

# The Fighting Chance

ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

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

(A continued story.)

"I mean for you and me to try to understand each other."

"For us?" asked Plank, raising his blond eyebrows. "Do you mean Amalgamated Electric and Intercounty Interpersonally?"

"I mean for us personally. We are wasting opportunities. This whole matter is involving us in a tangle of litigation requiring our constant efforts, constant attention."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Quarrier, but you take it too seriously. I have found in this affair nothing except a rather agreeable mental exhilaration."

"Mr. Plank, if you are not inclined to be serious—"

"I am," said Plank so savagely that Quarrier, startled, could not doubt him. "I like this sort of thing, Mr. Quarrier. Anything that is hard to overcome I like to overcome. The pleasure in life to me is to win out. I am fighting you with the greatest possible satisfaction to myself."

"Perhaps you see victory ahead," said Quarrier calmly.

"I do, Mr. Quarrier, I do, but not in the manner you fear I may hope for it."

Quarrier said without emotion, "I repeat that it would be easy for you and me to merge our differences on a basis absolutely satisfactory to you and to me—and to Harrington."

"You are mistaken," said Plank, rising. "Good afternoon."

Quarrier rose too. "You decline to discuss the matter?" he asked.

"It has been discussed sufficiently."

"Then why did you come here?"

"To see for myself how afraid of me you really are," said Plank. "Now I know, and so do you. Mr. Quarrier, I want to tell you something. Never before in business differences has private indignation against any individual interfered or modified my course of action. It does now, but it does not dictate my policy toward you; it merely, as I say, modifies it. I am perfectly aware of what I am doing, what social disaster I am inviting by this attitude toward you personally, what financial destruction I am courting in arousing the wrath of the Algonquin Trust company and of the powerful interests entrenched behind Intercounty Electric. I know what the lobby is; I know what judge cannot be counted on; I know my pecc and my chances, every one, and I take them—every one. For it is a good fight, Mr. Quarrier. It will be talked of for years to come wonderingly, not because of your effrontery, not because of my obstinacy, but because such monstrous immorality could ever have existed in this land of ours. Your name, Harrington's, mine, will have become utterly forgotten long, long before the horror of these present conditions shall cease to be remembered."

He stretched out one ponderous arm, pointing full between Quarrier's unwinking eyes.

"Take your fighting chance—it is the cleanest thing you ever touched—and use it cleanly, or there'll be no mercy shown you when your time comes."

Let the courts alone. Do you hear me? Let the legislature alone. Keep your manicured hands off the ermine. And tell Harrington to shove his own cold, splay fingers into his own pocket for a change. They'll be warmer than his feet by this time next year."

For a moment he towered there—powerful, bulky, menacing—then his arm

dropped heavily, the old stolid expression came back into his face, leaving it calm, bovine, almost stupid again. And he turned, moving slowly toward the door, holding his hat carefully in his gloved hand.

Stepping out of the elevator on the ground floor, he encountered Mortimer and halted instinctively. He had not seen Mortimer for weeks; neither had Lella, and now he looked at him inquiringly, disturbed at his battered and bloodshot appearance.

"Oh," said Mortimer, "you down here?"

"Have you been out of town?" asked Plank cautiously.

Mortimer nodded and started to pass on toward the bronze cage of the elevator, but something seemed to occur to him suddenly. He checked his pace, turned and waddled after Plank, re-

joining him on the marble steps of the rotunda.

"Look here," he said, "I promised you something once, didn't I?"

"Did you?" said Plank, with his bland, expressionless stare of an overgrown baby.

"Oh, cut that out! You know I did, and when I say a thing I make good. D'ye see?"

"I don't see," said Plank, "what you are talking about."

"I'm talking about what I said I'd do for you. Haven't I made good? Haven't I put you into everything I said I would? Don't you go every-where? Don't people ask you every-where?"

"Yes, in a way," said Plank wearily. "I am very grateful. I always will be. Can I do anything for you, Leroy?"

Mortimer had attended a "killing" at Desmond's and, as usual, had provided the piece de resistance for his soft voiced host. All he wanted was a temporary deposit to tide over matters. He had never approached Plank in vain, and he did not do so now, for Plank had a pocket check book and a stylus.

"It's little to ask, isn't it?" he muttered resentfully. "That will only square matters with Desmond. It doesn't leave me anything to go on with." And he pocketed his check with a scowl.

Plank was discreetly silent.

"And that is not what I chased you for, either," continued Mortimer. "Beverly, old boy, I've got a certain meaty faced hypocrite where any decent man would like to have him—by the scruff of his neck. He's fit only to kick, and I'm going to kick him good and plenty, and in the process he's going to let go of several things. One of 'em's yours."

Plank looked at him.

"I told you once that I'd let you know when to step up and say 'Good evening,' didn't I?"

Plank continued to stare.

"Didn't I?" repeated Mortimer peevishly, beginning to lose countenance.

"I don't understand you," said Plank, "and I don't think I want to understand you."

"What do you mean?" demanded Mortimer thickly. "Don't you want to marry that girl?" But he shrank dismayed under the slow blaze that lighted Plank's blue eyes.

"All right," he stammered, struggling to his fat legs and instinctively backing away. "I thought you meant business. I—what the devil do I care who you marry! It's the last time I try to do anything for you or for anybody else!"

Plank gazed at him for a moment. The anger in his face died out.

"I am not ungrateful," he said. "You may say almost anything except that, Leroy. I am not disloyal, no matter what else I may be. But you have made a bad mistake. So let us forget the matter."

But Mortimer, keenly appreciative of the pleasures of being misunderstood, squeezed some moisture out of his distended eyes and sat down, a martyr to his emotions. "To think," he gulped, "that you of all men should turn on me like this!"

"I didn't mean to. Can't you understand, Leroy, that you hurt me?"

"Hurt nothing!" retorted Mortimer indignantly. "You've had sensation battered out of you by this time. I guess society has landed you a few while I was boosting you over the out-works. There's another lady, that's all."

"Let it go at that, then," said Plank, reddening. "And now let me ask you a question—where were you going when I met you?"

"What do you want to know for?" asked Mortimer sullenly.

"Why, I'll tell you, Leroy. If you have any idea of identifying yourself with Quarrier's people, of seeking him at this juncture with the expectation of investing any money in his schemes, you had better not do so."

"Investing?" sneered Mortimer. "Well, no, not exactly, having nothing to invest, thanks to my being swindled into joining his Amalgamated Electric gang. Don't worry. If there's any shaking down to be done I'll do it, my friend." And he rose and started toward the elevators.

"Wait," said Plank. "Why, man,

you can't frighten Quarrier. What did you sell your holdings for? Why didn't you come to us—to me? What's the use of going to Quarrier now and scolding? You can't scare a man like that."

Mortimer fairly grinned in his face. "Your big mistake," he sneered, "is in undervaluing others. I want you to understand a few things, my friend, and one of them is that I'm not afraid of Quarrier, and another is I'm not afraid of you!"

"Leroy"—

"No, not afraid of you either!" repeated Mortimer, with an ugly stare. "You keep a civil tongue in your head after this—do you understand?—and we'll get on all right. If you don't, I've the means to make you!"

"Are you crazy?"

"Not a bit of it! Too sane for you and Lella to hoodwink!"

"You are crazy!" repeated Plank, aghast.

"Am I? You and Lella can take the matter into court if you want to—unless I do. And—here he leaned forward, showing his teeth again—"the next time you kiss her close the door!"

Then he went away up the marble steps and entered an elevator, and Plank, grave and pale, went out into the street and entered his big touring car. But the drive up town and through the sunlit park gave him no pleasure, and he entered his great house with a heavy, lifeless step, head bent, as though counting every crevice in the stones under his lagging feet. For the first time in all his life he was afraid of a man.

The man he was afraid of had gone directly to Quarrier's office, missing the gentleman he was seeking by such a small fraction of a minute that he realized they must have passed each other in the elevators, he ascending while Quarrier was descending.

Furious to think of the time he had wasted with Plank, he crawled into a hansom and bade the driver take him to a number he gave, designating one of the new limestone basement houses on the upper west side.

All the way up town as he jolted about in his seat he angrily regretted the meeting with Plank even in spite of the check. What demon had possessed him to boast—to display his hand when there had been no necessity? Plank was still ready to give him aid at a crisis, had always been ready. Time enough when Plank turned stingy to use persuasion.

He lay back, rolling about in the jouncing cab, scowling at space.

"I'll shake down Quarrier," he said to himself. "I'll make him pay for his treachery—scaring me out of Amalgamated! That will be restitution, not extortion!"

He was angry because he had been for days screwing up his courage to the point of seeking Quarrier face to face. He had not wished to do it. The scene and his own attitude in it could only be repugnant to him, although he continually explained to himself that it was restitution, not extortion.

"Oh," he groaned, "what an ass I am!" And he got out of his cab in front of a very new limestone basement house with red geraniums blooming on the window sills and let him-

self in with a latchkey.

The interior of the house was attractive in a rather bright, new, clean fashion. The maid, too, who appeared at the sound of the closing door and took his hat and gloves was as newly groomed as the floors and woodwork and so noiseless as to be conspicuous in her swift, silent movements.

"Anybody here?" he growled, leaning into the drawing room at a tiny grand piano cased in unvarnished Circassian walnut.

"There is nobody at home, sir," said the maid.

He began to ascend the stairway, breathing heavily, thud, thud over the deep velvet strip, his fat hand grasping the banister rail.

Somewhere on the second floor a small dog barked, and Mortimer traversed the hall and opened the door into a room hung with gold Spanish leather and pale green curtains.

"Hello, Tinto!" he said affably as a tiny Japanese spaniel hurled herself at him, barking furiously, then began writhing and weaving herself about him, gurgling recognition and welcome.

Presently another maid entered, with an apple cut into thin wafers and a decanter of port, and Mortimer lay back in his chair, sipping his apple in the thick, crimson wine and feeding morsels of the combination to himself and to Tinto at intervals until the apple was all gone and the decanter three-fourths empty.

It was very still in the room—so still that Mortimer, opening his eyes at longer and longer intervals to peer at the door, finally opened them no more.

It was still daylight when Mortimer awoke, conscious of people about him. As he opened his eyes a man laughed. Several people seated by the windows joined in. He yawned, laughed, turning his heavy eyes from one to another, recognizing a couple of young girls at the window. He didn't want to get up, but there is in the society he now adorned a stringency of etiquette known as "re-finement" and which to ignore is to become unpopular.

So he got on to his massive legs and went over to shake hands with a gravity becoming the ceremony.

"How d'ye do, Miss Hutchinson? Thought you were at Asbury Park. How do do, Miss Del Garcia? Have you been out in Millbank's motor yet?"

"We broke down at McGowan's pass," said Miss Del Garcia, laughing the laugh that had made her so attractive in "A Word to the Wise."

"Muddy gasoline," nodded Millbank tersely, an iron jawed, overgrown man of forty with a florid face shaved blue.

"We passed Mr. Plank's big touring car," observed Lydia Vyse, shifting Tinto to the couch and brushing the black and white hairs from her automobile coat. "How much does a car like that cost, Leroy?"

"About twenty-five thousand," he said gloomily. Then, looking up: "Hold on, Millbank. Don't be going. Why can't you all dine with us? Never mind your car. Ours is all right, and we'll run out into the country for dinner. How about it, Miss Del Garcia?"

But both Miss Del Garcia and Miss Hutchinson had accepted another in-

itation, in which Millbank was also included.

They stood about, veils floating, leather decorated coats thrown back, lingering for awhile to talk the garage talk which fascinates people of their type. Then Millbank looked at the clock, made his adieu to Lydia, nodded significantly to Mortimer and followed the others downstairs.

There was something amiss with his motor, for it made a startling racket in the street, finally plunging forward with a kick.

Lydia laughed as the two young girls in the tonneau turned to nod to her in mock despair. Then she came running back upstairs, holding her skirt free from her hurrying little feet.

"Well?" she inquired, as Mortimer turned back from the window to confront her.

"I missed him," said Mortimer. She flung the coat over a chair, stood a moment, her fingers busy with her hair pins, then sat down on the couch, taking Tinto into her lap. She was very pretty, dark, slim, marvelously graceful in her every movement.

"Can't you see him tomorrow?" she asked.

"I suppose so," said Mortimer slowly. "Oh, Lord! How I hate this business!"

"Hasn't he misused your confidence? Hasn't he taken your money?" she asked. "It may be unpleasant for you to make him unbet, but you're a coward if you don't!"

"I wish I'd held fast now. I never supposed Plank would take hold. It was that driving old Belweather who scared me stiff! The minute I saw him scurrying to cover like a slinged cat I was fool enough to climb the first tree. I've had my lesson, little girl."

"I hope you'll give Howard his. Somebody ought to," she said quietly.

About half past 8 they dined in a white and pink dining room furnished in dull gray walnut and served by a stealthy, white haired, plink skinned butler.

They had planned to go for a spin in Mortimer's motor after dinner, but in view of the Quarrier fiasco neither was in the mood for anything.

"Do you know, Leroy," she observed as they left the table and sauntered back into the pale blue drawing room, "do you know that the servants haven't been paid for three months?"

"Oh, for heaven's sake," he expostulated, "don't begin that sort of thing. I get enough of that at home. I get it every time I show my nose!"

(To be continued.)

Miss Myrtle Parker of Independence is going to Port and to work as a trimmer in a wholesale millinery establishment. She will room with Miss Bertha Bohannon who is also working there.

"Can't you see him tomorrow?" she asked.

"I suppose so," said Mortimer slowly. "Oh, Lord! How I hate this business!"

"Hasn't he misused your confidence? Hasn't he taken your money?" she asked. "It may be unpleasant for you to make him unbet, but you're a coward if you don't!"

"I wish I'd held fast now. I never supposed Plank would take hold. It was that driving old Belweather who scared me stiff! The minute I saw him scurrying to cover like a slinged cat I was fool enough to climb the first tree. I've had my lesson, little girl."

"I hope you'll give Howard his. Somebody ought to," she said quietly.

About half past 8 they dined in a white and pink dining room furnished in dull gray walnut and served by a stealthy, white haired, plink skinned butler.

They had planned to go for a spin in Mortimer's motor after dinner, but in view of the Quarrier fiasco neither was in the mood for anything.

"Do you know, Leroy," she observed as they left the table and sauntered back into the pale blue drawing room, "do you know that the servants haven't been paid for three months?"

"Oh, for heaven's sake," he expostulated, "don't begin that sort of thing. I get enough of that at home. I get it every time I show my nose!"

(To be continued.)

Miss Myrtle Parker of Independence is going to Port and to work as a trimmer in a wholesale millinery establishment. She will room with Miss Bertha Bohannon who is also working there.

"Can't you see him tomorrow?" she asked.

"I suppose so," said Mortimer slowly. "Oh, Lord! How I hate this business!"

"Hasn't he misused your confidence? Hasn't he taken your money?" she asked. "It may be unpleasant for you to make him unbet, but you're a coward if you don't!"

"I wish I'd held fast now. I never supposed Plank would take hold. It was that driving old Belweather who scared me stiff! The minute I saw him scurrying to cover like a slinged cat I was fool enough to climb the first tree. I've had my lesson, little girl."

"I hope you'll give Howard his. Somebody ought to," she said quietly.

About half past 8 they dined in a white and pink dining room furnished in dull gray walnut and served by a stealthy, white haired, plink skinned butler.

They had planned to go for a spin in Mortimer's motor after dinner, but in view of the Quarrier fiasco neither was in the mood for anything.

"Do you know, Leroy," she observed as they left the table and sauntered back into the pale blue drawing room, "do you know that the servants haven't been paid for three months?"

"Oh, for heaven's sake," he expostulated, "don't begin that sort of thing. I get enough of that at home. I get it every time I show my nose!"

(To be continued.)

Miss Myrtle Parker of Independence is going to Port and to work as a trimmer in a wholesale millinery establishment. She will room with Miss Bertha Bohannon who is also working there.



"Take your fighting chance."



"Let it go at that, then."

## Bishop's Ready Tailored Clothes

### Men's and Boy's Suits Discounted One-Fourth to One-Half

DON'T WAIT FOR THEM TO GET CHEAPER IN PRICE. WE ARE OFFERING OUR HIGH GRADE LINE OF MEN'S SUITS TO YOU AT ABOUT COST PRICE. MANY WE ARE SELLING AT LESS THAN MANUFACTURERS' COST.

#### BISHOP'S READY TAILORED LINE AS FOLLOWS:

\$35.00 SUITS NOW	\$28.00
\$30.00 SUITS NOW	\$24.00
\$25.00 SUITS NOW	\$20.00
\$20.00 SUITS NOW	\$16.00
\$15.00 SUITS NOW	\$12.50

BOYS' SHORT PANTS SUITS, INCLUDING SOME PATTERNS IN THE THREE-PIECE SUITS, WE ARE SELLING AT ONE-HALF PRICE. THEY ARE OUR LEADING BRANDS OF SCHOOL SUITS. EVERY MOTHER SHOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THESE REDUCTIONS, THE LIMITED NUMBER NECESSITATES QUICK BUYING.

## SALEM WOOLEN MILL STORE

SALEM, OREGON