

Copy Hunter

BY RAFAEL

SABOTEUR.



"MR. RULE" SAID THE PUBLISHER "CHOOSES TO MAINTAIN THE STRICTEST INCOGNITO."

"I AM MR. RULE" SHE ANSWERED

Mrs. RANDALL.

MARTIN VOSSICKER beheld a slender girlish figure and a gentle girlish face, with fair hair and the softest eyes conceivable. A pathetic air of helplessness seemed to envelop her, and this was the magnet that first attracted Martin, being himself an athletic animal of something over six feet, and as little like the popular notion of the popular novelist as possible.

She was sitting away a summer month where her aunt, Mrs. Randall, at the Manor, where Martin, who lived in an Ivy-clad cottage at Saxton, was a frequent and ever-welcome visitor. Thus they met.

When he came to talk to her, he found her less helpless than at first, she had conveyed the impression of being— which is often the way with women. Nor were her eyes always as soft and gentle as the first glance from them had seemed to him— which again, is often the way with women. Those eyes were of a deep brown, widely set and thoughtful and they had a disconcerting trick of riveting themselves upon you until their glance appeared to penetrate into the privacy of your inmost thoughts.

Charmed at first, Martin was dazzled presently. He found her bright and witty, with a subtle, scholarly wit, which would have pleasantly surprised him in a woman, but he found inexplicable in a woman, for he was one of those who— frequently to their undoing— have a rather low estimate of the intellectuality of the so-called weaker sex. Not only was she scientific in the vivacity of her cultured mind, but there was a magnetism about her which seemed to attract those with whom she came into contact, much as the moon shines in the light which it borrows from the sun.

Of what they talked as they sat under the beeches that summer afternoon, with Mrs. Randall purring in her wicker chair beside them, Martin would have found it difficult to say; for it was all so provokingly intangible. But he went home inspired by a profound admiration for Rose Gerard, and promising himself that so long as she remained at the Manor, he would find his way there more often than usual.

He kept that promise so well that from a frequent he became a daily visitor. He was busy at the time upon one of those anemic novels which he brought him a fair measure of fame with a decadent public, and each afternoon, which his four hours' work— Martin only worked four hours a day— he would stroll over to the Manor for tea.

Saxton began to talk for in Saxton there was a good deal of human nature— particularly that kind which is patronized by elderly ladies on the borderline of girlhood and old-maidhood.

Saxton waited on tiptoe for the announcement of the engagement of his popular novelist to Mrs. Randall's charming niece. But Saxton was disappointed. Martin Vossicker was certainly making love to Rose, but the love was purely artistic, without yet being of that art which conceals art.

For the first time in his career he had come upon an opportunity of making copy out of a real, live person. He set himself to make it, and she appeared to be assisting him with a degree of nerve, sympathy, and understanding which, what it amazed him considerably, pleased him still more. He would drop into a chair beside her, the cup in hand, and what time he handed her muffins and crumpets he would behave and talk like an ordinary human being of average self-respect. But when they strolled away by themselves, as he had presently become their custom, Martin would drop into strange mental attitudes.

His favorite pose was that of a victim of unrequited love. This he assumed of his case demanded, for such were the circumstances under which the hero of his anemic novel was laboring, for a moment had he permitted himself a hopeful tone. From the outside his attitude had been pathetically dependent; it indicated that he loved her hopelessly, and that whilst he was consumed by his passion, he was persecuted, and wished to continue so, that he was unmoved by it.

Rose had fallen a victim to his mental suggestion, and she accepted the situa-

tion with characteristic— if hardly feminine— readiness.

She seemed to play the part he had assigned to her just as he— half consciously only— was playing the part he had assigned to himself. She was capricious, petulant, arch and mocking by turns, but rarely tender, and then it was a tenderness that faded almost as soon as it took shape.

Martin outwardly gloomy and saturnine, made phrases and talked in epigrams, and invented proverbs. She, taking her cue from him, replied in kind, with a wit and brilliancy that delighted his artistic sense whilst heightening the artistic gloom upon his countenance. In short, these two young people behaved and talked as young people behave and talk in books or upon the stage, and whilst each appeared to be fully conscious of the pose, each seemed content it should be so.

But it was affording Martin something more than amusement, as I have hinted, it was equipping him with much rich material. The mental notes he made while in her company he transferred to paper each evening, to be anon molded into his novel. And so his book grew apace, and the frothy brilliancy which his readers had come to look for in his work was reaching in "The Futile Quest" a height to which it had never soared before.

At the end of July approached the time drew near for Rose's departure from Saxton. The hero of "A Futile Quest" had come to the stage of proposing to the heroine, and for two or three days Martin had been unable to decide whether to rely purely upon his imagination for that which should be the culminating scene of his book, or whether to avail himself of the opportunity which his readers had come to look for in his work was reaching in "The Futile Quest" a height to which it had never soared before.

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"I am very sorry to leave auntie; she has been so very kind," he said, removing his hand from her arm. "Oh, Mrs. Randall!" he complained, "you can think of everybody but me."

"Why should I think of you, since you confess yourself glad that I am going? Why are you glad?"

He hesitated. For a moment he sat thinking. Then, looking up and encountering the steady gaze of her brown eyes, he said: "I am glad because— because it is better so; better that I should see no more of you."

He dropped his glance.

"My lot does not lie in the smooth places of the world," he continued tragically. "It is not such an existence as I could wish any woman to share. That is why I reject that, in a couple of days, we shall have passed out of each other's way of life."

He paused. Somehow, he was not doing at all well. He was beginning to feel ashamed of himself. This was falling a pose too far, perhaps—a fact which, in his absorption in the artistic side of the question, he had not hitherto contemplated. On the whole, he thought it best to drop the subject and effect as orderly a retreat as possible. But it was her hand that now fell upon his sleeve, and her voice quivered slightly.

"Do you mean that you care?" she asked.

Inwardly he groaned. He was not to be allowed to retreat, after all. As he was a gentleman, he could not do so now. He had overreached himself in his infernal copy hunting, and he must go on, although a church and a nuptial service should be at the end of the road he was following.

"That," he faltered, "is what I mean."

"There was a pause, during which her soft eyes were lowered and his furrowed brows could make nothing of her expression.

"But if that is so," she murmured, "why should you rejoice at my going? He thivered at thought of all the things she had said to him, and even to effect as orderly a retreat as possible. But it was her hand that now fell upon his sleeve, and her voice quivered slightly.

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idleness that followed its dispatch to the publisher, his thoughts reverted to Rose, and the sense of injury returned.

Next the explanation of it came home to him little by little. He was in love with her. He had become so absorbed in his mental attitude that the natural illumination of his heart had gone unperceived. He remembered the trapped feeling which had come to him when she had almost allowed him to see that she was not indifferent, and he cursed himself now for having so frantically struggled to escape from toils outside of which he felt that life could hold no happiness for him.

It occurred to him to obtain her address from Mrs. Randall, and to follow her. But when he recalled their last words that day at the Manor, he lacked the courage. He had burnt his boats, he argued, and, after all, perhaps it might be better so. He contended that he was a poor man, and there were others in the world who, no doubt, would make her happier. And so, with a consideration and another, he turned down that page of his life, and resolutely combated the desire to reopen it.

"The Futile Quest," by Martin Vossicker, was published in the autumn. A week after its appearance, Martin was in town, and one afternoon at his club an acquaintance thrust a paper under his nose, and pointed to a review article headed, "A Literary Coincidence."

"Have you seen that Vossicker? You are in good company, anyhow."

Martin, glancing at the article, saw his name coupled with that of Sebastian Rule, an author who had leapt into fame a year ago, and whose work was being everywhere discussed. In gathering surprise he perused the article, which ran:

"We have lighted upon what we think is a literary coincidence that has never been recorded. Last week saw the appearance of 'The Idealists,' by Sebastian Rule, and 'The Futile Quest,' by Martin Vossicker. Each of these works is remarkable for vigor, power and insight, but more remarkable still, for the amazing resemblance that exists between them. It is true that in the matter of plot and mis-appointments these two works have perhaps, not much in common; but the characters of the hero and heroine are not only almost identical in each case, but they utter identical sentences, and frequently in identical words, and a fitting climax to this astounding coincidence of thought and expression is afforded by the parting sentence which the hero addresses to the heroine. In both novels we find him taking his leave of her with these words: 'You have no feelings! I can say of you as Carlyle said of Ruskin—you are like a beautiful bottle of soda water.'

"This was followed by the reviewer's theories and speculations in explanation of this remarkable fact. But Vossicker didn't trouble to read what the reviewer thought. His own thoughts were more than enough for him just then. He let the paper fall and, reclining in his chair, he gave himself up to the luxury of conjecture. But it proved for once rather more of a torture than a luxury. He was quick to evolve a theory of his own. Rose must be very intimate with Sebastian Rule, and must have confided in him touching that copiously conducted wooing at Saxton. It was hardly admitted of doubt—there could scarcely be any other explanation.

Having reached that conclusion Martin rose. He must see of Rule at once, and they must discuss what attitude they were to take toward the public, particularly if it seemed inevitable imputation came to be cast upon their work of having been plagiarized from a common source.

To this end he repaired there and then to Brett & Hackett, Sebastian Rule's publishers, with a view of ascertaining Mr. Rule's address. He was received by Mr. Brett, the senior partner, who welcomed him cordially, for Mr. Brett was in a state of considerable excitement at the astounding coincidence which would presently be the talk of the literary world. Martin demanded Mr. Rule's address, informing

Mr. Brett that it was his intention to see that gentleman at once.

"Mr. Rule," said the publisher, "chooses to maintain the strictest incognito, and I am under promise not to divulge his address to anybody. But if you care to write to him I will see that your letter is forwarded."

Martin, however, did not care to write. He insisted upon seeing the author of "The Idealists," and he contended—with expressions of much justifiable strength and even some profanity—that whatever Mr. Rule's instructions may have been concerning his address, they had to deal with a very exceptional case, which would demand very exceptional treatment. In the end he won his way—wonderful to relate—and he left Brett & Hackett's with Sebastian Rule's address in his pocket.

Half an hour later saw him on the doorstep of a pretty villa in St. John's Wood, asking to see Mr. Rule. The inquiry seemed to cast the maid into some agitation, and for some moments he was kept waiting in a room on the ground floor. At last the door opened, and Martin gasped to behold Rose Gerard herself standing before him.

"How do you do?" came her pleasant greeting.

"Are you doing here?" he blurted out.

"I live here—with my mother. This is my home."

"But Mr. Rule," he asked, "—"

"I am Mr. Rule," she answered with a quiet, half-wistful smile. "You" he

cried, in unbelief. "You" and his fine eyes were opened very wide.

"You are Sebastian Rule?"

"Yes," she reassured him. "I am the man."

Then, with a laugh, "Don't look so shocked, Martin," she continued. "I know that you find it hard to credit— you whose opinion of woman's intellectuality is so unflattering to us. But if you think for yourself, you will see that it could not be otherwise. You have, of course, seen what the Daily Wire says about this literary coincidence. At least, I assume that that is the explanation of your presence here."

Then Martin understood everything. He understood the nerve and sympathy with which she had entered upon those marvellous conversations at Saxton. While he was making copy for her she was making copy for him. Each had been posing unconsciously for the other's benefit.

When at last he put his feelings into words, his diction lacked that artistic finish which had characterized his old-time expressions. "We have," said he, "made a very charming mess of it."

"Hardly so bad as that," she laughed. "People will wonder, and the wonder will advertise our books."

An expression of settled gloom overclouded Martin's good-looking face. Rose knew it of old; it had been the expression he adopted when he struck his mental attitudes. But her keen perceptions told her also that for once it was a sincere reflection of what was passing in his mind.

"I was an ass," he acknowledged with melancholy conviction, and for the moment—as he met her brown eyes—he forgot the literary coincidence.

"I was an ass," he repeated.

"No, no," she answered with soothing politeness.

"But I was," he insisted.

"You don't know the worst."

"Tell me," she begged. She was standing close to him. The proximity seemed to affect him. His hand fell upon her arm as it had done that day at Saxton.

"By dint of posing as a lover, I became a lover," he blurted out, and without knowing it. But I found it out after you had gone away. Rose, and I so wanted to come after you. But I didn't dare. I don't suppose you'll ever forgive me. I'm sure I don't deserve that you should."

"Silly boy, you forget that I was just as bad. If you talk of forgiving, you have quite as much to forgive me. And, oh, Martin, I have been punished!" she cried.

"Punished?"

"Just as you have been punished. I acted a part, until it ceased to be acting, and—"

"Rose!" he exclaimed, and at that moment the literary coincidence was completely forgotten.

He took her by the shoulders and held her at arm's length, solemnly regarding her.

"It's true, dear," said she, "and I think that in future we might collaborate very satisfactorily, don't you?"

"Rather. Sebastian Rule and Martin Vossicker united should prove an overwhelming combination. We were born to collaborate, Rose."

"And, at least, we shall be safeguarded against coincidences," she concluded, with a smile.

CHILD'S CRIB AND CHAIR

These Two Needful Very Successfully Combined.

The crib and the high chair are two of the needfuls of every household in which are young children. To combine the two in one piece of furniture is a recent invention of two California cabinet-makers.



CHAIR AND CRIB COMBINED.

netmakers. Besides serving the two purposes equally well, the appearance has not been slighted in the least, the combination being attractive rather than cumbersome. In the illustration it is shown in the position of a high chair, rollers being attached to the end frame. To convert the high chair into a crib it is only necessary to change the position, the rockers at the back of the high chair serving the same purpose as rockers on an ordinary crib. The seat in the high chair is readily removed, and the necessary pillows and coverings inserted. Every mother will at once recognize the advantage of having a crib in the dining-room, in which to place the baby for his regular naps without the necessity of carrying him to the upper floor.

REMOVABLE CHICKEN COOP

Raised and Lowered for Cleaning by an Ingenious Method.

One of the essentials in the raising of chickens and other fowls is cleanliness. To insure good stock they must be cared for with as much diligence as canaries and parrots. Chicken coops are seldom more than four or five feet in height, and when cleaning them even a man small in stature is compelled to bend himself at all angles to reach perches and nests. To avoid this back-breaking work a Texas farmer has designed a chicken coop that is right up to date. The coop is not unlike the ordinary one, and can be built to suit the



LIFTS COOP OFF THE GROUND.

individual's taste. In the rear and extending above the top of the coop is a post, at the top of which is pivoted a hoisting arm. One end of the arm connects with cables extending to the four corners of the coop; the other end serves as a handle for raising the coop off the ground when necessary to clean the interior. This innovation will appeal to all those who are interested in poultry and their care.

HOG CATCHER

More Effective Than Old-Fashioned Way of Grabbing His Tail.

Chasing hogs is exceedingly tiring when the chaser is bent on pleasure only. When it becomes an everyday duty the funny feature disappears, and instead the air is generally laden with



SUBDUES THE HOG.

explosives not suitable to polite society. The hog is an elusive beast. Being round and fat—add also slippery—the chaser is not afforded any point of vantage to obtain a firm hold. This is true with but one exception, and that is his tail. But here again the chaser is handicapped. Hogs' tails are so little and at the same time so frail that not infrequently the hog emerges from the chase minus his tail. A more sensible method is the use of the implement illustrated herewith. The inventor, an Iowa man, claims that no difficulty is experienced in getting the noise in position. When once it is securely clamped on the hog's nose it is an easy matter to lead the animal to any place desired.