

Half A Chance

BY FREDERICK S. ISHAM.

Author of "The Strollers," "Under the Rose," "The Lady of the Mount," etc.

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CHAPTER XVI A CONDITION.

LORD RONSDALE seemed almost to forget caution—almost, but not quite. Perhaps he was deterred by the look on John Steele's face—scornful, mocking, as if half inviting him to cast all prudence to the winds. This bit of evidence that he had not calculated upon—it was hard to give it up, but no other course remained. Besides, another—Gillett—knew of his existence. Lord Ronsdale felt he could not depend on that person in an emergency of this kind.

The nobleman moved toward the desk. The paper fluttered from his cold fingers. When once more John Steele buttoned his coat the affidavit had again found lodgment in his waistcoat pocket.

What John Steele said was for Lord Ronsdale alone. After Gillett had gone he laid down a condition.

"And if I refuse to let you dictate in a purely private concern?" Lord Ronsdale, white with passion, had answered.

"The end will be the same for you. As matters stand Sir Charles no doubt thinks still that you would make a desirable part for his niece. His wife, Lady Wray, unquestionably shares that opinion. Their combined influence might in time prevail and Jocelyn Wray yield to their united wishes. This misfortune," with cutting deadliness of tone, "it is obvious must be averted. You will consent to withdraw all pretensions in that direction or you will force me to make public this paper. A full exposition of the case I think would materially affect Sir Charles and Lady Wray's attitude as to the desirability of an alliance between their family and yours."

"And yourself? You forget," with a sneer, "how it would affect you?" "Myself!" John Steele laughed. "You fool! Do you imagine I would hesitate for that reason?"

"You love her yourself, and?" "John Steele stepped toward him. "Stop or—I have once been almost on the point of killing you tonight. Don't!" He broke off. "The condition? You consent or not?"

"And if I—you would?" "Keep your cowardly secret? Yes!" Lord Ronsdale nodded his head slowly, indicating that he would cease his attentions to Jocelyn Wray. And as he did so a venomous expression came into his face.

A day a month after that night in Lord Ronsdale's rooms Captain Forsythe, calling on John Steele, found himself admitted to the sitting room. The rooms were partly dismantled, a number of boxes littering the place indicating preparations to move. John Steele came in. His face was paler than it had been—thinner like that of a man who had recently suffered some severe illness.

A short time passed. They talked on various topics. The military man puffed more quickly. It seemed the irony of fate or friendship that now that he was just beginning to get better acquainted with Steele the latter should inconsistently determine to leave London.

"Anything I can do for you when you're away?" began Captain Forsythe. "Command me if there is. Needn't say."

"There's only one thing," John Steele looked at him. His voice was steady, quiet. "And we've already spoken about that. You will let me know if Ronsdale doesn't keep to the letter of the condition?"

"Very well," Captain Forsythe's expression changed slightly, but the other did not appear to notice.

"I shall leave with you certified copies of all the papers," said Steele in a short, matter of fact tone. "These, together with the one you furnished me, are absolutely conclusive."

"The one I furnished you?" Captain Forsythe rested his chin on the knob of his stick. "Odd about that, wasn't it—that the day in the library at Strathorn House, when I was about to tell you how I had better success the second time I visited the landlady, we should have been interrupted? And," looking at the other furtively, "by Jocelyn Wray." Steele did not answer. "If I had only seen the drift of your inquiries, had detected more than a mere perfunctory interest! With the confession given me on her deathbed by the landlady that she had testified falsely to protect her good for nothing son and acknowledging that another whom she did not know by name, but whom she described minutely, had entered the house on the fatal night—with this confession in your hands a world of trouble might have been saved. As it is," he ended half ruefully, "you have found me most unlike the proverbial friend in need, who is—"

"A friend indeed," said John Steele, placing a hand on the other's shoulder, while a smile somewhat constrained lighted his face for a moment, "who at once rose to the occasion, hastened to London on the receipt of a letter that was surely a test of friendship?" "Oh, I don't know about that!"

quickly. "Test of friendship, indeed!" Captain Forsythe looked slightly embarrassed beneath the keen searching eyes. "Don't think of it, or— Besides," brightening, "I had to come. Telegram from Miss Wray, don't you know?"

"Miss Wray!" Steele's hand fell suddenly to his side. He looked with abrupt, swift inquiry at the other. Captain Forsythe bit his lips. "By Jove, forgot!" he murmured. "Was not to say anything about that?"

"However, as you have"—John Steele regarded him steadily. "You received a telegram from?" "At the same time that your letter intercepted me at Brighton."

"Asking you to return to London?" "Exactly. She—wanted to see me." "About?" John Steele's eyes asked a question. The other nodded. "Of course. Not difficult to understand. Her desire to hush up the affair. Her fear," with a short laugh, "lest the scandal become known. A guest at Strathorn House had been—"

"I don't think it was for—" "You found out," shortly, "that she, too, had learned—knew—" "Yes; she made me aware of that at once when she came to see me with Sir Charles. It was she sent your luggage?"

"Sir Charles? Then he also?" "No. You—you need feel no apprehension on that score." A peculiar expression came into the other's glance. "You see, his niece told him it was not her secret; asked him to help her, to trust her. Never was a man more perplexed, but he kept the word he gave her on leaving for London and forbore to question her. Even when they drove through London in that fog?"

"Yes, yes. I know!" "You? How?" John Steele seemed not to hear. "She saw you that night?"

"She did, alone in the garden of Rosemary Villa. Sir Charles behaved splendidly. 'All right, my dear. Some day you'll tell me, perhaps,' he said to her. 'Meanwhile I'll possess my soul in patience.' So while he smoked in the cab we talked it over."

"Well?" John Steele said shortly. "And the upshot of it all was?" "She suggested my going to Lord Ronsdale."

"To invoke his assistance, perhaps?" Steele once more laughed. "As an old friend?" Captain Forsythe started to speak. The other went on. "Well, we'll keep his secret as long as he keeps his compact."

"But—" "I promised. What does it matter? Sir Charles may be disappointed at not being able to bring about—but for her sake—that is the main consideration."

"And you, the question of your innocence to her?" Forsythe looked at him narrowly, smiled slightly to himself.

"Is—inconsequential! The main point is—the Prisco Per is dead—Gillett won't speak. You won't. Lord Ronsdale can't. Another to whom I am about to tell the story will I am sure, be equally silent."

"Another?" John Steele smiled. "Can you think of no one to whom I am bound to tell the truth, the whole truth? Who extended me his hand in friendship, invited me to his home? Of course it would be easier to go without speaking. It is rather difficult to own that one has accepted a man's hospitality, stepped beneath his roof and sat at his board—as not to mince words—an impostor. I could have delegated you—to tell him all, but that wouldn't do. It is probably a part of the old, old debt, but I must meet him face to face. So I have sent for—"

A bell rang. A servant opened the door of the library. Sir Charles Wray walked in.

(To Be Continued.)

SCHOOL DISTRICT BOND ELECTION NOTICE.

Notice is hereby given that a school meeting of School District No. 49 of Jackson County, Oregon, to be held at the high school building, in said district, on the 15th day of July, A. D. 1910, there will be submitted to the legal voters of said district the question of contracting a bonded debt of fifty thousand (\$50,000.00) dollars, thirty thousand (\$30,000.00) dollars thereof to be used for the purpose of erecting and equipping an east side school building, and twenty thousand (\$20,000.00) dollars thereof for the purpose of repairing and constructing an annex to the Washington school and installing a new heating plant therein, the vote to be by ballot, upon which shall be the words, "Bonds—Yes," and the words, "Bonds—No." Polls to be open at 1 o'clock p. m. and remain open until 4 o'clock p. m.

By order of the Board of Directors of School District No. 49 of Jackson County, Oregon.

Dated this 25th day of June, A. D. 1910.

ORIS CRAWFORD, Clerk.

Haskins for Health.

OF COURSE RARDON'S PRICE IS HIGHER. WHY SHOULD IT NOT BE, WHEN HIS ICE CREAM IS MADE FROM PURE CREAM, BUT YOU WILL FORGET THE PRICE WHEN YOU THINK OF THE QUALITY.

AVIATOR WILL CARRY MACHINERY TO MINES

DOUGLAS, Ariz., July 8.—Dr. J. P. Armstrong has contracted with A. M. Williams, an aviator of this city, to convey placer mining machinery from Douglas to a property in the Chihuahu mountains, Mexico. The distance is about 300 miles. The machinery is such that it can be carried in 100-pound lots. Williams owns and operates a monoplane. This is probably the first contract made calling for the commercial use of a heavier-than-air machine.

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NOTICE.

In the district court of the United States for the District of Oregon.

In the matter of Baker-Hutchason Company, an Oregon corporation, and the Hutchason Company, a partnership composed of J. F. Hutchason, C. W. Zorn and — Kugler, bankrupts.

The undersigned trustee of the above entitled estate in bankruptcy will receive sealed bids at his office, No. 7 First street, room 8, Portland, Oregon, up to 12 o'clock noon of Saturday, July 23d, 1910, for the following described property belonging to said estate, namely: A stock of merchandise, consisting principally of ladies' furnishing goods and shoes of the inventory value of \$23,838.25, together with a lot of store fittings and fixtures of the inventory value of \$2031.75, all located in store building at Nos. 14-18 North Central avenue in Medford, Oregon. Cash or a certified check for ten per cent of the amount offered must accompany each bid and the sale is made subject to confirmation by the court, the right being reserved to reject any and all bids. An inventory is on file at the office of the undersigned and the property may be inspected upon application at the store in Medford.

Dated at Portland, Oregon, July 7th, 1910.

R. L. SABIN, Trustee.

To the creditors of the above-named bankrupts:

Notice is hereby given that a meeting of the creditors of said bankrupts will be held in the office of the undersigned referee at Medford, Jackson county, Oregon, on the 20th day of July, 1910, at 2 o'clock in the afternoon to consider the sale of the personal property mentioned in the foregoing notice and to transact such other business as may properly come before said meeting.

Dated July 7th, 1910.

HOLBROOK WITHINGTON, Referee in Bankruptcy.

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