

The Fighting Chance

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(A continued story.)

"That little remembrance for old time's sake. Don't you recollect?"

"No," said Quarrier.
"Why, Howard! Didn't you promise me all sorts of things when I wanted to go to your friend, Mr. Seward, and explain that it was not his fault I got into the Patrons club? Don't you remember I felt dreadfully that he was expelled—that I was simply wild to write to the governors and tell them how I took Merkle's clothes and drove to the club and waited until I saw a lot of men go in and then crowded in with the push?"

Mortimer was staring at Quarrier out of his protruding eyes. The girl leaned forward, deliberate, self possessed, the red lips edged with growing scorn.



"That is the amount," she said.

Quarrier looked at the pad which she had tossed upon the desk. Then he slowly wetted his pen with ink and, laying the loose check flat, began to fill it in. Afterward he dried it and, reading it carefully, pushed it aside and rose.

"It wouldn't be advisable for you to stop payment, you know," observed Mortimer insolently, lying back in his chair and stretching his legs.

"I know," said Quarrier, pausing to turn on them a deathly stare. Then he went away. After awhile they heard the door close. But there was no sound from the electric hansom, and Mortimer rose and walked to the window.

"He's gone," he said.
Lydia stood at the desk examining the check.

"We ought to afford a decent touring car now," she suggested—"like that yellow and black car of Mr. Plank's."

Plank scarcely noticed what the press said of him. He was too busy; his days were full days, brimming over deep into the night. Undaunted, inexorable, slow to the verge of stupidity at times, at times swift as a startled tiger, this new, amazing personality steadily developing, looming higher, heavier, athwart the financial horizon, in stature holding his own among giants, then growing gradually, inch by inch, dominated his surrounding level sky line.

Harrington, old, hoary, seamed, scarred, maimed in onslaughts of long forgotten battles, looked long and hard upon this weird of his own dead youth which now rose towering to confront him, menacing him with the armed point of the same shield behind which he himself had so long found shelter—the law!

The closing of the courts enforced armed truces along certain lines of Plank's battle front, the adjournment of the legislature emptied Albany. Once it was rumored that Plank had passed an entire morning with the governor of the greatest state in the Union and that the conference was to be repeated. A swarm of newspaper men settled about the governor's summer cottage at Saratoga, but they learned nothing, nor could they find a trace of Plank's tracks in the trodden trails of the great spa.

Besides, the racing had begun. Desmond, Burbank, Sneed and others of the gilded guild had opened new club-houses. There was plenty of copy for newspaper men without the daily speculative paragraph devoted to the doings of Beverly Plank. Some scandal, too—but newspapers never touch that. And after all it was nobody's affair that Leroy Mortimer drove a large yellow and black touring car, new model, all over Saratoga county. Perhaps the similarity of machines gave rise to the rumor of Plank's presence; perhaps not, because the car was often driven by a tall, slender girl with dark eyes and hair, and nobody ever saw that sort of pretty woman in Plank's car or saw Leroy Mortimer for many days without a companion of that species.

Mortimer's health was excellent. The races had not proved remunerative, however, and his new motor car was horribly expensive. So was Lydia. And he began to be seriously afraid that by the end of August he would be obliged to apply to Quarrier once more for some slight temporary token of that gentleman's good will. He told Lydia this, and she seemed to agree with him. This pleased him. She had not pleased him very much recently. For one thing she was becoming too friendly with some of his friends, Desmond in particular.

Plank, it was known, had opened his great house at Black Fells. His servants, gamekeepers, were there, his stables, kennels, greenhouses, model stock farm—all had been put in immaculate condition pending the advent of the master. But Plank had not appeared. His new seagoing steam yacht Siwanoa still lay in the East river, and at rare intervals a significant glimmer of bunting disclosed the owner's presence aboard for an hour or two.

The Ferralls were at Shotover with their first installment of guests. Sylvia was there. Quarrier expected, because Kemp Ferrall's break with him was not a social one, and Grace's real affection for Sylvia blinded neither her nor her husband to the material and social importance of the intimacy. Seward was not invited. Neither had an invitation to him been even discussed in view of what Grace was aware of and what everybody knew concerning the implacable relations existing between him personally and Howard Quarrier.

Bridge, yachting and motoring were the August sports. The shooting set had not yet arrived, of course—in fact, there was still another relay expected before the season opened and brought the shooting coterie for the first two weeks. But Sylvia was expected to last through and hold over with a brief interlude for a week's end at Lenox. So was Quarrier, and Grace, always animated by a deep but harmless malice, hoped to heaven that Plank might arrive before Quarrier left.

"Oh, to see them together in a small room," she sighed ecstatically in Sylvia's ear. "I'd certainly poke them up if they only turned around sulkily in the corners of the cage and evinced a desire to lie down."

"What a mischief maker you are!" said Sylvia listlessly.

There seemed, in fact, little to interest her that summer at Shotover

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE heat, which had been severe in June, driving the last fashionable loiterer into the country, continued fiercely throughout July. August was stifling.

Nobody who was anybody remained in town except some wealthy business men and their million odd employees, but the million, being nobodies, didn't count.

Quarrier's huge limestone mansion, looming golden in the sun, was tenantless. Its owner, closing even The Sedges, his Long Island house, and driven northward for a breath of air, was expected at Shotover.

The house of Mrs. Mortimer was closed and boarded up. A caretaker apparently guarded Major Belwether's house, peeping out at intervals from behind the basement windows. As for Plank's great pile of masonry edging the outer hundreds in the north, several lighted windows were to be seen in it at night, and a big yellow and black touring car whizzed down town from its bronze gateway every morning with perfect regularity.

For there was a fight on that had steadily grown hotter with the weather and Plank had little time to concern himself with the temperature or to mop his red features over the weather bureau report. Harrington and Quarrier were after him—horse, foot and dragons. Harrington had even taken a house at Seabright in order to be near in person, and Quarrier's move from Long Island to Shotover House was not as flippant as it might appear, for he had his private car there and a locomotive at Black Fells Crossing station, and he was within striking distance of Rochester, Utica, Syracuse and Albany, which was what Harrington thought necessary.

The noise of the fray in the papers, which had first excited then stunned the outside public, continued in a delirium of rumor, report, forecast and summing up at the week's end.

Scare heads involving everybody and everything, from the district attorney to Plank's office boy, succeeded one another. Plank's name headed column after column. Already becoming familiar in the society and financial sections, it began to appear in neighboring paragraphs.

House. Her interest, too, in people had seemingly been extinguished. Once or twice she did enquire as to Marion's whereabouts and learned that Miss Page was fishing in Minnesota somewhere, but would return

to Shotover when the shooting opened. Somebody, Captain Voucher perhaps, mentioned to somebody in her hearing that Seward was still in New York.

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(To be continued.)

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