

# The Fortune Hunter

Novolized by  
Louise Joseph Vance

"Good Lord," he thought, pitiful. "It's worse here than I dreamed. Old Graham must need a keeper, and this child has been trying to be that with nothing to keep him on."

"Who are you?" the girl demanded suddenly in a voice a little harsh and toneless. "What are you doing here? Where's your father?"

"Mr. Graham has stepped out on business," Duncan replied. "You are his daughter, I believe?"

"Yes, I'm his daughter, but—"

"My name is Nathaniel Duncan. Mr. Graham has been kind enough to take me on as apprentice, so to speak. Her stare continued, intense, resentful, undeviating.

"You mean you're going to work here?"

"That's my intention, Miss Graham. He nodded gravely.

"What for?"

"To learn the drug business."

"Oh-h!" She flung herself a pace away impatiently. "I'm not a child, and I don't want to be talked to like one."

"I didn't mean to annoy you," he said. "Well, you do. You're got to do business in a rundown place like this, you with your fine clothes and your fine airs. You didn't come here to learn the drug business. You know as well as I do you're not some other motive."

There was a truth in that to sting him. He smarted under its lash, but held his temper in check because he was sorry for the girl. "Perhaps you're right," he conceded. "Perhaps I have some other motive. But that's neither here nor there. I'm here, and it is my present intention to learn the drug business in your father's store."

"I don't believe you, Mr. Duncan, or whatever your name is."

"I'm sorry," he said patiently. Betty's lips twitched contemptuously.

"Well, saying you do mean to work here?"

"I do."

"You're making a mistake," she snapped. "Father can't pay you nothing."

"He'll pay me all I'm worth," said Duncan meekly.

She glared at him an instant longer, then, mute for lack of a sufficiently scornful retort, turned and ran back up the steps, slamming the door behind her.

## CHAPTER X.

NAT had a busy day or two after that, trying to set things to rights in the store for the better reception and display of the new stock. Sperry dropped him a line saying that the goods would



ROLAND BARNETTE.

arrive on the third day, and there was much to do to make way for them.

Between spasms of work Duncan had his hands full attending to the soda fountain. Soda water being practically the only salable thing in the store, it had to serve as an excuse for the inquisitiveness of many of his fellow citizens, to say nothing of—

should put it, but especially—there wives and daughters. The consumption of vanilla sody in those two days broke all known Radville records and stands a singular tribute to the Spartan fortitude of Radville womanhood, particularly the young stratum thereof.

From my window in the Citizen office I was able to keep a tolerably close account of events and obtain a consensus of public opinion. So far as the latter bore upon Duncan, it was divided into two rather distinct parties, one, of course, favoring him, and this was feminine almost exclusively. Tracey Tanner, to be sure, confessed within my hearing to predilection for the Noo York deed, but was inclined to hedge and climb the fence when assailed by Roland's strictures. Roland, I suspect, was a wee mite jealous. He had been paying attention to—



SAM GRAHAM WAS WORRIED.

mentally consummated. Roland went to the length of labeling Duncan "sissy" and professed to believe that Hiram Nutt was justified in calling him a "silly character." Roland blushed darkly that Duncan knew New York no better than Will Bigelow.

"And if he did come from there," he asserted, "I betcher he didn't leave for no good purpose."

His temper inspired me with the sapient reflection that it's a terrible thing to be in love even if only with an old man's millions.

"There's goin' to be a real Noo York or here before long," Roland boasted. "He's comin' to see me on some special private business of ourn."

"Huh," commented Tracey, the skeptical, "what kind of a Noo Yorker'd come all the way here to see you?"

"That's all right. You'll see when he gets here. He's a pro-motor."

"A what?"

"A pro-motor, a financier." Roland pronounced it "finan sewer," thus betraying symptoms of culture and bewilderment Tracey beyond expression.

"What's that?" he demanded aggressively.

"That's a feller 't can take nothing at all and incorporate it and make money out of it," Roland defined with some hesitancy.

"And that's why he's coming down here to take a look at you?" inquired Tracey, skipping nimbly round the corner.

Curiously enough in my understanding for I own to no great faith in Roland's statements, taking them by and large his friend from New York put in an unheralded appearance in Radville that same night on the evening train. The Bigelow House received him to its figurative bosom under the name of W. H. Burnham. He sent for Roland promptly and treated him to a dinner at the hotel, something which I have always regarded as a punishment several sizes too large for the crime. Later, having displayed him on the streets in witness to his good faith, Roland spent the evening with Mr. Burnham, mysteriously confabulating behind closed doors in the hotel.

Duncan was at the station a few days later superintending the transportation of the new stock, which had come by the early local. Betty was busy with her housework upstairs, and only old Sam kept the shop.

Sam wasn't in the best of spirits. His evergreen optimism seldom withered, but in spite of all that had already been accomplished in behalf of the store, in spite of the rosier aspect of his declining fortunes and his confidence in and affection for Duncan, Sam was worried. He had been over to the bank once even at that early hour, but Blinky Lockwood had driven out of town to see about foreclosing on one of his numerous mortgages, in the neighborhood, and his note, which fell due at the bank that day, was still a weight upon Sam's mind.

Roland and Burnham found him wandering nervously round the store alternately taking his hat down from the peg, as if minded to make a second

trip to the bank and replacing it as he realized that patience was his part.

"Why, hello, Roland!" he cried cheerfully, hanging up his hat for perhaps the twentieth time. And, "How de do, sir?" he greeted the stranger.

"Good morning, sir," said Burnham pleasantly.

"Say, Sam," Roland blundered with his usual adroitness, "this gentleman"—

Burnham's hand fell heavily on his forehead.

"What's that, Roland?" Sam turned curiously to them.

"Oh, nothin'; I was—er—just goin' to say that this gentleman's my friend from Noo York, Mr. Burnham, and we just happened to look in."

"The friend you were going to write to about my burner?" inquired Sam.

It was here that Roland got a look from Mr. Burnham that withered him completely.

"Why, no, Mr. Graham," Burnham interposed deftly. "Mr. Barnette must have been talking of some one else he knew in New York. I"—

"Didn't know he knew more'n one there," Sam observed mildly.

Burnham's glance jumped warily to Sam's face, but withdrew reassured, having detected therein nothing but the old man's kindly and simple nature. "At all events," he continued, "I don't remember hearing anything about the matter (what did you call it? A burner, eh?) from Mr. Barnette."

"I s'pose Roland forgot," Sam allowed. "He's so busy courtin' our pretty girls, Mr. Burnham!"

"Yes, that was it," Roland put in hastily, seeing his chance to mend matters. "I did intend to write you about it, Mr. Burnham, but it kind of slipped my mind. We've had a lot of important business over to the bank recently."

"By the way, Roland, did you just come from the bank? Is Mr. Lockwood back yet?"

"No; I got off this morning. I don't think he is, Sam. Did you want to see him?"

"Well, yes," Sam admitted. "I guess you know about that, Roland."

"Menn business, sometimes, asking favors of these bankers, eh, Mr. Graham?" Burnham remarked.

Graham nodded dolefully. "Yes, it is unpleasant," he admitted candidly. "You see, there's a note of mine come due today, and I'm not able to take care of it or pay the interest just now. But I guess it'll be all right. Mr. Lockwood's kind, very kind."

"I'm afraid you're a little too sure, Sam," Roland contributed tactfully. "When there's money due Lockwood he wants it, and most times he gets it or its equivalent."

"But," Burnham changed the subject adroitly, "what was this—burner, did you say—that Mr. Barnette forgot to tell me about?"

"Oh, just one of my inventions, sir. I've spent most of my life at it, sir, but somehow nothing has ever turned out well—not so far, I mean. But I mean to hit it yet."

"That's the way to talk," Burnham cried heartily. "Never give up, I say! But tell me about some of these inventions, won't you?"

"Well"—Sam knitted his fingers and pursed his lips reflectively—"I patent-

"No, not long; just a minute or two. Sam was already dragging the affair out from under the window box. "You see?"

He went on to expound its virtues with all the fond enthusiasm of a father showing off his newborn and wound up with a demonstration of the illuminating appliance. I'm afraid though, he got little encouragement from Mr. Burnham. He considered the machine with a dispassionate air its true, and admitted its practical advantages, but wasn't at all disposed to take a rosy view of its future.

"Yes," he grunted when Sam put a match to the jet, "that's certainly a very good light."

"All right, ain't it?" chimed Roland, enthusiastic.

"Oh, it may amount to something. It's hard to tell. Of course you know, sir," he continued, addressing Graham directly, "you've got competitor to overcome."

Sam's old fingers trembled to his chin. "No-o," he said, "I didn't know that. I've got the patent."

"Of course it's something. But the Consolidated Petroleum crowd has another machine, slightly different, which does the same work and, I should say, does it better."

"Is—is that so?" quavered Sam.

"My patent!"

"Now, see here, Mr. Graham," Burnham argued, "we're practical men, both of us."

"No, I shouldn't say that about myself," Sam interrupted. "Now, you, sir, I can see you're a man who understands such things. But I"—

"Nevertheless you must know that a patent isn't everything. You said a moment ago a man had to have money to make anything out of his inventions."

"Did I?" Sam interjected, surprised.

"Certainly you did. And dead right you are. A patent's all very well, but supposing you're up against a powerful competitor like the Consolidated Petroleum company. They've got a patent too. Granted, it may be an infringement of yours even. What can you do against them?"

"Why, if it's an infringement"—

"Sue, of course. But do you suppose they're going to lie down just because



"WHAT WAS THIS—BURNER?"

ed a new type thrashing machine once, but I couldn't get anybody to take hold of it. You see, I haven't any money, Mr. Burnham."

"How would you like to talk it over with me some time? I'm interested in such things—as a sort of side issue."

"Will you?" Sam's eagerness was not to be disguised.

"Be glad to. Tell me, how did you get your power?"

"From gas, sir, though coal will do most as well. You see, I've got this burner patented that makes gas from crude oil—no waste, no odor nor trouble and little expense. It'd be cheaper than coal, I thought; that's why I invented it. I could get steam up mighty quick with that gas arrangement. I use it for lighting here in the store now."

"Do you, indeed?" Burnham's tone indicated falling interest, but such diplomacy was lost on Sam.

"If you've got time I could show you. It's right over here."

A glance at his watch accompanied Burnham's consent to spare a few minutes. "There's a telegram I must send presently," he said. "But I'd like to see this burner, if it won't take long."

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"I'LL BE GLAD TO SHOW YOU ANYTHING I'VE GOT HERE."

an unknown and penniless inventor sues them? Bless you, no! They'll fight to the last ditch. They'll engage the best legal talent in the country. You'll have to carry the case to the supreme court of the United States if you want to cost your thousands—hundreds of thousands—a million!"

"Never mind. A thousand's enough," said Sam gently. "I see what you mean, sir. It's just another case where I've got no chance."

"Oh, I wouldn't put it as strong as that!"

"But I have no money."

"Still, you never can tell. I'll think it over if I get time."

"Why, that's kind of you, sir; very kind."

It was at this point that Roland rose to the occasion like the noble ass he is. Roland never could see more than an inch beyond the end of his nose.

"Say, Mr. Burnham," he floundered, "don't you think you could help Sam to?"

"I think," said Mr. Burnham, with additional business of looking at his watch, "I'd like to send that wire I spoke of."

"Yes, Roland," Sam agreed meekly, "you mustn't keep your friend from his business. I'm glad you looked in, sir. You'll call again, I hope."

"Thank you," said Burnham, moving toward the door.

It was too much for Roland's sense of opportunity. He rolled in Burnham's wake sullenly reluctant. "Say, Mr. Burnham," he exploded as they got to the door, "if you'll just offer Sam five?"

"That will do!" Roland collapsed as if punctured. Burnham turned to Graham with a wave of his hand. "I'm leaving on the afternoon train, but if I get time I may drop in again and talk things over with you. There might be something in that thrashing machine you mentioned."

"I'll be glad to show you anything I've got here."

"All right. Good day. I'll see you again perhaps."

This cavalier snub was lost on Sam,

an essential of whose serene soul is the quality of humility. He followed them to the door as grateful as a lost dog for a stray pat instead of a kick. "Good day, sir. Good day, Roland," he sped their parting cheerfully.

But it was a broken man who shut the door behind them and turned back, fingering his gray chin.

"Perhaps Mr. Burnham was right. Only I was kind of hopla!—Now, Mr. Lockwood over there!"

He shook himself to throw off the spell of depression.

"Well, well! He's kind, very kind. With this young man in here and everything gettin' fixed up and new stock comin' in— I'm sure Mr. Lockwood



"ONLY HER SENSE OF DUTY SUSTAINED HER."

"I'll see it the right way for us. He's kind, very kind."

Thus it was that he presently called up the stairs in a very cheerful voice, "Betty, are you pretty near through up there?"

The girl's weary voice came down to him without accent. "Yes, father, almost."

"Well, then, you keep an eye on the store, please. I'm goin' to step out for a minute."

"Yes, father."

"And if—if anybody asks for me I'll most likely be down to the depot with Mr. Duncan."

He didn't mention that he contemplated calling on Lockwood, because he feared it might worry Betty.

Betty knew, or, rather, divined. And she had no hope, no faith such as made Sam what he was. She came down the steps listlessly. Only her sense of duty sustained her. She owed something to old Sam for the gift of life, dismal though she found it. He needed her. What she could do for him she would.

Sighing, she went to work. In work only could she forget. The soda glasses needed cleaning and the sirup jars replenishing, for the new order of sirups had come in the previous evening.

After a time, to a tune of pounding feet, Tracey Tanner pranced into the shop with all the graceful abandon of a young elephant feeling its oats. His face was fairly scarlet from exertion and his eyes bulging with a sense of importance. The girl looked up without interest, nodding slightly in response to his breathless "Lo, Betty."

"Father's gone out," she said, holding a glass to the light, suspicious of the lint from her dish towel.

"I know—seen him down the street." The boy halted at the counter, producing a handful of square envelopes.

"Note for you from the Lockwoods, Betty," he panted. "Josie ast me to bring it round."

Betty put down her glass in consternation. "From the Lockwoods?"

"Uh-huh!" Tracey offered it, but she withheld 'er hand, dubious.

"For me, Tracey?"

"Uh-huh! It's a ninvitation. I got four more to take." He thrust it into

Suddenly she tore it open, her hands unsteady with nervousness.

The envelope contained a square of heavy cardboard of a creamy tint with scalloped edges touched with gold. On the face of the card a round and formless hand had traced with evident pains the information:

MRS. JOSEPHINE MAE LOCKWOOD Requests the pleasure of your company at a lawn fête and dinner to be held at the residence of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. George Lockwood, Saturday, July 15, at 8 p. m. V. P.

The envelope fluttered to the floor, while the card was crushed between the girl's hands. For a moment her face was transfigured with delight, her eyes blank with rapturous visions of the joys of that promised night.

"Oh—it 'ud be grand!"

Then suddenly the light faded. Her eyes clouded; her face settled into its discontented lines. She stuffed the card haphazardly into the pocket of her dingy apron and took up another glass.

"But I can't go; I've got nothin' to wear."



"JOSIE AST ME TO BRING IT ROUND."

her reluctant fingers. "Got five, really, but one of em's for me."

"An invitation, Tracey?"

"Yeh. Hope you have a good time when it comes off." Already he was bouncing toward the door. "Goodby."

"But what is it, Tracey?"

"Aw, it tells in the ninvitation. "From the Lockwoods!" she whispered.

CHAPTER XI.

SHE was scrubbing blindly at the same glass when, a quarter of an hour later, Blinky Lockwood strode into the store, his right eye twitching more violently than usual, as it always does in his phases of mental disturbance—as when, for instance, he fears he's going to lose a dollar.

Lockwood is that type of man who was born to grow rich.

In person he is as beautiful as a snake fence, as alluring as a stone wall. Something over six feet in height, he walks with a stoop, one hand always in a trousers pocket jingling silver, that materially detracts from his stature. His face, like his figure, is gaunt and lanky, his nose an emaciated beak. His mouth illustrates his attitude toward property—is a trap from which nothing of value ever escapes. His eyes are small and hard and set close together under lowering brows. He's grizzled, with hair not actually white, but gray as the iron from which his heart was fashioned. Aside from these characteristics, his principal peculiarity is a nervous twitching of the right eye which has earned him his sobriquet of Blinky. Legrand Gunn said he contracted the

affliction through squinting at the silver dollar to make sure none of its milling had been worn off. I have never known the man to wear anything but a rusty old frock coat, black, of course, and black and shiny broadcloth trousers, with a hat that has always a coating of dust so thick that it seems a mottled gray.

(Continued next week.)

NEEDFUL KNOWLEDGE

Eugene People Should Learn to Detect the Approach of Kidney Disease.

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THE N. K. FAIRBANK COMPANY CHICAGO

COLONISTS WILL BRING TO STATE \$6,000,000

Guard Special Service.

Portland, March 17.—That the colonist immigration now sweeping over the Northwest is an asset to Oregon that can be figured out in dollars and cents, is the opinion of the publicity workers here who say the present month of low rates will bring an investing power of not less than \$6,000,000 to this state alone. It is estimated that the number of people coming to Oregon during the period of cheap one-way fares will be not less than 30,000 and that one in five is the head of a family and as such is worth \$1,000 to the state. This would give Oregon \$6,000,000 in new assets during the current month of low rates.

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