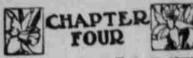
The Fighting Chance. ROBERT W. CHAMBERS.

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CONTINUED CHOM LAST WEEK



any other method or compromise being Shotover cup." impossible.

man, energetically devoted to his busiof silver covered dishes on the warm- draw for your lady, sir? It is the cus-

The fragrance of coffee was pleasantly perceptible. Men in conventional turning to Sylvia. shooting attire roamed about the room, selected what they cared for and carried it to the table. Mrs. Mortimer matched her complexion. Marion Page, always more congruous in field costume and beited jacket than in anything else, and always, like her preparing a breakfast for her own gun bearer in emergencies. onsumption with the leisurely precision characteristic of her whether in the saddle, on the box or grassing her brace of any covey that ever flushed.

Captain Voucher and Lord Alderdene discussed prospects between bites, attentive to the monosyllabic opinions of Miss Page. Her twin brothers, Gordon and Willis, shyly consuming oatmeal, listened respectfully and waited on their sister at the slightest lifting of her thinly arched eyebrows.

Into this company sauntered Siward apparently no worse for wear, for as yet the enemy had set upon him no proprietary insignia save a rather becoming pallor and faint binish shadows under the eyes. He strolled about, exchanging amiable greetings, and presently selected a chilled grape fruit as his breakfast. Opposite him Mortimer, breakfasting upon his own dreadful bracer of an apple soaked in port. raised his heavy inflamed eyes with a

tember sunshine Outside he could see Major Belwether, pink skinned, snowy chop whiskers brushed rabbit fashion, very voluble with Sylvia Landis, who listened absently, head partly averted. Quarrier in tweeds and gaiters, his morning cigar delicately balanced in his gloved fingers, strofted near enough to be within earshot, and when Sylvia's inattention to Major Belwether's observations became marked to the verge of rudeness he came forward and spoke. But whatever it was that he said appeared to change her passive inattention to quiet displeasure, for, as Siward rose from the table, he saw her turn on her heel and walk slowly toward a group of dogs presided over by some kennel men and gamekeepers. She was talking to the head game-

keeper when he emerged from the house, but she him a bright so close to an invitation that he descended the

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"I am asking Dawson to explain just ex-actly what a 'Shot-

head keeper. "You know, Mr. Siward, that it is a custom peculiar to Shotover House to open the season with what is called a

Shotover drive?" "I heard Alderdene talking about-it," he said, smilingly inspecting the girl's attire of khaki, with its buttoned pockets, gun pads and Cossack cartridge loops, and the tan knee kilts hanging heavily plaited over galters and little thick soled shoes. He had never cared very much to see women affeld, for, in n rare case where there was no affectation, there was something else inborn that he found unpleasant something tacking about a woman who could take life from frightened wild things, something shocking that a woman could look, unmoved, upon a twitching, blood soiled heap of feath-

ers at her feet. Meanwhile Dawson, dog whip at salute, stood knee deep among his restless setters explaining the ceremony with which Mr. Ferrall unbered in the

opening of each shooting season. "It's our own idee, Miss Landis,"

said proudly, "One't a season Mr. Ferrall and his guests likes it for a mixed bug, 'Tis a sort of picnic, miss. The guns is in pairs, sixty yards apart in line, an' the rules is walk straight you know why Sylvia isn't shooting REAKFAST at Shotover, except shead, dogs to heel until first cover is for the luxurious sluggards to reached; fire straight or to quarter, whom trays were sent, was never blankin nor wipin no eyes, and served in the English fashion, ground game counts as feathers for the

"Oh! It's a skirmish line that walks Ferrall appeared to be a normal straight ahead?" said Siward, nodding. "Straight ahead, sir. No stoppin', no his pleasures, his friends and turnin' for hedges, fences, water or comfortably in love with his wife. And rock. There is boats f'r deep water if some considered his vigor in bust- and fords marked and cordured fr to ness to be lacking in mercy, that vigor pass the Seven Dreens. Luncheon at was always exercised within the law. I, miss, an hour's rest, then straight He never transgressed the rules of on over hill, valley, rock and river to war, but his headlong energy some the rondyvoo atop Osprey ledge. You'll ed Quarrier for her! I thought she'd times landed him close to the dead see the poles and the big nests, sir. line. He had airendy breakfasted when It's there they score for the cup and the earliest risers entered the morning there when the bag is counted the room to saunter about the sideboards traps are ready to carry you home and investigate the simmering contents | again." And to Siward: "Will you tom."

"Do you want me?" In the smiling luster of her eyes the tinlest spark flashed out at him, a was there consuming peaches that hint at defiance for somebody, perhaps him. for Major Belwether, who had taken considerable pains to enlighten her as to Siward's condition the night before; perhaps also for Quarrier, who own hunters, minutely groomed, was had naturally expected to act as her

"I'm probably a poor shot," she said, looking smilingly straight into Siward's eyes. "But if you'll take me"-"I will with pleasure," he said. Dawson, do we draw for position? And he drew a Very well, then." slip of paper from the box offered by

the head keeper. "No. 7," said Sylvin, looking over his shoulder. "Come out to the starting line, Mr. Siward. All the positions are marked with golf disks. What sort of ground have we ahead, Dawson?" Kind o' stiff, miss," grinned the

Will you choose your dog. sir?" "You have your dog, you know," ob-

served Sylvia demurely, and Siward, glancing among the impatient setters, saw one white, beavily feathered dog straining at his leash and wagging frantically, brown eyes fixed on him. The next moment Sagamore was

significant leer at the leed grape fruit. free, devouring his master with caresses, the girl looking on in smiling ed casements into the brilliant Sep- silence, and presently, side by side, the man, the girl and the dog were strolling off to the starting line, where atready people were gathering in groups, selecting dogs, for ling pieces, comparing numbers and discussing the merits of their respective lines of advance.

Ferrall, busily energetic and in high spirits, greeted them gayly, pointing out the red disk bearing their number, 7, where it stood out distinctly above the distant scrub of the fore-

"You two are certainly up against it!" he said, grinning. "There's only one rougher line, and you're in for thorns and water and a scramble scross the back one of the divide." "Is it any good?" asked Siward.

"Good-If you've got the legs and Sylvia doesn't play baby"-

"I?" she said indignantly. "Kemp. you annoy me. And I will bet you saw him on the now," she added, flushing, "that your terrace and gave old cup is ours." "Walt," said Siward, laughing. "We

nod of greeting, may not shoot straight." "You will. Kemp, I'll wager what

ever you dare." "Gloves? Stockings-against a cigastone steps and rette case?" he suggested,

"Done," she said disdainfully, moving forward along the skirmish line, with a nod and smile for the groups "I am asking Dawson to ex- now disintegrating into couples-the Page boys with Elleen Shannon and Rena Bonnesdel, Marion Page follow ed by Alderdene, Mrs. Vendenning and Major Belwether and the Tassel girl said, turning to convoyed by Leroy Mortimer. Farther along the line, taking post, she saw Quarrier and Miss Caithness, Captain over drive resem- conference with Voucher with Mrs. Mortimer and oththe big, scraggy ers too distant to recognize moving across country with glitter and glint

of sunlight on stanting gun barrels. And now Ferrall was climbing into his saddle beside his pretty wife, who sat her horse like a boy, the white flag lifted high in the sunshine, watching the firing line until the last laggard

was in position. "All right, Grace!" said Ferrall brisk-Down went the white flag. The far ranged line started into motion straight across country, dogs at heel.

From her saddle Mrs. Ferrall could see the advance strong out far afield from the dark spots moving along the Feils boundary to the two couples traversing the salt meadows to north. Crack! A distant report came faintly over the uplands against the wind.

"Voucher," observed Ferrall, "probably a snipe. Hark! He's struck them

again, Grace." Mrs. Ferrall, watching curiously. saw Siward's gun fir up as two big dark spots foated up from the marsh and went swinging over his head. Craok! Orsok! Down sheered the shed mots tembling earthward out of

"Duck," said Ferrall. "A double for Stephen. Lord Harry! How that man

in shoot! Isn't it a pity that"-He said no more. His pretty wife, stride her thoroughbred, sat silent, gray eyes fixed on the distant figures Sylvia Landis and Siward, now

shoulder deep in the reeds. "Was it very bad last night?" she asked in a low voice.

Ferrall shrugged. "He was not offensive. He walked steadily enough tionality dropping from her a woman, nestairs. When I went into his room he lay on the bed as if he'd been struck by lightning, and yet you see how he is this morning."

"After awhile," his wife said, "it is going to alter him some day dreadful- ed and curious, ly, isn't it, Kemp?" You mean like Mortimer?"

"Yes, only Leroy was always a pig."
As they turned their horses toward the highrond Mrs. Ferrall said, "Do with Howard?" "No," replied her husband indiffer-

ently, "do you?" "No." She looked out across the sun-

with suppressed mischief. "But I half

"What?" "Oh, all sorts of things, Kemp." "What's one of 'em?" asked Ferrall, looking around at her. But his wife ing forward, grave, thoughtful, pre-

only laughed. "You don't mean she's throwing her flies at Siward, now that you've hookplayed him to the gaff"-

"Please don't be coarse, Kemp," said Mrs. Ferrall, sending her horse for-Her husband spurred to her ward. side, and without turning her head she to her arms and warmed her and continued: "Of course Sylvia won't be foolish. If they were only safely mar-"Are you my 'lady?" he asked, ried. But Howard is such a pill"

What does Sylvia expect with Howard's millions-a man?" Grace Ferrall drew bridle. "The cu-

rious thing is, Kemp, that she liked

"No, liked him. I saw how it was, She took his silences for intellectual meditation, his gallery, his library, his smatterings for expressions of a cultivated personality. Then she remembered how close she came to running off with that cashiered Englishman, and that scared her into clutching the substantial in the shape of Howard. Still, I wish I hadn't meddled."

"Meddled how?" "Oh, I told her to do it! We had talks until daylight. She may marry him-I don't know-but if you think any live woman could be contented with a muff like that!"

"That's immoral." to marry him, but I don't know what "Pity your gentleman ain't I'd do to a man like that if I were his drawed the meadows an' Sachem hill wife. And you know what a terrific capacity for mischief there is in Syl-Some day she's going to love somebody. And it isn't likely to be Howard, And. oh, Kemp, I do grow so tired of that sort of thing! Do you suppose anybody will ever make decency a fashion?"

"You're doing your best," said Fer rall, laughing at his wife's pretty boycan dress the part"

"Don't, Kemp! I don't know why I meddled. I wish I hadn't"-

"I do. You can't let Howard alone. You're perfectly possessed to plague him when he's with you, and now you've arranged for another woman to keep it up for the rest of his lifetime. What does Sylvia want with a man who possesses the instincts and intellect of a coachman? She is asked everywhere. She has her own money. Why not let her alone? Or is it too

"You mean let her make a fool of herself with Stephen Siward? That is where she is drifting."

"Do you think" "Yes, I do. She has a perfect genius for selecting the wrong man, and she's already sorry for this one. I'm sorry for Stephen, too, but it's safe for me to be.'

"She might make something of him." "You know perfectly well no woman



Kemp Ferrall.

man. He'd kill her. I mean it, Kemp He would literally kill her with grief. She isn't like Lella Mortimer; she isn't like most girls of her sort. You men think her a rather stunning, highly fempered, unreasonable young girl, with a reserve of sufficiently trained intelligence to marry the best our market offers and close her eyes a thoroughbred with the caprices of one, but also with the grafted instinct for prop-

or mating." "Woll, that's all right, isn't it?" sok ed Forrait. "That's the way I sine her us, have it operate?"

"Yes, in a way. She has all the expensive training of the theroughbred and all the ignorance too. She is cold blooded because wholesome a trifle skeptical because so absolutely unawakened. She never experienced a deep emotion. Impulses have intoxicated her once or twice. But-but if ever a man awakens her-1 don't care who he is-you'll see a girl you never knew, a brand new creature emerge with the last rays and laces of conven-Kemp, helress to every generous impulse, every emotion, every vice, every virtue of all that brilliant race of hers."

"You seem to know," he said, amus-

"I know. Major Belwether told me that he had thought of Howard as an anchor for her. It seemed a pity-Howard with all his cold, heavy negative inertia. I said I'd do it. I did. And now I don't know. I wish, almost wish I hadn't."

"What has changed your ideas?" "I don't know. Howard is safer than Stephen Siward, already in the first ilt ocean, grave gray eyes brightening clutches of his master vice. Would you mate what she luberits from ber mother and her mother's mother with what is that poor boy's heritage from the Siwards?"

She held her horse to a walk, ridoccupied with a new problem, only part of which she had told her hus-

For that night she had been awakened in her bed to find standing beside her a white, wide eyed figure, shivering, limbs a chill beneath her clinging lace. She bud taken the pallid visitor soothed her and whispered to her, murmuring the thousand little words and sounds, the breathing magic mothers use with children.

Driven she knew not why, Sylvia had crept from her room in search of the still, warm, fragrant nest and the whispered reassurance and the caress she had never before endured. Yes, now she craved it, invited it, longed for safe arms around her, the hover ing hand on her hair. Was this Sylvin?

And Grace Ferrall, clearing her sleepy eyes, amazed, incredulous of the cold, childlike hands upon her shoulders, caught her in her arms with a little laugh and sob and drew her to her breast, to soothe and caress and reassure, to make up to her all she could of what is every child's just heritage.

And for a long while Sylvia, lying there, told her nothing-because she did not know how-merely a word, a restless question half ashamed, barely enough to shadow forth the something "Kemp, I'm not. She'd be mad not stirring her toward an awakening in new world.

And at length, gravely, innocently, she spoke of her engagement and the worldly possibilities before her, of the man she was to marry and her new and unexpected sense of loneliness in his presence now that she had seen bim again after months.

She spoke presently of Siward, a fugitive question or two offered in iifferently at first, then with shy persistence and curiosity, knowing nothing ish face turned back toward him over of the senseless form flung face downher shoulder. "You're presenting your ward across the sheets in a room close cousin and his millions to a girl who by. And thereafter the murmured burlen of the theme was Siward until one, heavy eyed, turned from the white dawn silvering the windows, signed and fell asleep, and one lay silent, head half buried in its tangled gold wide awake, thinking vague thoughts that had no ending, no beginning. And at last a rosy bar of light fell across the wall, and the warm shadows faded from corner and curtain, and, turning on the pillow, her face nestled in her bair, she fell asleep.

Nothing of this had Mrs. Ferrall told her husband. Nothing of this could her husband understand had she words to convey it. There was nothing he need understand except that his wife. meaning well, had meddled and re-

gretted. And now, turning in her saddle with pretty gesture of her shoulders: "I meddle no more! Those who need me may come to me. Now laugh at my tardy wisdom, Kemp! The mis-

chief take Howard Quarrier!" "Amen! Come on, race." She gathered bridle. "Do you suppose Stephen Siward is going to make

trouble?" "How can he unless she helps him?

Nonsense! All's well with Siward and Sylvia. Shall we gallop?" All was very well with Siward and

Sylvia. They had passed the rabbit brier country scathless, with two black mallard, a jack snipe and a rabbit to the credit of their score, and were now advancing through that dimly lit en chanted land of tall gray alders where in the sudden twillight of the leaves woodcock after woodcock fluttered upward twittering, only to stop and drop. transformed at the vicious crack of Siward's gun to fluffy balls of feather whirling earthward from micair.

Sagamore came galloping back with a soft, unsolled mass of chestnut and brown feathers in his mouth. Siward took the dead cock, passed it back to the keeper who followed them, patted the beautiful, eager dog and signaled him forward once more.

"You should have fired that time," be said to Sylvia-"that is, if you care to kill anything."

"But I don't seem to be able to," she said. "It isn't a bit like shooting at clay targets. The twittering whire takes me by surprise-it's all so charmingly sudden-and my beart seems to stop in one beat, and I look and look. and then, whisk, and woodcock is gone, leaving me breathless."

Her voice ceased. The white setter, cutting up his ground shead, had stopped, rigid, one leg raised, jaws quivering and looking alternately.

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(To be centinued)

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