from under the boudoir couch and looking anxiously about her for any other traces of untidiness which the duster maids might have left behind them. "I'm solemn in spite of myself."

"Please don't," objected Molly almost piteously. "If you turn solemn my last prop is gone."

"I didn't mean to," apologized Fern. "But getting married is rather a weighty thing after all. Besides that, my conscience hurts me."

"It should, I suppose," agreed Molly. "Anybody's should. Why?"

"About Sledge. Molly, he's a nice old fatter."

"I never can remember him with an ugly thought," admitted Molly. "I don't sympathize with him, though. He started a rough game with me, and I beat him. I had to be rough to do it."

"We were mean to him," declared Fern. "I've a notion to marry him myself to make up for it."

The pang of distaste which Molly felt at that speech was not jealousy; far from it. If anything, it was a mere questioning of Fern's taste in making such a remark. That was it!

"I suppose poor Bert's lonesome," she suggested. "We really ought to go down and keep him company until the minister comes."

"Murder!" objected Fern. "Molly, you haven't a bit of style about you. You mustn't even see Bert until you walk in the parlor on your father's arm and take him for better or—well, for better."

"You don't seem any too hopeful," laughed Molly, looking longingly at the couch, but remembering her gorgeous gown. "I don't believe you like Bert very well."

"Indeed I do!" remonstrated Fern almost too quickly. "He's still the handsomest fellow I ever saw—tall and big and fine looking and the very best dancer I ever swung across a floor with. I just couldn't get through envying you when I first came."

"Yes, I was jealous of you," confessed Molly. "Bert is a fine dancer."

"All the girls will be envious of you," went on Fern, determined to say nice things. "You should be very happy. Molly, about the new home and the fine business prospects and the social triumphs which I know are waiting for you, and you'll have a polished husband, of whom you can always be proud, and just bushels and bushels of love, of course."

"Of course," agreed Molly, looking at the little Dresden clock on the mantel. "Goodness, Fern, the minister is due to arrive in ten minutes, and Jessie Peters isn't here yet!"

"If she knew the importance of your informal invitation to call this afternoon she'd have been here hours ago," laughed Fern. "I don't wonder, Molly, that of all your girl friends she was the one you insisted on having here. She's a darling!"

"She's true," added Molly. "Somehow I always feel safe, even against myself, when she's around me. I love you to death, Fern, but you're wicked."

"I guess I am," giggled Fern. "I never can see anything else when there's a chance for devilment."

Mina knocked at the door.

"Miss Peters," announced Mina, glancing once more over her handwork as she surveyed the handsome Molly and the pretty Fern.

"Have her come right up," directed Molly, brightening, and waited with an expectant smile, which changed to a look of concern when she saw the poorly concealed traces of tears in Jessie's eyes.

"What's the matter, Jessie?" she asked,

ed, stepping hastily forward, and Jessie, forgetting or not seeing that painfully duffy wedding gown, threw herself dully into Molly's arms.

"They didn't want me to come!" she gulped. "But I had promised you, and Dicky said I might."

"Where is Dicky?" asked Molly.

"He went on downtown on an errand. He'll be back after me in half an hour."

"Why didn't they want you to come?" asked Molly anxiously.

"On account of your father."

"Father?" gasped Molly. "What about him?"

"Don't you know?" wondered Jessie, half crying again.

"Why, no, child," worried Molly. "What is it? Tell me," and she heard Fern slipping quietly out of the room. She led Jessie over to the couch, and all forgetful of her shimmering satin, with its beautifully increased folds, sat down.

"It's the street car stock," Jessie explained. "Dicky just came out to the house with the news. There is to be no consolidation. The old tracks are to be torn up three years from now, and nobody would have the stock for a gift. And it's Thanksgiving day!"

"That's only some wild rumor," Molly assured her, wondering, nevertheless, at this new and strange turn of financial gossip. "Even if it were true, though, how is father to blame?"

"I don't know, except that my father's like a maniac about this all and forbade me to come near his house."

Molly held her closer.

"Dicky brought me, though. He said that he didn't think Mr. Marley was the thief, and that if he was you weren't, and that if I wanted to come I was coming. He's a good Dicky, Molly," and here Jessie cried a little more, just on account of Dicky's goodness.

"It isn't father's fault, it's mine," confessed Molly, aghast, as she began for the first time to fully realize the hundreds of real sufferers in this high handed game which she and Sledge had played. "Mr. Sledge wanted to marry me, and I was engaged to Bert. He broke Bert. Then father said he had money enough for all of us; so Sledge tried to break father, and I don't know how many people besides us have had to suffer for that. It's Sledge and I, Jessie, not father."

"Sledge is a beast," charged Jessie vehemently. "He is the most cruel and vicious man in the world, I think Dicky says he should be killed."

"He isn't really so bad," declared Molly, trying to be just. "He's like other strong people. He doesn't know how badly he hurts. He's like a football player shaking hands with you."

"He is a brute!" shuddered Jessie. "I stood by him in Maberly's candy store yesterday, and I was actually afraid of him for fear I would annoy him by being in his way and he might turn around and be rough to me."

Molly laughed softly at the idea of Sledge's being rough to little Jessie Peters.

"Why, he'd be so gentle to you as to be ridiculous," she said. "Not even Dicky could be more gentle."

Jessie straightened immediately.

"How absurd!" she laughed. "You don't know Dicky, Molly. He isn't like other men. Why, when we found that we had lost every cent we had in the world and would be in debt besides and would even lose our home father blamed mother for signing the mortgage and has been cross with her ever since he got into difficulties, and there isn't a better father than mine. But Dicky! Why, when the West End bank failed because it had too many street railway securities and Dicky lost the \$6,000 he saved to buy us a home, do you know what he did? He took me to the theater and patted my hand all through the show and told me how young we were, and how much money we were going to make, and how happy we'd be even if we didn't, and he wouldn't hear of father's having us postpone our wedding for a minute. Why, Molly, he can't do without me, and I can't do without him. It's wonderful!"

Molly patted Jessie's shoulder thoughtfully.

"I guess you and Dicky love each other very much," she suggested.

"I don't know how to tell it," confessed Jessie shyly. "Love is such a tremendous thing, Molly. It cries."

Molly was startled into silence.

What was this thing that she was doing? She was entering on the most serious relationship in life as the termination of a game in which love, such as Jessie knew had had no part, in which even romance, to which every girl is entitled at least once, had been made subservient to business, to stock manipulations, to real estate deals and to subornment. The only one who had been at all romantic—and she smiled with a trace of humiliation as she remembered it—was big, coarse Sledge.

"You're going to be very happy, Jessie," admitted Molly, refusing to own she was envious.

"I'm so happy I'm selfish," replied Jessie comfortably. "I've even forgotten to ask why you were so insistent this morning upon having me come over at such an exact minute."

"I wanted you at my wedding," smiled Molly.

"Molly!" exclaimed Jessie. "That's why you and Fern are all in white. Oh, and I came over in my old blue tailored suit."

"That's lucky," laughed Molly. "You know the old time, 'Something old and something new, something borrowed and something blue.'"

"I shan't be something blue," declared Jessie. "I'm too happy for that, and so are you. You're a lucky girl, Molly. You have everything in the



They Found Frank Marley Sprawled on the Floor.

world—friends and money and a pretty home and everything you want, including the man you love."

"I suppose I am lucky," agreed Molly, putting her arm more lovingly about her friend. Somehow she did not like to let go of little Jessie.

There was a knock at the door, but it was Fern who stood there in place of Mina.

"The minister is here," whispered Fern in her most mysterious air, and her eyes were dancing. "He's in the parlor, trying not to see that shocking picture, and Bert's in the library pulling his thumbs, and your father's in the den, most respectably quiet. Jessie, you come down with me. I'll send up Mr. Marley, and when he and Molly start downstairs you're to play the wedding march, while I back Bert up under the chandelier. Now, everybody to their posts."

She flew down the stairs and hurried back to the den. A moment later they heard a shriek, and running to the den, they found Frank Marley sprawled on the floor with Goldman's check crumpled in his nerveless fingers.

(To be continued.)

SHOWS TRAINMEN'S PAY B. & O. Claims They Are Paid Higher Than Other Employes.

In support of the claim of the railroad that the earnings of organized train employes concerned in the movement to assure increases of approximately 25 per cent in their regular wages and of 87 and one half per cent for overtime through the basic 8-hour day, with time and half-time for overtime, are already higher than the wages of any other classes of transportation employes, and larger than any other class of industrial workers in the world, the Baltimore & Ohio has prepared a statement from its pay rolls for October, 1915, showing the monthly pay of the highest five employes in the different classes of service on each division of the system.

On the Connellsville division five engineers in passenger service earned from \$233.25 to \$149.30 for the month; freight engineers from 204.95 to 193.15; yard engineers from 139.80 to 126.15; passenger conductors from 135 to \$100.35. The man earning \$100.35 worked less than a full month. According to the agreement with the Brotherhood he is guaranteed \$135 as a minimum monthly wage unless he remains out of service voluntarily; freight conductors \$181.40 to \$164.25 and yard conductors from \$147.60 to 127.55. The figures include all the branch lines of the Connellsville division.

WELLERSBURG.

George Delbrook and sons, Carl and Stewart, and Lena Bachman of Pine Hill spent Sunday evening at the home of the former's mother, Mrs. Catherine Delbrook.

Mrs. A. Gessner of Mt. Savage was a guest at the home of her brother, G. W. Witt, over Sunday.

Mrs. J. E. Shaffer left last week for a three weeks' visit with relatives in Pittsburgh.

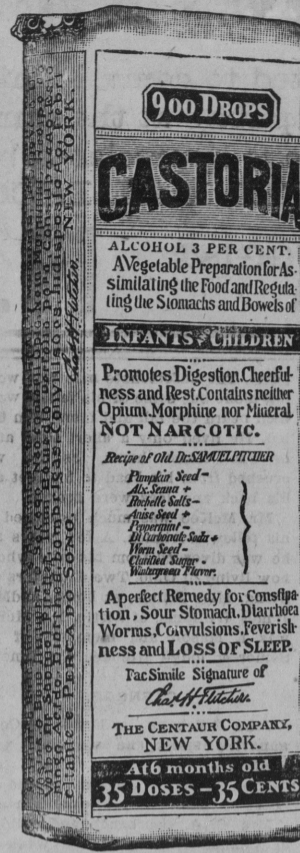
Earl Witt and Elsworth Beal spent Sunday evening in Frostburg.

Miss Grace Shaffer and Mrs. Ed. Law were shopping in Cumberland last week.

G. W. Witt and son, Robert, were business callers near Berlin the former part of this week.

Miss Wilhelmina Wingert went to Cumberland last week, where she expects to spend the summer with Mr. and Mrs. A. C. Kennell, on Decatur street.

Mrs. Eleanor Shaffer, after spending several days with her son, F. P. town last week.



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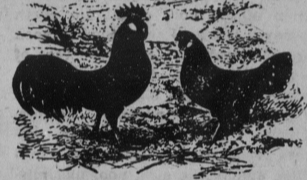
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Miss Dorothy Shaffer, who has been working in Cumberland for the past week, spent Sunday at her home in town.

Miss Edna Witt was a guest at the home of Mr. and Mrs. H. M. Poorbaugh of near Glencoe over Sunday.

We are glad to see that Mr. A. H. Long, who has been unable to walk for several months, is now able to get around with the aid of crutches.

NEW AGREEMENT SIGNED BY COAL OPERATORS.

Granting increases in wages which it is estimated, will total three and a half million dollars a year, the check-off clause for both miners and laborers and other concessions, the bituminous coal operators of the central Pennsylvania district at Philadelphia Friday night signed a new agreement with the officials of District No. 2 of the United Mine Workers of America.

The new scale takes the place of the agreement which expired March 31 and under which the men have since been working. Fifty thousand miners in the district are affected by the increase, which is said to be the largest ever granted.

The new agreement is for two years and provides for the following rates of wages: Pick mining, 75 cents a ton gross, net ton the equivalent; machine loading, 44.43 cents a ton gross, net to the equivalent; drivers, \$2.77 a day; trappers, \$1.25 a day minimum all day laborers, 5 per cent increase, from \$2.64 to \$2.77 a day; all dead work and yardage, 5 per cent increase.

The operators agreed to the check-off clause for both miners and laborers and for the first time conceded the right of the miners to make special assessments.

It was also agreed by the operators' committee that letters be sent to all operators in the district urging upon them the seriousness of the car pushing question and requesting that the complaints of the miners on this matter be rectified in order that it should not be a cause of contention when a new agreement has to be drawn up two years hence.

Congressman Hopwood has appointed George R. Sanner, son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank K. Sanner, of Somerset, first alternate to take the examination for entrance to the United States National Academy at Annapolis. John N. Penn, of Waynesburg, has been appointed second alternate. The principal for admission is Robert F. Gause, of Uniontown.

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