

The Fighting Chance

ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

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

(A continued story.)

"Yes, we are dining out."

"I'm sorry I didn't wire you, because we might have dined together. I saw Plank this afternoon. He did not say you were to dine with him. Shall I see you later in the evening, Sylvia?"

"I—it will be too late."

"Oh, tomorrow then! What train do you take?"

Sylvia did not answer. He picked up his hat, repeating the question earnestly, and still she made no reply.

"Shall I see you tomorrow?" he asked, swinging on her rather suddenly.

"I think—not I—there will be no time."

He bowed quietly to Lella, offering his hand. "Who did you say was to dine with you—besides Plank?"

Lella stood silent, then, withdrawing her fingers, walked to the window.

Quarrier, his hat in his gloved hands, looked from one to the other, his inquiring eyes returning and focused on Sylvia.

"Who are you dining with?" he asked with authority.

"Mr. Plank and Mr. Seward."

"Mr. Seward," he repeated in surprised displeasure, as though he had not already divined it.

"Yes—a man I like."

"A man I dislike," he rejoined with the slightest emphasis.

"I am sorry," she said simply.

"So am I, Sylvia. And I am going to ask you to make him an excuse. Any excuse will do."

"Excuse? What do you mean, Howard?"

"I mean that I do not care to have you seen with Mr. Seward. Have I ever demanded very much of you, Sylvia? Very well, I demand this of you now."

And still she stood there, her eyes wide, her color gone, repeating: "Excuse? What excuse? What do you mean by 'excuse,' Howard?"

"I have told you. You know my wishes. If he has a telephone you can communicate with him."

"And say that I—that you forbid me?"

"If you choose. Yes, say that I object to him. Is there anything extraordinary in a man objecting to his future wife dining in the country at a common inn with a notorious outcast from every decent club and circle in New York?"

"What!" she whispered, white as death. "What did you say?"

"Shall I repeat what everybody except you seems to be aware of? Do you care to have me explain to you exactly why decent people have ostracized this man with whom you are proposing to figure in a public resort?"

He turned to Lella, who stood at the window, her back turned toward them; "Mrs. Mortimer, when Mr. Plank arrives you will be kind enough to explain why Sylvia is unable to accompany you."

If Lella heard she neither turned nor made sign of comprehension.

"We will dine at the Santa Regina," he said to Sylvia. "Agatha is there, and I'll find somebody at the club to—"

"Why bother to find anybody?" said Lella, wheeling on him, exasperated.

"Why not dine there with Agatha alone? It will not be the first time, I fancy."

"What do you mean?" he said fiercely under his breath. The color had left his face, too, and in his eyes Lella saw for the first time an expression that she had never before surprised in any eyes except her husband's.

"What do I mean?" repeated Lella. "I mean what I say, and if you don't understand it you can find the key to it, I fancy. Nor shall I answer to you for my guests. I invite whom I choose. Mr. Seward is one, Mr. Plank is another. Sylvia, if you care to come I shall be delighted."

"I do care to come," said Sylvia. Her heart was beating violently; her eyes were on Quarrier.

"If you go," said Quarrier, showing the glimmering edge of teeth under his beard, "you will answer to me for it."

"I will answer you now, Howard. I am going with Mrs. Mortimer. What have you to say?"

"I'll say it tomorrow," he replied, contemplating her in a dull, impassive manner as though absorbed in other things.

"Say what there is to be said now," she insisted, the hot color staining her cheeks again. "Do you desire me to free you? Is that all? I will if you wish."

"No. And I shall not free you, Sylvia. This—all can be adjusted in time."

"As you please," she said slowly.

"In time," he repeated, his passionless voice now under perfect control.

He turned and looked at Lella. All the wickedness of his anger was concentrated in his gaze. Then he took his leave of them as formally, as precisely as though he had forgotten the whole scene, and a minute later the big motor car ran out into a half circle, backed, wheeled and rolled away through the thickening dusk, the glare of the acetylene sweeping the deserted street.

Into the twilight sped Quarrier, head bent, but his soft, dark lashed eyes of a woman fixed steadily ahead. Every energy, every thought was now bent to this newest phase of the same question which he and fate were finding simpler to solve every minute. Of all the luxuries he permitted himself openly or secretly, one—the rarest of them all—his self denial had practically eliminated from the list, the luxury of punishing where no end was served save that of mere personal satisfaction. The temptation of this luxury now presented itself, and the means of gratification were so simple, so secret, so easy to command, that the temptation became almost a duty.

Seward he had not turned out of his way to injure. Seward had been in the way, that was all, and his ruin was to have been merely an agreeable coincidence with the purposed ruin of Amalgamated Electric before Inter-county absorbed the fragments. But here was a new phase. Mrs. Mortimer, whom he had expected to use, and if necessary sacrifice, had suddenly turned vicious. And he now hated her as coldly as he hated Major Belwether for betraying suspicions of a similar nature. As for Plank, fear and hatred of him were becoming hatred and contempt. He had the means of checking Plank if Mortimer did not drop dead before midnight. There remained Sylvia. Long ago, whatever of liking, of affection, of passion he had ever entertained for her had quieted to indifference and the unemotional contemplation of a future methodically arranged for. Now of a sudden this young girl he had bought—he knowing what she sold and what he was paying for—had become exposed to the infection of a suspicion concerning himself and another woman—a woman unmarried and of his own caste and numbered among her own friends.

And he knew enough of Sylvia to know that if anybody could once arouse her suspicion nothing on earth could induce her to look into his face again. Suppose Lella should do so this evening?

Certainly Quarrier had several matters to ponder over and provide for and first and foremost of all to provide for his own security and the vital necessity of preserving his name and his character untainted. In this he had to deal with that miserable judge who had betrayed him; with Mortimer, who had once blackmailed him and who now was temporarily in his service; with Mrs. Mortimer, who—God



Agatha Cathness.

knew how, when or where—had become suspicious of Agatha and himself; with Major Belwether, who had deserted him before he could sacrifice the major and whom he now hated and feared for having stumbled over suspicions similar to Mrs. Mortimer's. He had to deal with Sylvia herself and with Seward—reckon with Seward's knowledge of matters which it were best that Sylvia should not know.

But first of all and most important of all he had to deal with Beverly Plank. And he was going to do it in a manner that Plank could not have foreseen. He was going to stop Plank where he stood, and to do this he was deliberately using his knowledge of the man and paying Plank the compliment of counting on his sense of honor to defeat him.

(To be continued.)

STATE WILL CARE FOR WHITE PLAGUE VICTIMS

Tuberculosis Sanatorium Will Be Opened at Salem Soon.

PORTLAND. — Preparations for opening the Oregon State Tuberculosis sanatorium at Salem are complete. Soon the doors of the most completely equipped state maintained tuberculosis sanatorium in the United States will swing open with welcome and promise of cure to white plague sufferers throughout the state.

Dr. C. S. White, state health officer, acting for the state board of health is now sending broadcast bulletins giving information concerning the sanatorium.

Voters Give Worry.

LA GRANDE.—Complications that sugar illegal entanglements at the primaries and a general state of disarrangement and disorder that will be detrimental to hundreds of voters in Union County are developing through an unusual and unexplainable apathy on the part of qualified voters to register before the primaries. Not alone will the voter be deprived of his suffrage—unless six freeholders are forced to spend time and go to inconveniences on the day of the primaries—but prospective candidates are going to meet an obstacle in Union County that is going to work havoc with every one of them. The situation is simply this—there are not enough registered voters properly to sign the candidates' petitions.

Tree Culture Is Taught.

MEDFORD.—The Medford high school when it opens its doors for the fall term will offer a one year's course in agriculture, with special emphasis upon tree culture. S. H. Hall, a well-known athlete of the Oregon Agricultural College, has been placed in charge of the new branch of training.

A Man of Iron Nerve

Indomitable will and tremendous energy are never found where Stomach, Liver, Kidneys and Bowels are out of order. If you want these qualities and the success they bring, use Dr. King's New Life Pills, the matchless regulators, for keen brain and strong body. 25c at all druggists.



Fall Painting Means Winter Comfort

If it's a surface to be painted, enameled, stained, varnished, or finished in any way, there's an Acme Quality Kind to fit the purpose.

Fall is the time to touch up shabby surfaces in the home, because winter is the time your home is used most. A little money spent now for paints and finishes will make the home brighter, cleaner, more attractive, more wholesome all winter long.

ACME QUALITY PAINTS AND FINISHES

refinish shabby surfaces at trifling cost. Expert advice at our store, by phone or mail. Let us tell you Five Strong Reasons for Fall House Painting.

P. M. Kirkland, Druggist

Independence, Oregon

BREAKFAST, LUNCH OR DINNER



at the Whitehouse Restaurant, 362 State street, Salem, Oregon, is always a meal never to be forgotten, for its genuine goodness will always leave a most pleasant remembrance. Good service, good food and pleasant surroundings do much to make life enjoyable, and these we guarantee.

WM. MCGILCHRIST & SONS, Props.
SALEM, OREGON

NO-FLY

THE GREAT COW REMEDY

Saves \$6 a month on each cow. Good for driving-horses as well.

For sale by

F. E. SHAFER

SALEM, OREGON

Manufacturer of Harness, Saddles, Whips, Robes, Blankets, Horse Boots and all Turf Goods.

Bishop's Ready Tailored Clothes

How Much Money Have You to Invest in Clothes, at

\$15.00 TO \$35.00

WE SHOW A COMPLETE RANGE OF STYLES AND PATTERNS IN THE SEASON'S MOST POPULAR MATERIALS AND WEAVES. IT WILL PAY YOU TO INVESTIGATE THE BARGAINS WE HAVE TO OFFER IN BOYS' LONG PANTS SUITS, MANY OF THEM GOING AT HALF PRICE.

SALEM WOOLEN MILL STORE

SALEM, OREGON