## THE GIRL from PROSPERITY

By GEORGE RANDOLPH CHESTER

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fully keyed up to his pink tie, swag. table. gered into the Hotel Belveigh barber shop, the boss barber loafing over at the table of Bessie Williams grinned in spite of his present ill humor.

"Pipe the village cut-up," he observed. The Manicure Girl surveyed the

newcomer with a keen eye. 'No, Billy," she replied, "it's the

village sport." "Whatever he is," insisted Billy, "he's a Hick and looking for a tencent shave."

Again the girl surveyed the newcomer critically.

"No," she once more dissented, "I'll bet you the size of the tip that he tips you.

The same which would be a fine and wise bet for me to make, I think not," observed Billy, and added a forcible word or so under his breath as he started forward, for Mr. James E. Carroll, having looked down the line of Greeks and Italians who stood invitingly at their empty chairs, gave a glance at the only American barber in the place, and climbed into the only chair which had no attendant.

"I'll take a round trip," he affably observed as Billy slipped the sleeves of the shaving apron over his arms. Shave, sir?" coldly inquired Billy,

who, nevertheless, had understood perfectly what his customer meant. "The whole howling hippodrome," said young Mr. Carroll, unabashed. "Do everything you know how."

"Just watch me make this fresh wop's pocket change shrink down to the edge of his return ticket." growled Billy to the Manicure Girl as he made a pretext to go past her table for fresh towels.

"I wouldn't have your ingrowing grouch for money." laughed the girl. "You would if you ached to furnish a flat and got turned down every time you mentioned it." he

complained. "I told you that was barred," she informed him. "I think I see myself in an East Harlem flat, with cheesecloth curtains on the front windows and a garbage can on the fire escape, counting how many wienerwursts we get for a dime."

It was in consequent savageness that Billy began upon the task of giving his country customer "a round He cut that hearty young gentleman's hair, and singed and shampooed and dandruffined it, he shaved him and massaged his head and his face, he put upon him drenches of every bottled thing in his possession, then he grinned, yanked up the chair, jerked off the towels and handed over his largest check But Mr. Carroll was scarcely interested.

"Is that all you can do?" he asked. "We have a chiropodist, but he's not on duty just now," snarled Billy; "while you're waiting, though, you can get manicured."

"Me for the manicure. I've heard about 'em." said Mr. Carroll; "and just as a sporting proposition I'm going to sample a sample of everything there is in New York."

"Just go right ahead and see if New York cares," Bill advised him.

"I don't care whether New York cares," returned Mr. Carroll, largely, "and that's where I've got the best of New York."

As a matter of living up to that largeness he presented Billy with half a dollar, then he swaggered across the shop to the cashier's desk, flaunting a twenty-dollar bill in his hand and glancing with speculative assurance at the row of manicure girls. Tess, who was quite universal in her tastes, used her large eyes freely, but with the usual negative effect. body could be persuaded to believe them. Instead of succumbing to the girl who owned them. Mr. Carroll's gaze roved right on over her head to the deceptively demure Miss Wil-

"Mr. Smarty from Smartville," commented Tess with a toss of her head. "I don't want him," retorted Miss Williams, "If I draw Johnny Fresh I'll give him the salting down of his life. It'll be a real quiet convention we'll hold, with me in the steam roller part."

As a preliminary to this process, when Mr. Carroll sat down at her table she spread out both his hands before her and surveyed them critically; then she smiled with an apparent attempt to conceal it; then she looked demurely up. Mr. Carroll was Some uncomfortable thought held him silent throughout the entire operation, checking any desire for conversation and killing any inclination whatsoever toward flippancy. When he got up to go he looked at the change dubiously, then at the girl, then back at the change and again grew red. His dilemma was obvious. He did not know whether or not it was the proper thing to tip a lady. Sometimes Miss Williams took tips and sometimes she refused them. This time she accepted before

one was really offered. "Thank you," said

sweetly. He pushed a quarter toward her tentatively and she swept it noncha-

When James E. Carroll, his attire lantly into the little drawer of her

"Thank you." she said again, still very sweetly. Those were the only four words

that had been spoken during the entire event.

'How did you tame him, Bess?" asked the other girl.

"Made him see the size of his hands," explained Miss Williams with "You can do that with any of them that have big ones, and after Prosperity." that they'll lay down and roll over glance of command."

The next day he came again, but with not nearly so much assurance. ing you?" Again he took Billy's chair, but there was very little aggressiveness about

What will you have a sample of today?" asked Billy. 'Shave," said Mr. Carroll, weartly,

as he lay back in the chair. When Billy turned him loose he went over to Miss Williams and spread out his hands upon her table.

dropping opposite to her with a dead-tired air. "You don't want me to treat your nails again?" she objected. "Sure," he said. "I came in on

"This is one of the good things you can overdo," she told him. "If I'd give those nails the full course so soon you'd have to get a new set." He was quite dismal about it.

purpose."

"Can't you just fuss around with them a little bit, then?" he inquired. favor. "I'm so lonesome I could go to jail for company." "Maybe I could finish yesterday's

job a little," she returned. "It would be cheating, but I don't mind," and she studied them carefully. The fact of the matter was that Mr. James E. Carroll was quite pal-

pably unhappy, and the Manicure Girl, who always wore her claws unsheathed for "fresh" people, could not withhold comfort from unhappy ones. "What's the matter? Hasn't New

York been clubby with you?" she asked, as she went gingerly to work "No," he complained, "the town's too slow. There's more fun out in Prosperity, Indiana, where I came from.

"That isn't what alls you. There's a girl back in Prosperity." "There's half a dozen of them," he

grinned. 'Yes?" she inquired, and looked him over carefully. "There's only one. I'll put a little bet down on it; a bag of peanuts against a package of chewing gum."

He looked a long time at the Manicure Girl's imported pompadour, then handed him

"Bring a package of chewing gum, he ordered. That's when Miss Williams began

not to dislike him so much. "Yes," he went on by and by "There is just one girl back in Pros perity, that is, one worth mention ing, and I'd give a hundred dollars if she was here."

"So much as a hundred left," she asked, in apparent surprise; "and you here two days?"

"It does melt pretty fast," he con fessed smiling, "but I'm good for a few days longer. I brought between three and four hundred dollars with

"Gee!" exclaimed Miss Williams "What will they do for a circulating medium out there?"

"Oh, there's some left, I guess," he told her, "but not among the gang You see, I won this in a poker game. the biggest one we ever had in town.

"My, what a wicked little sport!" she gasped. "I guess you're the hor rible example in Prosperity. I guess they won't let you come to the church sociables, nor the husking bees, nor anything. What does the girl think

'She doesn't know anything about it," he returned rather soberly. she found it out, I don't think she'd like ft very much."

Miss Williams liked him even bet ter for the seriousness with which he considered this phase of the matter. "Of course, she's pretty," she sug

gested by and by. It was good to see his face light

"I call her Reddy, but her hair isn't really red," he explained. "It's a dark brown, that seems to flare ug copper colored sometimes when the sun shines through it; and she has the brownest of brown eyes, and the reddest of red lips, and the whitesi of white teeth, and the pinkesi

cheeks; and-" "Sure." she interrupted: "I know the kind. You can find her on the front page of any of the twenty-six best sellers, and on the covers of all the magazines when they haven't anything special to feature; and 1 suppose after this lonesome little Seeing-New-York trip all by yourself you'll go back home and marry the

girl in the last chapter." "You bet I will," he returned, de cidedly, and when he got up to go be was feeling a lot more cheerful.

The boss barber was not, however. Some chummy with Mr. Yap from Yapville," he sneered to the Manicure

"He's a real nice little Hick, Billy," she insisted, "but he was as solemn as classic music; and you know me Any time I see anybody look mooeyed I've got to be Busy Bessie, the Cheerful-Chirker-up.

"So I notice," said Billy, "but you usually manage to spring that gag on the strangers."

"You needn't worry, Billy," she retorted. "Not that you've got any mortgage on the premises, but that I hate to see you taking all that spite out on the poor Dagoes. Considering the couple of hundred dollars my pet Hick has left, he's not likely to be in any more.

She was mistaken. In a week he was in again, more aggressive even than he had been the first time. Some way there was a change in him. The noisy tie was gone, he had a new hat, and he carried himself a shade "scrappy," as she expressed it.

"Hello!" she hailed him. thought you'd gone back to the girl in

"Not yet," he said. "I don't think and jump through hoops at the mere I'm going back except when I go after the girl." "No?" she asked. "What's hold-

> "Money," he replied gleefully, and displayed a huge roll of bills. Who died in your family?" she

> asked. "It isn't that," he laughed "but New York has too much loose coin for a man to leave. I've found out how to take its wealth away from it. "Little old "Good!" she exclaimed. New York needs a trimming. after it and get it good. But how are you doing it? I'm greedy to know."

"Oh, just speculating a little in stock and grains," he replied.

"Reuben, Reuben!" she gasped. You'll be the death of me vet." You're mistaken in the name," he retorted. "It's Hiram H. Hanks of Hawkinsville, or possibly Josh Dill that for a pace" of Picklesburg.

She surveyed him with some dis-

"My, but I bet they miss you in Prosperity. What a merry wag you out of him." must be when you're going good." 'Just for that I'll make you listen to my real name.

From his pocket he drew a stamped and addressed letter and pointed to the "James E. Carroll" written in the corner under the Belveigh card.

"And here's the girl," he said, pointing to the address with a combination of diffidence and assertiveness. "Elizabeth Ruth

"Hick, isn't he, Rilly? Yap, I guess! Also a pin-head and a few other things; but just the same, he came here to spend three hundred dollars, and he's been here over a week, and he's got about six hundred of it left. call that real Marathon blood myself. If you'd go out and turn a few tricks like that you could come down to your daily toil in a buzz-wagon."

He'll be down on the Bowery panhandling before he gets through,

growled Billy. It did not seem to happen right at once, however. Every time James E. Carroll came in he looked more prosperous, and he told the Manicure Girl each time of how much money ha was making as a "grain and stock operator." Every time it was more and more. He didn't exactly boast about it; he was only gleeful in a large, childish way, and it is doubtful if he gloated to any one else as he did to Miss Williams. He had constituted her his confidante from the beginning, and seemed to feel it a solemn duty, as well as a joy, to come in and let her know his progress. It was strange, too, to see his transition from a country boy to an all-rounder. His clothing now was up to the minute, his talk up to the second, and everything about him was right on the dot; but in place of the rugged pink and brown of his cheeks he now had a massaged complexion, and there were pouches under you from writing to the girl."

The Manicure Girl came in one day laughing and still half vexed.

"Guess where I saw James E. Carroll," she said to Tess; "In a big red racer with three stunning chorus girls. was with Frank-you know him; head rusher over at Churley's "It's Plunger Jimmy Carroll, Frank

told me. 'Gee!' I said. 'Has he got so along that Broadway knows him?"

'Sure,' said Frank. 'He's the hottest member on the main stem. He's just Jimmy, along the line. All the late places know him and all the follies and Fluffies know him.' How's

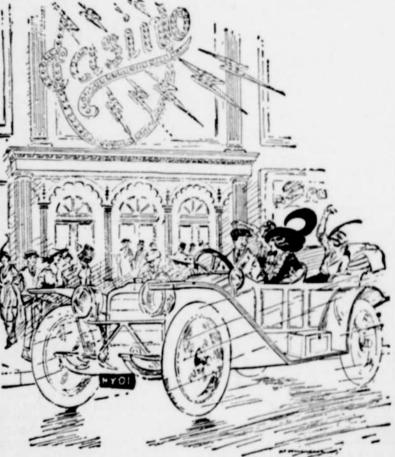
"He got the quickest education of anybody ever I saw," commented Tess. "If he was mine I'd have a sparkling rock as hig as the head of a hat pin

"You've had plenty of chances," re-"Regular clown," he grinned torted Miss Williams, "but I don't notice that Tiffany effect on you." Mr. Carroll came in the next day

> "You ought to see my new car," he told the Manicure Girl as he sat down at her table. "I saw it yesterday," she snapped.

"You were peddling a fine load of shrimps."

"Weren't they the class of the



"In a Big Red Racer With Three Stunning Chorus Girls."

Don't you think it's some pumpkins of a name? "It's a shine to Elizabeth E. Car-

roll; and for that I suppose I get paid double." "You sure do," he agreed. "I'm writing her a dandy letter. I'm telling her all about the good business

I'm in and how much money I'm making. Why, say, do you known I'm ahead over five hundred dollars since I saw you?"

The Manicure Girl pushed back his hand, and hastily reached down his hat from the hook overhead.

"Run!" she exclaimed. "Get away quick before they find out you've got it, or they'll take it away if they have to strangle you." He merely grinned.

"Oh, I don't know," he said con-"I've noticed that the fidently. people who do gouge its money out of New York, and keep it, come from places like Prosperity, Indiana. There's a lot more where this five hundred grew, and I'm going to pick

"Poor child," she commiserated. "I

can see your bumps on the way." "Maybe so," he admitted, "but let me tell you, little lady, I'll be having the time of my life until they reach me, and if they clean me I've made my three hundred stretch a

long, long way." He held his head high and his big shoulders square as he walked out, and Billy snorted; but he got no satisfaction out of the Manicure Girl.

card?" he laughed, and seemed quite proud of it. "That flossy blonde on the outside was Beauty Phillips, the sensation of 'The Pink Canary.' going to star next season, and Angel Jimmy may back the show.

"Fine for Beauty Phillips!" said the Manicure Girl, and then she was angrily silent for a few minutes. 'Look here, Mr. James E. Carroll," she suddenly demanded; "when did you write last to the girl in Prosperity?"

"By George, I-I intended to write her last night," he stammered. "I- the last couple of weeks," I haven't been answering her letters

"When - did - you - write --her?" she insisted.

"Well, it's been-why, confound it, I can do it again. Watch me." it's over three weeks," he finally confessed

page," she snapped back at him, cellar stairs," she suggested. You told her you were too busy to write, only just those few lines, but, then she smiled to herself. The menwould write more tomorrow." That time she made him blush.

"Now," she sternly went on, "you go right out of here and write to that girl; and keep it up, or don't ever come back."

"Cross my heart, hope to die if don't," he promised. The next time he came in he was

leading a particularly ugly bulldog. "Isn't that a lovely mut?" he asked as he tied the end of the chain to his chair.

"What's it good for besides kill- be came back reluctantly.

ing?" she asked, eyeing the creature

with supreme disfavor. "It's to make an already peerless beauty look still more like a queen, he told her, complacently. "I examined something like two tons of dogs to find this specimen. I bought it to take my place in the honk wagon alongside of Beauty Phillips, when I'm busy throwing a harpoon into the wheat pit."

"Did you write that letter yet?" she demanded.

'Yes," he answered shortly. "It's about time to write another

one, Isn't it?" "No," he replied, deflantly. "I'm not going to write any more."

She looked at him and shook her head, but she said nothing, and her very silence angered him. "What's the use?" he hotly went and she divined that, after all. his anger was more at himself than

at her. "Why should I hide the facts from myself any longer. I've grown away from Prosperity. "I should say you had," she agreed. 'If Prosperity could know how you've

changed for the worse, it wouldn't recognize you on the street." "It's not my world any more," he continued, paying ne attention to her

interruption, "and the people are not of my world. "So you hinted before," she reminded him; "but that doesn't keep

He hesitated a moment. "But her letters do," he finally said "I got one from her yesterday. It was about nothing but the new coat of paint on the Baptist church, and

about there being an epidemic of

measles in the town, and about-"That's about far enough," she told him, furiously angry. "Awful drivel, sn't it? I can see the little fool out there now, sitting down to write about such triffing things in her ignorance Red hair I think you said she had and red cheeks, and you called her Reddy. Coarse, ignorant, country per-Well, I don't blame son, no doubt. you for shaking her, now that you have got up among the real people, real ladies like Beauty Phillips and her crowd, and real gentlemen of the sort that loaf around the hotel bars on Broadway. You're right to cut her dead right now. Why, she might sometime come to New York, and if she should happen to meet you on Broadway when you were with some of your swell friends, and should nod you, you'd be disgraced for life. I'll bet she'd be a scream on Broad way, with her funny clothes and her

"That'll be about all," he said, as he jumped up and unwound his dog chain; and his face had turned suddenly pale. "My ideas have changed somewhat about things back in Prosperity, but I can't stand for having that girl roasted, even in a joke."

funny little hat and her red complex-

It was over a month before he came in again, and the Manicure Girl had missed him. Now she saw at once that something was wrong. He was nervous and abstracted, though he tried to be his old flippant self. With the shrewd eyes of Miss Williams upon him he kept thinking of one thing while he talked of another. asked questions without listening to the answers, then asked the same questions again.

"How much did you lose?"

finally asked him. He stared at her in wonder. "How did you know? Where did

you hear?" he slowly questioned. "You've been telling me ever since you came in," she said. "I expect I have," he admitted.

"Well, they got to me in lumps and gobs. For the past month I think I was about the only bull in a bear market. I went down the greased incline so fast it smoked from the friction. The first of this week I had to sell both automobiles.

"I can see the headlight and the glimmer studded watch going next," she commented, with a shake of her head. "I suppose they've about got all that automobile money by now. "Suppose again," he retorted. "They

did get nearly all of it at first, but the market changed at last, and I've made a little money since. If I'd close out now I'd have at least three thousand."

"Tell me where it is and I'll go get it for you," offered the Manicure Girl, hastily. "You take that money and go right back to Prosperity, Indiana; buy the village dry goods emporium; marry that girl; settle down and get fat. Then this experience will have done you good."

He shook his head. "I can never go back there," he said; "never! That's not my world, I tell you. I'll make back the money I lost. I've learned a few tricks in

"Oh, New York will educate you," as promptly as I ought, and that's a she owned; "but, you know, college graduates don't amount to much. "Never mind," he insisted. "Tve played this game to win before, and

"You'd better send at least one thousand dollars of that money to the "And then I'll bet it was on one girl back home to plant under the

She watched him narrowly, and tion of the girl in Prosperity did not seem to annoy him this time. "That much money wouldn't scare

her, at any rate," he said, smiling. "She's rather well-to-do for a country town. She's an orphan and lives with her married sister. But don't you worry about that thousand. I can use that to elegant advantage myself."

The next time she saw him was on the street. He tried to pass on by with a nod, but she called to him and

"What's the matter with your demanded. "You look like a yes day's three-cent bunch of soup

tables. He glanced down at himself fully. His clothes needed brush and pressing, his shoes needed per ing, his face needed shaving "I'll give you four guesses," he

fered, with an attempt at his gayety. "I only need one," she You wouldn't listen to your

Hessle, and they got you. "Yes," he admitted, "they got and they got me good. I haven

dollar. What are you going to do?" "I don't know." he said and apite of his attempt to corry h manfully there was a voice. The ginger was all out of hi "I'll get another start somehor

guess. "Oh, yes." she agreed your friends are sure to help your back on your feet again; Phillips, for instance.

"Hang Beauty Phillips!" he said "Such language!" she exclaim but nevertheless she secretly delig VI ed in it, this time, "I guess pop about ready to go back to Prosperty she decided.

He drew a sharp breath

"I'd die first!" he declared live some way, though. They sive live," and he laughed bitterly. passed a group of just such men may become, sitting on the sta bench at Herald square; but I'll ke on living, I am sure of that. He seemed to be afraid that i

would not. He seemed to be abu of himself, and suddenly Miss W llams saw with a shock that he w one of the tragedy kind!" it her to swift thought, and a such bold idea came to her. "I believe I know of an opening all you," she said, with a suppress gasp at her own temerity; "a par

nership that would be about the be thing you ever had offered to m Come around and see me next M day afternoon "What kind of a business is it" | True asked eagerly, a new light of h

springing in his eyes. "You musn't ask questions," warned him, "because I don't want disappoint you I feel very si though, that I can land it for you.

That afternoon between work

wrote a letter, a proceeding wh always made the boss barber ners Billy, however, managed to get glimpse at the envelope before it mailed, and felt better as the letter was addressed to Elizabehip the letter was addressed to Elizabehip

On Monday morning, Elizabeth Ru Emery and her sister arrived, a Elizabeth Ruth sent down word t she would like to see Miss Williamsb That young lady promptly went up the room, and was confronted by girl almost as pretty as Jimmy be tried to describe.

The two girls shook hands, and

there had been any distrust in bosom of Miss Edwards it melted Fra a moment as she looked into t truthful eyes of Bessie Williams. "Where is Mr. Carroll?" asked tiw. girl from Prosperity, with tremblirets

eagerness. "How ill is he? Has laus a good doctor?" "I'm his only doctor," responded Miss Williams, "and the only scription I've given him was the I wrote to you. You see, It isn't body that's sick, it's his mir Jimmy Carroll's a good boy, but h

a fool." Miss Emery flushed a bit, nantly, but her sister smiled. "I suspected as much." she "I think your description is about

right, Miss Williams. He is a go

boy, and I'm afraid he is the res

"I guess he's cured of that," Miss Williams, laughing, "but aftened all, he's no bigger fool than the crowens that put him on the reefs. He thougharm he could play the bucket shops, a no living man has ever kept at the As and finished on the cozy side of l For about a month he thought owned New York, and now he's dow and out; that's all. I tried to get hi

to go home, but he wouldn't go, se sent for the sheriff." The girl from Prosperity was no plussed; also she was honest.

"I don't quite know whether thank you for inducing me to tak this trip or not," she said, a littl coldly

"Wait until you see Jimmy." spended Miss Williams easily. she felt quite confident of the come.

It was about two o'clock when came, looking worse than ever. was pale now and also shabby, an she judged that maybe he was hut gry, too, but he was shaved and his clothes were brushed. She looked a his hand. The ring was gone. He had made that sacrifice to appear neatly in case the "partnership chance" should come out right, and he was tremblingly eager to know ! she had beard anything favorable.

She took him up to the girl from Prosperity just as he was. He will not be whiter when he is dead that he turned when he saw her. For a moment they just looked and looked They were both trembling. Thes slowly she held out her hands to him-Suddenly, with a sob, he dropped on his knees before her, there upon the parlor floor, and buried his head upon

her hands. Outside in the hall the Manicure Girl was dabbing her eyes with pocket handkerchief and upbraiding herself.

"I certainly am the prize Weepins Winifred," she said, impatiently, she hurried for the elevator.