

The Fighting Chance.

By ROBERT W. CHAMBERS.

Copyright, 1906, by the Curtis Publishing Company.
Copyright, 1906, by Robert W. Chambers.

LAST WEEK

"Yes, child," she answered absently. "Has it occurred to you that what you have said about this boy touches me very closely?"

Mrs. Ferrall's wits returned nimbly from woolgathering, and she shot a startled, inquiring glance at the girl beside her.

"You—you mean the matter of heredity, Sylvia?"

"Yes, I think my uncle, Major Belwether, chose you as his august mouthpiece for that little sermon on the dangers of heredity—the danger of being ignorant concerning what women of my race had done—before I came into the world they found so amusing."

"I told you several things," returned Mrs. Ferrall composedly. "Your uncle thought it best for you to know."

"Yes, there was, if I understood you, enough of divorce, of general indiscretion and irregularity to seriously complicate any family tree and coat of arms I might care to claim."

"Sylvia!"

The girl lifted her pretty bare shoulders. "I'm sorry, but could I help it? Very well, all I can do is to prove a decent exception. Very well, I'm doing it, am I not—practically scared into the first solidly suitable marriage offered, seizing the unfortunate Howard with both hands for fear he'd get away and leave me alone with only a queer family record for company?"

"Very well! Now, then, I want to ask you why everybody in my case didn't go about with a sanctimonious face and a dolorous mien repeating: 'Her grandmother sinned! Her mother ran away! Poor child; she's doomed, doomed!'"

"Sylvia, I—"

"Yes, why didn't they? That's the way they talk about that boy out there." She swept a rounded arm toward the veranda.

"Yes, but he has already broken loose, while you—"

"So did I—nearly. Had it not been for you, you know well enough I might have run away with that dreadful Englishman at Newport, for I adored him—I did, I did, and you know it. And look at my endless escapes from compromising myself! Can you count them? All those indiscretions when mere living seemed to intoxicate me that first winter, and only my uncle and you to break me in?"

"In other words," said Mrs. Ferrall slowly, "you don't think Mr. Seward is getting what is known as a square deal?"

"No, I don't. Major Belwether has already hinted—no, not even that, but has somehow managed to dampen my pleasure in Mr. Seward."

Mrs. Ferrall considered the girl beside her, now very lovely and flushed in her suppressed excitement.

"After all," she said, "you are going to marry somebody else. So why become quite so animated about a man you may never again see?"

"I shall see him if I desire to."

"Oh!"

"I am not taking the black veil, am I?" asked the girl boldly.

"Only the wedding veil, dear. But, after all, your husband ought to have something to suggest concerning a common visiting list."

"He may suggest, certainly. In the meantime I shall be loyal to my own friends and afterward, too," she murmured to herself as her hostess rose, calmly dropping care like a mantle from her shoulders.

"Go and be good to this poor young man, then—I adore you—and you'll have a few on your hands, I'll warrant. Let me remind you that your uncle can make it unpleasant for you if you and that your amiable fiancé has a will of his own under his pompadour and silky beard."

"What a pity to have it clash with mine!" said the girl serenely.

Mrs. Ferrall looked at her. "Mercy on us! Howard's pompadour would stick up straight with horror if he could hear you. Don't be silly; don't for an impulse, for a caprice, break off anything desirable on account of a man for whom you really care nothing."

"The amiable exterior and prospective misfortune merely enlist a very natural and generous sympathy in you."

"Do you suppose that I shall endure interference from anybody—from my uncle, from Howard?"

"Dear, you are making a mountain out of a molehill. Don't be emotional; don't let loose impulses that you and I know about, know about in our school years, know all about now and which you and I have decided must be eliminated."

"You mean subdued. They'll always be there."

"Very well. Who cares as long as you have them in leash?"

Looking at one another, the excited color cooling in the younger girl's cheeks, they laughed, one with relief, the other a little ashamed.

"Kemp will be furious. I simply must cut in," said Mrs. Ferrall, hastily turning toward the parlor. Miss Landis looked after her, subdued, vaguely repentant, the consciousness dawning upon her that she had probably made a considerable conversation about nothing.

"It's been so all day," she thought

impatiently. "I've exaggerated. I've worked up a scene about a man whose habits are not the slightest concern of mine. Besides that, I've neglected Howard shamefully!" She was walking slowly, her thoughts outstripping her errant feet, but it seemed that neither her thoughts nor her steps were lending her toward the neglected gentleman within, for presently she found herself at the breezy veranda door looking rather fixedly at the stars.

The stars, shining impartially upon the just and the unjust, illuminated the person of Seward, who sat alone, rather dimly, one knee crossed above the other. He looked up by chance and, seeing her star-gazing in the doorway, straightened out and rose to his feet.

Aware of him apparently for the first time, she stepped across the threshold, meeting his advance halfway.

"Would you care to go down to the rocks?" he asked. "The surf is terrific."

"No—I don't think I care."

They stood listening a moment to the stupendous roar.

"A storm somewhere at sea," he concluded.

"Is it very fine—the surf?"

"Very fine—and very relentless," he laughed. "It is an unfriendly creature, the sea, you know."

She had begun to move toward the cliffs. He fell into step beside her. They spoke little, a word now and then.

The perfume of the mounting sea saturated the night with wild fragrance. Dew lay heavy on the lawns. She lifted her skirts enough to clear the grass, heedless that her silk shoes were now soaking. Then at the cliffs' edge, as she looked down into the white fury of the surf, the stunning crash of the ocean saluted her.

For a long while they watched in silence. Once she leaned a trifle too far over the starlit gulf and, recoiling, involuntarily steadied herself on his arm.

"I suppose," she said, "no swimmer could endure that battering."

"Not long."

"Would there be no chance?"

"Not one."

She bent farther outward, fascinated, stirred, by the splendid frenzy of the breakers.

"I think—" he began quietly; then a firm hand fell over her left hand, and, half encircled by his arm, she found herself drawn back. Neither spoke. Two things she was coolly aware of—that, urged, drawn by something subtly irresistible, she had leaned too far out from the cliff and would have leaned farther had he not taken matters into his own keeping without apology.

"Was I in any actual danger?" she asked curiously.

"I think not. But it was too much responsibility for me."

"I see. Any time I wish to break my neck I am to please do it alone in future."

"Exactly—if you don't mind," he said, smiling.

They turned, shoulder to shoulder, walking back through the drenched herbage.

"That," she said impulsively, "is not what I said a few moments ago to a woman."

"What did you say a few moments ago to a woman?"

"I said, Mr. Seward, that I would not leave a—certain man to go to the devil alone."

"Do you know any man who is going to the devil?"

"Do you?" she asked, letting herself go swinging out upon a tide of intimacy she had never dreamed of risking, nor had she the slightest idea whether the current would carry her.

They had stopped on the lawn, ankle deep in wet grass, the stars overhead sparkling magnificently and in their ears the outcrash of the sea.

"You mean me," he concluded.

"Do I?"

He looked up into the lovely face. Her eyes were very sweet, very clear—clear with excitement, but very friendly.

"Let us sit here on the steps a little while, will you?" she asked.

So he found a place beside her one step lower, and she leaned forward, elbows on knees, rounded white chin in her palms, the starlight giving her bare arms and shoulders a marble luster and tinting her eyes a deeper amethyst.

And now, innocently untethered, mission and all, she laid her heart quite bare—one chapter of it. And, like other women errant who believe in the influence of their sex individually and collectively, she began wrong by telling him of her engagement perhaps to emphasize her pure disinterestedness in a crusade for principle only.

So it was when she was most eloquent, most earnestly inspired—nav-

in the very midst of a plea for sweetness and light and simple living—that his reasonings found voice in the material comment:

"I never imagined you were engaged."

"Of course you didn't. You'd know me for about three hours—there on the cliff."

"But—Quarrier?"

Over his youthful face a sullen shadow had fallen—flickering, not yet settled. He would not for anything on earth have talked freely to the woman destined to be Quarrier's wife. He had talked too much anyway. Something in her, something about her, had loosened his tongue. He had made a plain ass of himself, that was all—a garrulous ass. And truly it seemed that the girl beside him, even in the starlight, could follow and divine what he had scarcely expressed to himself, or her instincts had taken a shorter cut to forestall his own conclusion.

"Don't think the things you are thinking," she said in a fierce little voice, leaning toward him.

"What do you mean?" he asked, taken aback.

"You know! Don't! It is unfair—it is—faithless—to me. I am your friend. Why not? Does it make any difference to you whom I marry? If such a friendship as ours is to become worth anything to you—to me—why should it trouble you that I know and am thinking of things that concern you? Is it because the confidence is one-sided? Is it because you have given and I have listened and given nothing in return to balance the account? I do give interest—deep interest, sympathy if you ask it; I give confidence in return if you desire it."

"What can a girl like you need of sympathy?" he said, smiling.

"You don't know, you don't know! If heredity is a dark vista and if you must stare through it all your life, sword in hand, always on your guard, do you think you are the only one?"

"Are you one?" he said incredulously.

"Yes," with an involuntary shudder, "not that way. It is easier for me. I think it is. I know it is. But there are things to combat—impulses, recklessness, perhaps something almost ruthless. What else I do not know, for I have never experienced violent emotions of any sort—never even deep emotion."

"You are in love!"

"Yes, thoroughly," she added, with conviction, "but not violently. I—"

She hesitated, stopped short, leaning forward, peering at him through the dusk, and, "Mr. Seward, are you laughing?" She rose, and he stood up instantly.

There was lightning in her dark eyes now; in his something that glimmered and danced. She watched it, fascinated. Then of a sudden the storm broke, and they were both laughing convulsively, face to face, there under the stars.

"Mr. Seward," she breathed, "I don't know what I am laughing at, do you? You—you infer that I am either not in love or incapable of it or too ignorant of it to know what I'm talking about. That, Mr. Seward, is what you have done to me tonight."

"I—I'm sorry—"

"Are you?"

"I ought to be anyway," he said.

It was unfortunate. An utterly inexcusable laughter seemed to bewitch them, hovering always close to his lips and hers.

"How can you laugh!" she said.

"How dare you! I don't care for you nearly as violently as I did, Mr. Seward. A friendship between us would not be at all good for me. Things pass too swiftly—too intimately. There is too much mockery in you!" She ceased suddenly, watching the somber alteration of his face, and, "Have I hurt you?" she asked penitently.

"No."

"Have I, Mr. Seward? I did not mean it." The attitude, the words, slackening to a trailing sweetness, and then the moment's silence stirred him.

"I'm rather ignorant myself of violent emotion. I suspect normal people are. As for our friendship, we'll do the best we can for it, no matter what occurs," he added, thinking of Quarrier, and, thinking of him, glanced up to see him within earshot and moving straight toward them from the veranda.

There was a short silence, a tentative civil word from Seward, then Miss Landis took command of some-thing that had a grotesque resemblance to a situation. A few minutes later they returned slowly to the house, the girl walking serenely between Seward and her preoccupied affianced.

"If your shoes are as wet as my skirts and slippers you had better change, Mr. Seward," she said, pausing at the foot of the staircase.

So he took his congée, leaving her standing there with Quarrier and nodded to his room.

In the corridor he passed Ferrall, who had finished his business correspondence and was returning to the cardroom.

"Here's a letter that Grace wants you to see," he said. "Read it before you turn in, Stephen."

"All right, but I'll be down later," replied Seward, passing on, the letter in his hand. Entering his room, he kicked off his wet pumps and found dry ones; then moved about, whistling a gay air from some recent vaudeville, busy with rough towels and silken footgear, until, reshod and dry, he was ready to descend once more.

The encounter, the suddenly informal acquaintance with this young girl, had stirred him agreeably, leaving a slight exhilaration. Even her engagement to Quarrier added a tinge of malice to his interest. Besides, he was young enough to feel the flattery of her concern for him.

Perhaps, as like recognizes like, he recognized in her the instincts of the

born sufferer momentary—the temporary inertia of the opportunist, the latent capacity of an unformed character for all things and anything. Add to these her few years, her beauty and the wholesome ignorance so confidently acknowledged, what man could remain unconcerned, uninterested, in the development of such possibilities? Not Seward, amused by her sagacious and impulsive prudence, worldliness and innocence in accepting Quarrier and touched by her professed, frank and unworldly friendliness for himself.

Not that he objected to her marrying Quarrier. He rather admired her for being able to do it, considering the general scramble for Quarrier, but let that take care of itself. Meanwhile their sudden and capricious intimacy had aroused him from the morbid reaction consequent upon the cheap notoriety which he had brought upon himself. Let him sponge his slate clean and begin again a better record, flattered by the solicitude she had so prettily displayed.

Whistling under his breath the same gay, empty melody, he opened the top drawer of his dresser, dropped in his mother's letter and, locking the drawer, pocketed the key. He would have time enough to read the letter when he went to bed. He did not just now feel exactly like skimming through the food, foolish sermon which he knew had been preached at him through his mother's favorite missionary, Grace Ferrall. What was the use of dragging in the sad old questions again, of repeating his assurances of good behavior, of reiterating his promises of moderation and watchfulness, of explaining his own self confidence? Better that the letter await his bedtime. His prayers would be the sincerer the fresher the impression, for he was old-fashioned enough to say the prayers that an immature philosophy proved superfluous, for, he thought, if prayer is any use it takes only a few minutes to be on the safe side.

So he went downstairs leisurely, prepared to acquiesce in any suggestion from anybody, but rather hoping to saunter across Sylvia Landis' path before being committed.

She was standing beside the fire with Quarrier, one foot on the fender, apparently too preoccupied to notice him. So he strolled into the gunroom, which was blue with tobacco smoke and aromatic with the volatile odors from decanters.

There were a few women there, and the majority of the men, Lord Alderdene, Major Belwether and Mortimer, were at a table by themselves. Stacks of ivory chips and five cards spread in the center of the green explained the nature of their game, and Mortimer, raising his heavy inflamed eyes and seeing Seward unoccupied, said wheezily: "Cut out that 'widow' and give Seward his stack! Anything above two pairs for a jack triples the ante. Come on, Seward, there's a decent chap!"

So he seated himself for a sacrifice to the blind goddess balanced upon her winged wheel, and the cards ran high—so high that stacks dwindled or toppled within the half hour, and Mortimer grew redder and redder, and Major Belwether blander and blander, and Alderdene's face wore a continual nervous smile, showing every white hound's tooth, and the ice in the tall glasses clinked ceaselessly.

It was late when Quarrier "sat in," with an expressionless acknowledgment of Seward's presence and an emotionless raid upon his neighbor's resources with the first hand dealt, in which he participated without drawing a card.

And always Seward, eyes on his cards, seemed to see Quarrier before him, his overmanicured fingers caressing his silky beard, the symmetrical pompadour dark and thick as the winter fur on a rat, tufting his smooth blank forehead.

It was very late when Seward first began to be aware of his increasing deafness, the difficulty, too, that he had in making people hear, the annoying contempt in Quarrier's womanlike eyes. He felt that he was making a fool of himself, very noiselessly somehow, but with more racket than he expected when he miscalculated the distance between his hand and a decanter.

It was time for him to go unless he chose to ask Quarrier for an explanation of that snore which he found distasteful. But there was too much noise, too much laughter.

Besides, he had a matter to attend to—the careful perusal of his mother's letter to Mrs. Ferrall.

Very white, he rose. After an indeterminate interval he found himself entering his room.

The letter was in the pocket of his coat, but he got the letter, sank down on the bed's edge and strove to read—set his teeth grimly, forcing his shut eyes to a focus. But he could make nothing of it, nor of his toilet either, nor of Ferrall, who came in on his way to bed, having noticed the electricity still in full glare over the open transom, and who straightened out matters for the stunned man lying face downward across the bed, his mother's letter crushed in his nerveless hand.

(To be continued)

A Hurry-Up Call.

Quick, Mr. Druggist, quick! A box of Bucklen's Arnica Salve. Here's a quarter. For the love of Moses, hurry! Baby's burned himself terribly. Johnny cut his foot with the axe. Mamie's scalded. Pa can't walk from piles. Billie has boils, and my corns ache. She got it and soon cured all the family. It's the greatest healer on earth. Sold by all druggists.



4 quart bottles of GENUINE CYRUS NOBLE direct to you all charges paid to the nearest railroad express office.

\$4.90

DIRECT TO YOU

from the best known, strictly wholesale house in the Northwest. Established in Portland in 1864. 4 quarts GENUINE CYRUS NOBLE \$4.90. A pure—old—honest—whiskey bottled by the distillers. Guaranteed to the United States Government, and to you, to contain nothing excepting pure straight whiskey. Many of the railroads use Cyrus Noble almost exclusively. So do the big steamship companies. So does nearly every big metropolitan hotel. Because it's pure. Because it's aged in wood. Because it has that soft, delicate, palatable flavor of the ripened grain, often mentioned but rarely found.

W. J. VAN SCHUYVER & CO.
Established 1864. 105-107 Second Street, Portland, Oregon.
CUT AT THIS LINE AND MAIL TO-DAY

W. J. Van Schuyver & Co., Portland, Oregon.
Enclosed please find \$4.90 for which please send me at once by express, prepaid, four quarts GENUINE CYRUS NOBLE.

Name _____ Ship via _____
P. O. Address _____
County _____

REST, ROMP, RECUPERATE

At the Seashore

Newport

Is a delightful resort and a happy combination of pleasure ground possibilities. An ideal climate, diversion of recreation—perfect bathing—fishing—riding—driving and exploring make Newport a most charming and popular play ground.

SOUTHERN PACIFIC

Has a

SPECIAL SUMMER EXCURSION RATE TO NEWPORT OF

\$4.25 Season
\$2.55 Sunday to Monday
from

Independence, Oregon

Ask for our booklet, "Outings in Oregon."

G. A. WILCOX, Agent
Wm. McMURRAY,
General Passenger Agent
Portland, Oregon

The Salem Steam Laundry

GUARANTEES YOU PERFECT WORK

Leave order at D. Taylor's Barber Shop, Independence, Oregon

HAUSER BROS. SALEM, OREGON

Props. of Salem Gun Store OREGON

We now have on display a very fine and complete line of

Base Ball Goods, Lawn Tennis Supplies and also Fine Fishing Tackle

Send for Catalogue of Base Ball Uniforms

Fair Week Specials

Towels, stamped to embroider... 79c

The Famous Needlecraft Cherry Pillow... 50c

The latest Waists are those embroidered on French Eton Crepe, which require no starching or ironing. Full waist length, stamped to embroider or braid... \$1.25

REMEMBER, we are selling the balance of our Ready Made Shirt Waists and Tub Suits at One-Half to One-Third Off.

The Needlecraft Shop

Mrs. S. C. Wall

270 N. Com'l. St. Salem, Oregon