

Richard the Brazen

By ...
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Continued from last week.

Back of them came the spring wagon, drawn by mules on the dead run. Old Jacob Renwyck knew enough about cattle to realize his daughter's danger. He had also realized that he could do absolutely nothing to help her. But, as luck would have it, his outfit was near at hand. It was that he had signaled her from the top of the hill. He and his daughter had made a detour, and the wagon, traveling on the chord of the arc, was almost up with him when the stampede came. He raced down the hill toward it, shouting the terrible tidings. Cowboys and guides in his outfit galloped up to do exactly what had been done. In a moment they had gathered around the two.

"Oh, father!" said the girl as Renwyck swung himself from his saddle and dropped on his knees beside her. "Are you safe, my dear?"

"Perfectly safe, thanks to this gentleman."

"Sir," began her father impressively, "I owe"—

"Oh, it's nothing," said the cowboy lightly, "nothing at all. It was just breaking a mill. Any of these boys will tell you how easily it can be done. Now, if you'll excuse me, I've got to go after my bunch. Goodbye, miss; you'll be all right in no time."

He swung himself into his saddle. "But, my dear sir," cried Mr. Renwyck, "your name?"

The cowboy was already on the gallop. He turned and shouted something that no one could understand and then was gone. The girl stared after him in great disappointment. He had saved her life, rescued her like a hero—but to leave her that way, and for a lot of wretched cattle—it was too provoking!

"Do any of you know that man?" asked Mr. Renwyck.

"Ain't never seed him afore," replied their guide.

"From wot he says, though, he sure knows his biz," said another. "The chances of gittin' out'n that mill—he looked at the ground torn by the trampling herd—'was sure less'n nothin', all right."

"Father," said the girl weakly, the reaction setting in, "let's go home. I've had enough of this terrible country—these awful cows."

"It breeds men, though, miss," said the guide, "as well as cattle."

"Yes," said the girl, "it certainly bred one. I wish I knew his name."

"I'll try to find it for ye, miss," said the guide, "although 'ain't jest the thing to ax a gent's name out here. The boys generally don't use their own names on a range. They've frequently got reasons for not mentionin' 'em. But, wotever his name is, he's a man, all right."

"He is, indeed," said Miss Renwyck, and then she promptly collapsed a second time.

CHAPTER III.

RICHARD WILLIAMS, a young man of twenty-four, a graduate of the University of Texas, had spent the two years since he had won his sheepskin on a range of his own, which had come to him through his mother. Foolish differences had arisen between him and his father, in which the young man was generally in the wrong. A reconciliation had been effected, however, a short time before the arrival of Mr. Renwyck, and Richard had combined his cattle with some of his father's. It was this joint herd which had nearly ended the life of Miss Renwyck.

The day after the departure of Jacob Renwyck and the young lady Richard Williams had saved in so daring and romantic a manner the young man was summoned to the ranch by a message from his father. Recognizing that it was war to the knife between him and his former partner, the Texan laid his plans to bring to his feet the schemers of New York. It was the west against the east, and no mercy was to be shown on either side.

Richard's experience had been on the practical side of the business. He was his father's son, however, and Bill Williams had every confidence that he could be safely trusted to look after his father's interests in New York. He explained the details of his operations carefully to the boy, provided him with the necessary credentials and told him to hustle east and get in communication with a firm of brokers with whom his father already had dealt, who were to advise with Richard with regard to whatever action was required.

Of course the young man learned the details of the quarrel between the two partners, and a few questions put him in possession of the name and address of the girl who had made so deep an impression upon him. With unusual discretion, he said nothing whatever to his father about the adventure. Such things do happen outside of books, and Richard was thoroughly in love with the girl whom for one brief moment he had held in his arms. He was more than willing, therefore, to

carry out his father's wishes. In the pursuit of the old man's business he was determined that he would find time in some way, in spite of the rupture, to further his own affairs. The mere fact that enmity had given a place to friendship and that there was open warfare between the two houses added zest to his love affair. He had cut her out from a herd of steers, and he had faith that he could win her from the Wall street "bunch," as he phrased it, or from any other group of men who, if they had his appreciation of a good thing, would surely be stampeding in her direction whenever she appeared.

In due season, therefore, Richard Williams arrived in New York, where he settled himself comfortably at the St. Regis. Preliminary to entrance on his financial campaign, and especially in the hope of making himself outwardly more fit for his role of a passionate pilgrim, he discarded his San Antonio clothing, including his soft felt hat of sombrero-like dimensions, for an outfit so completely up to date that his best friends on the range would not have recognized him and then plunged into the business which had brought him north. He presented himself at the offices of Messrs. Benton & Cartwell, in Wall street, where the preparatory details looking toward the final adjustment of his father's complicated interests with Mr. Renwyck were put in train for settlement with amazing celerity. Where in Texas deals were consummated over a pipe and several long drinks—sometimes behind the barrel of a gun, too—in New York the cores of the same deals were bored into by snappy little gentlemen with the feverish energy of a belated commuter in the elusive hope of catching the next train.

"Mr. Benton," said Richard as he shook hands with the senior partner, "seems to me we've branded this maverick in record time."

Mr. Benton gave him a hurried smile and a hurried hand. "The—or calf will grow into beef, I trust. Honored to have met you, sir. Good morning."

The young man entered the elevator, was dropped down twenty-one stories, more or less, and found himself again in the busy, roaring streets. With the exception of the sale of one large batch of railroad bonds, which could not be negotiated for at least a month on account of some restriction clauses, his father's business would require no further attention from him for the next two weeks. His time was now his own, and every energy was bent upon one subject—picking up the trail, so to speak, of Miss Harriet Renwyck. It was an easy task, for the "sign" was good and plenty, as a cowboy would have phrased it. He easily located the offices of old Jacob Renwyck on Broad street and learned without difficulty that the family were at present occupying their country place near Irvington-on-the-Hudson. But this knowledge, after all, was of little value. He could not present himself as the son of William Williams for obvious reasons. He smiled as he pictured his father's appletic rage at such a proceeding and ceased to smile at the fancy of his visiting card in the hands of the tartar, Jacob Renwyck.

He made a flying trip to Irvington and walked around the extensive grounds several times in the hope of catching a glimpse of his divinity, but failed, even from the vantage point of



He leaped for his life to the sidewalk. He surrounding wall, to discover a single inmate, with the exception of a groom exercising a horse and riding with a curlew up and down English motion that nearly turned the Texan's stomach. He returned to New York despondent, but with a mental picture of the scene in which she dived, which was like a crumb of consolation. He

grew the more restless and unhappy on that account. He did not want crumbs; he craved the whole loaf.

He visited the theaters and the opera, but his thoughts were not with the painted puppets of bygone days. Throughout the mimic tragedies—he was in no mood for comedy—he saw a more stirring scene: A piebald broncho, quivering between his knees as it tore through a bunch of plunging steers, a weight in his arms and a limp head hanging backward, a cheek that had brushed his own. With her a ten-cent show would be a heavenly entertainment; without her "Gotterdammerung" was just a noise. Others not in love have thought the same.

He spent his time in wandering aimlessly about, making and rejecting one idiotic plan after another. He was entirely unknown in the city, lonely, miserable and as far from meeting the object of his affection as though he were back again in the Lone Star State.

On the morning of the fifth day of his suspense while crossing upper Fifth avenue he was nearly run down by a coffee colored touring car which recklessly swung around a corner, skidding as it took the turn. He leaped for his life to the sidewalk, turned and was about to express a candid opinion of the driver when his suppurous salutation was exchanged for one of surprise and pleasure. The offending automobile had come to a stop, and in its solitary occupant Richard recognized a friend of former days, one George Henry Fitz-Clarence de Courcy Howard, earl of Croylond.

This gentleman had spent several months with Richard on the ranch in Texas, and, while the two men had few tastes in common, still a friendship knit upon the boundless plains is usually more lasting than one contracted in the whirl and rush of city life. In general appearance the two were not unlike, both blonds, rather tall and marked with the branding iron of vigorous manhood, although Richard was the younger, the fresher and the more virile. The earl had been in America for perhaps a year, seeking by various schemes to rehabilitate an impoverished estate and in all his undertakings meeting with indifferent success. He had become the sole owner of a "salted" mine in Colorado; he had recouped in Birmingham real estate, only to "drop his pile" again in Texas cattle. At present his bow was strung with two widely differing cords—one a secret mission, with a lucrative promise, for an oriental government regarding the surreptitious purchase of submarines and other war material in violation of the neutrality laws; the other a somewhat hackneyed scheme of exchanging an earl's coronet for a seven figured bank account, the figure of the necessarily accompanying lady being a matter of little moment.

The meeting between the two was cordial, not to say affectionate. A friendly face in New York to Richard was like a water hole in the desert. To the earl he was as welcome as a "g" pun note when I'm strapped, by gad!" Lord Croylond suggested a splin in his motor, and Richard, who had nothing but leisure on his hands and

was glad of any break in the dull monotony, accepted with alacrity. The motor was a four cylinder Layton, with a vicious back fire and a hoarse, wet cough, which would have warned an expert to look after his igniter and relieve the oil vent. The auto car was rented, and, besides, machinery was a detail to be looked after in the garage; therefore the driver hiccupped up Riverside drive with a charming disregard for signs and omens.

The Englishman talked, and the Texan listened, though he adroitly kept the conversation in a social vein on the chance of finding some opening for an attack on Irvington. In this he was not disappointed. The earl had secured letters of introduction to Jacob Renwyck, but on calling at the Broad street offices had found the gentleman absent. He left his letters, together with a note of regret, and had promptly received a cordial invitation to join a small house party in the home of the Renwycks on the Hudson. He had accepted and intended to go there on the following day, where his valet would join him, bringing his luggage from Washington.

Richard's heart rose and rejoiced. Here was a possible chance to meet Miss Renwyck, yet he must proceed with caution.

"Renwyck," he said thoughtfully, "seems to me I've heard that name. Well off?"

The earl became so eloquent on that subject that his companion's eyelids were at once aroused, and more so when the Englishman's attention was riveted upon an income rather than his steering gear.

"Any daughters in the family?" asked the Texan carelessly.

"One. Aw—quite passable, I understand."

Richard agreed with him, but did not think it necessary to mention the fact.

"Did you ever meet the lady?" "No, old chap."

"Nor any of the family?" "Never. I ain't—ah—not so keen, however, as Mr. Renwyck's—or—relatives, don't you know," drawled his lordship in his most blasé and superior manner. The Texan's white teeth closed with an angry snap. He could not bear his friend in that pose, but he put a curb on his tongue.

Englishman. "It's a fair game, isn't it?"

"No, it isn't," snapped the Texan, falling into the vernacular of the plains. "It's a dinky deal with a cold deck. Where does the girl come in?"

"Coronet," drawled the noble earl, "and not such a bad sort under it. If she is satisfied, I am, I'm sure."

"Birthright, mess of pottage and a pig in a poke," suggested Richard rather warmly. "But what of you? Why, great Scott, man, you've never seen her? She may be humpbacked—hideous!"

"My dear old chap," said the earl, with a dry, indulgent smile, "you will learn some day that a Bradstreet report covers a multitude of freckles. By Jove, I've even known it to con done a hump!"

Here the conversation stopped suddenly. The m. line had done the same. They were far out on the Westchester road in the vicinity of New Rochelle, with nothing in sight but a farmer's truck wagon approaching from an opposite direction, with a big yellow dog trotting beside the wheel.

The earl drawled something about it being "most extraw'dinary" and began to manipulate the various levers, but without result. Clearly he was unfamiliar with the vagaries of this particular brand of motor. He descended from the car and turned his engine over, being rewarded by a clattering roar which caused him to leap back into his seat again. He released his brake and inadvertently threw his weight upon the speed controller. The machine arose and rejoiced as a strong man going to batle.

As Mr. Richard Williams afterward described it, "the thing first bucked and then bolted for nowhere in particular. It attended to the yellow dog first, then ate up the farmer's wagon, turned over on its back and kicked up its heels, hollering like a calf under the branding iron."

The graphic historian found himself sailing gracefully over a barbed wire fence until he alighted in a soft field, where he plowed up considerable earth, but sustained no serious injury. The Earl of Croylond had fared worse. In his headlong plunge he had struck a fence post, wrenching one leg badly and fracturing his right collar bone. The irate farmer arose from the dust with a bleeding nose and immediately put in a claim for damages, not only for his wagon and his valuable dog, but for loss of time and the greater portion of his costume. Nothing seemed to have happened to his vocabulary, it was noticed.

Richard crawled under the barbed wire fence back to the road and turned his attention to his injured friend. In the meantime a correctly attired young woman driving a Panhard stopped to view the general wreck. While a road patrolman galloped up and took bustling charge of every one.

"What's the gentleman's name and address?" he demanded of Richard, who was in the act of raising the Englishman's head.

The Texan was about to answer truthfully when the earl opened his eyes and drawled languidly, but in a sufficiently clear voice: "My name is Richard Williams of San Antonio, Texas—Hotel St. Regis—I'll pay all damages. This gentleman has one of my cards in his pocket."

The earl then closed his eyes deliberately, as though the matter were entirely disposed of—ready to shut out Richard's surprised and reproachful glance.

The real Richard Williams of San Antonio, Tex., was thunderstruck at this limitless display of nerve, but his vigorous protest was checked by an elaborate wink from the sufferer. Accordingly he handed the officer one of his own cards and stood forth ready and eager to answer all questions.

"What is your name?" asked the pa-

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trouman, notebook in hand, "Er—Peter Wilson."

"Friend of this gentleman?"

"Chauffeur," interrupted Croylond quickly.

"Ah!" said the petrolman. "Were you driving?"

"No," answered Richard truthfully. "I gave the wheel to that idiot, and only through a special dispensation of Providence am I now able to answer your questions. Anything more?"

"Is a measure he had evened up with the earl, but not quite."

"How did your machine happen to run into this man's cart?" continued the officer.

"Don't know. Shied at something, I reckon," replied the involuntary chauffeur sardoniously.

This was not technical, but it amused the officer, whereupon, at Croylond's adroit suggestion, Richard presented him with a twenty dollar bill—his own, by the way—and asked him to have the machine towed to the nearest garage, noting that if Mr. Williams were approached properly it might not be to the petrolman's disadvantage. The officer made short work of the in-

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