

# The Fighting Chance

ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

Copyright, 1906, by the Curtis Publishing Company.  
Copyright, 1908, by Robert W. Chambers.

(A continued story.)

The hot mouth dragged on. Quarrier came. Agatha Calhoun arrived a few days later—scheme of the Ferraris involving Alderdene—but the Swanoos did not come, and Plank remained invisible. Lella Mortimer arrived from Swan's Harbor toward the middle of the month, offering no information as to the whereabouts of what Major Belwether delicately designated as her "legitimate." But everybody knew he was at last to be crossed off and struck clean out, and the ugly history of the winter, now so impudently corroborated at Saratoga, gave many a hostess the opportunity long desired.

"Gad," said Alderdene, "she's well rid of him!"

"A suit before a referee would settle him," mused Voucher. "He hasn't a leg to stand on. Lord, the same cat that tripped up Stephen Sward!"

Fleetwood's quick eyes glimmered for an instant in Quarrier's direction. Quarrier was in the billiard room, out of earshot, practicing balk line problems with Major Belwether, and Fleetwood said: "The same cat that tripped up Stephen Sward. Yes. But who let her loose?"

"It was your dinner. You ought to know," said Voucher bluntly.

"I do know. He brought her," nodding toward the billiard room.

"Belwether?"

"No," yawned Fleetwood.

Somebody said presently: "Isn't he one of the governors? Oh, I say, that was rather rough on Sward, though." Sylvia, passing the hall, glanced in through the gunroom door with an absent-minded smile at the men and their laughing greeting as they rose with uplifted glasses to salute her.

"The sweetest of all," observed a man, disconsolately emptying his glass. "Oh, irony! What a marriage!"

Beverly Plank had no time for anything outside of his own particular business except to go every day to the big, darkened house in lower Fifth avenue where the days had been hard on Sward and the nights harder.

Sward, however, could walk now, using his crutches still, but often stopping to gently rest his left foot and see how much weight he was able to bear on it, even taking a tentative step or two without crutch support. He drove when he thought it prudent to use the horses in the heat, usually very early in the morning, though sometimes at night with Plank when the latter had time to run his touring car through the park and out into the Bronx or Westchester for a breath of air.

But Plank wanted him to go away, get out of the city for his convalescence, and Sward flatly declined, demanding that Plank permit him to do his share in the fight against the Inter-county people.

When it was that he first began to like Plank very much he could not exactly remember. He was not perhaps aware of how much he liked him. Plank's unexpected fits of shyness, of formality, often and often amused him. But there was a subtler feeling under the unexpressed amusement and, beneath all, a constantly increasing substratum of respect. Too, he found himself curiously at ease with Plank as with one born to his own caste. And this feeling, unconscious, but more and more apparent, meant more to Plank than anything that had ever happened to him.

Then one sultry day toward the last week in August a certain judge of a certain court, known among some as "Harrington's judge," sent secretly for Plank. And Plank knew that the crisis was over. But neither Harrington nor Quarrier dreamed of such a thing.

Fear sat heavy on that judge's soul—the godless, selfish fear that sends



Fear sat heavy on that judge's soul.

the first coward slinking from the councils of conspiracy to seek immunity from those slowly grinding millstones that grind exceeding fine.

Quarrier at Shotover, with his private car and his locomotive within an hour's drive, strolled with Sylvia on the eve of her departure for Lenox with Lella Mortimer; then when their conference was ended he returned to Agatha calmly unconscious of impending events.

Harrington at Seabright paced his veranda awaiting this same judge, annoyed as two boats came in without the expected guest. And never for one

instant did he dream that his creature sat closeted with Plank, tremulous, sal-low, nearing the edge of cringing avowal, only held back from utter collapse by the agonizing necessity of completing a bargain that might save himself from the degradation of the punishment that had seemed inevitable. All day long he sat with Plank. Nobody except those two knew he was there. And after a very long time Plank consented that nobody else except Sward and Harrington and Quarrier should ever know. So he called up Harrington on the telephone, saying that there was in the office somebody who desired to speak to him. And when Harrington caught the judge's first faint, stammered word he reeled where he stood, ashen, unbelieving, speechless.

Harrington was an old man, a very old man, mortally hurt, but he steadied himself along the wall of his study to the desk and sank into the chair.

After a little while he passed a thin hand over his eyes, over his gray head, over the mouth that all men watched with fear, over the shaven jaw now grimly set but trembling. His hand, too, shook with palsy as he wrote, painfully picking out the words and figures of the cipher from his code book, but he closed his thin lips and squared his unsteady jaw and wrote his message to Quarrier:

It is all up. Plank will take over Inter-county. Come at once.

Plank slept the sleep of utter exhaustion that night. The morning found him haggard, but strong, cool in his triumph, serious, stern faced, almost sad that his work was done, the battle won.

From his own house he telegraphed a curt summons to Harrington and to Quarrier for a conference in his own office, then, finishing whatever business his morning mail required, put on his hat and went to see the one man in the world he was most glad for.

"It's all over, Sward," he said, with a laugh. "Harrington knows it. Quarrier knows it by this time. Their judge crawled in yesterday and threw himself on our mercy, and the men whose whip he obeyed will be on their way to surrender by this time. Well, haven't you a word?"

"Many," said Sward slowly, "too many to utter, but not enough to express what I feel. If you will take two on account here they are in one phrase—thank you."

"Debt's canceled," said Plank, laughing. "Do you want to hear the details?"

The narrative exchanged by Plank in return for Sward's intensely interested questions was a simple, limpid review of a short but terrific campaign that only yesterday had threatened to rage through court after court, year after year. In the sudden shock of the cessation from battle, Plank himself was a little dazed. Yet he himself had expected the treason that ended all. He himself had foreseen it.

"Plank," said Sward at last, "there is nothing in the world that men admire more than a man. It is a good deal of a privilege for me to tell you so."

Plank turned red with surprise and embarrassment, stammering out something incoherent.

That was all that was said about the victory. Sward, unusually gay for awhile, presently turned somber, and it was Plank's turn to lift him out of it by careless remarks about his rapid convalescence and the chance for vacation he so much needed.

Once Sward looked up vacantly. "Where am I to go?" he asked. "I'd as soon stay here."

"But I'm going," insisted Plank. "The Fells is all ready for us."

"The Fells! I can't go there!"

"You once promised!"

"Plank, I'll go anywhere except there with you. I'd rather be with you than with anybody. Can I say more than that?"

"I think you ought to, Sward. A fellow feels the refusal of his offered roof-tree."

"Man! Man! It isn't your roof I am refusing. I want to go. I'd give anything to go. If it were anywhere except where it is, I'd go fast enough. Now do you understand? If—if Shot-over House and Shotover people were not next door to the Fells I'd go. Do you know what's the matter with me, Plank?"

"I think so."

"I have wondered. I wonder now how much you know."

"Very little, Sward."

"How much?"

Plank looked up, hesitated and shook his head. "One infers from what one

hears."

**POLK'S GAZETTEER**  
A Business Directory of each City, Town and Village in Oregon and Washington, giving a Descriptive Sketch of each place, Location, Shipping Facilities and a Classified Directory of each Business and Profession.  
R. L. POLK & CO., Inc.  
Seattle, Wash.

**Electric Bitters**  
Succeed when everything else fails. In nervous prostration and female weaknesses they are the supreme remedy, as thousands have testified.  
**FOR KIDNEY, LIVER AND STOMACH TROUBLE**  
It is the best medicine ever sold over a druggist's counter.

**NOW IS THE BEST TIME**



of the year to have your teeth put and plate and bridge work done. For out-of-town patrons we finish plate and bridge work in one day if necessary.

- PRICES:**  
Metal Crowns \$5.00  
22k Bridge Teeth 3.50  
Gold Fillings 1.00  
Enamel Fillings 1.00  
Silver Fillings .50  
Good Rubber Plate 5.00  
Best Rubber Plates 7.50  
Painless Extraction .50

**Wise Dental Co.**  
INCORPORATED  
Painless Dentists  
Felling Building, Third & Washington, PORTLAND, OREGON  
Office Hours: 9 A. M. to 6 P. M. Sundays, 9 to 1

**THE PACIFIC HOMESTEAD**

Do you read it? It's a weekly paper, adapted especially for the Pacific Coast farmer. Subscription price \$1.50 a year. Wait. You can read it and the Independence Enterprise for one year, 104 copies—52 of Pacific Homestead and 52 of Independence Enterprise—for the price of one, \$1.50. By special arrangement we are able to offer our readers this rate. Send in your subscriptions now. Remember \$1.50 for both. Pay either office and mention this advertisement to secure the two papers. This offer is only to new subscribers of the Enterprise.  
**INDEPENDENCE ENTERPRISE**

"Infers what?"  
"The truth, I suppose," replied Plank simply.  
"And what?" insisted Sward, "have you inferred that you believe to be the truth? Don't parry, Plank. It isn't easy for me, and I—I never before

spoke this way to any man. It is likely I should have spoken to my mother about it. I had expected to. It may be weakness—I don't know, but I'd like to talk a little about it to somebody. And there's nobody fit to listen, except you. You know what a pillow

is a tired man's shoulders. I want to use your good intelligence to rest on a moment. It's my brain that's tired, Plank."

Dr. Allin, Dentist, Cooper Bldg. 12

**S. Gross**

**WILL OPEN**  
in the  
**Campbell Building**  
on or about  
**SATURDAY,**  
**AUG. 27**  
with a complete line of  
**Dry Goods, Clothing,**  
**Furnishing Goods**  
and **Shoes**

**Bishop's Ready Tailored Clothes**

**EXTRA SPECIAL THIS WEEK**

**Boys' School Suit Sale**  
**\$2.50**

THIS IS, WITHOUT QUESTION, THE GREATEST MONEY SAVING SALE IN BOYS' SUITS TO BE FOUND.

**SAVE YOUR COUPONS**

THE ASSORTMENT INCLUDES HEAVY WEIGHT MATERIALS, NONE OF WHICH RETAIL FOR LESS THAN \$4.00, ALL COLORS AND SIZES. REMEMBER THE SALE WILL CLOSE SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 27. BE FIRST WHILE THE SIZE RANGE IS COMPLETE.

**SALEM WOOLEN MILL STORE**

SALEM, OREGON