



THE HUNTER FOR THE FORTUNE

NOVELIZED BY
LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE FROM THE PLAY
OF THE SAME TITLE BY
WINCHELL SMITH
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Continued from Saturday, Nov. 11.

"Be a doin' that, Hiram?"

"That's what he's been a doin'."

"Funny I missed hearin' about it."

"He only started this mornin'." He went to Sothorn & Lee's and Leonard & Call's and Godfrey's, and then I guess he must've quit discouraged. They wouldn't none of them give him nothin'. Leastways that's what they said after he'd gone out. He didn't give anybody a real chance to say anythin'. I was in Leonard & Call's, and he came in and asked for a job, but the minute Len looked at him he turned right round and stunk out without a waitin' for Len to say a word." Hiram smoked in huge enjoyment of the retrospect. "He's the curiouslyst critter we ever had in this town."

"Yes," agrees Watty; "I guess he be." At this juncture comes an interruption. Tracey Tanner returns hotfoot. Either he has been running or his breathlessness is due to excitement. Before the two upon the bench he pounces in agitated glee, a bearer of tremendous tidings.

"Hello!" he pants.

"Now, you Tracey Tanner," Hiram cuts in sharply, "you run 'long and don't be nothin' round. Seems like a body never can get a chance to rest with you children a-buttin' in."

"Aw, shet up," says Tracey disparagingly. "I only wanted to tell you the news."

Watty quavers, "What news, Tracey?"

"Well," says the boy, "I'll tell you, Watty, but I wouldn't've told him after what he said."

"But what's the news, Tracey?" There is suspense in the iteration.

"Well, seein' it's you, Watty"—

"You, Tracey Tanner, you run 'long and stop your jokin'!" interrupts Hiram with authority.

"Fatin' no joke; it's news I'm tellin' you. Say, what d'ye think, Watty?"

"Yes, Tracey, you? What is it, boy?"

"That—Noo—York—dood," draws Tracey, "is a workin' for Sam Graham!"

A dramatic pause ensues. I rise and find my coat.

"Tracey Tanner," shrills Hiram, "be you a-tellin' the truth?"

"Kiss my hand and cross my heart and vow honest injun I seen him up

there just now in the store, Watty, tendin' the sody fountain."

"Waal," says Hiram, rising, "I don't believe a word of it, but if it's true we better be goin' round to see, Watty, 'cause it ain't a-goin' to last long. He won't stay after he finds out Sam ain't got no money to pay his wages with."

CHAPTER VII.

THERE'S no questioning the fact that two weeks of Radville had driven Duncan to desperation. On the morning of the fifteenth day he awakened in his room at Miss Carpenter's and lay for a time a-bed staring vacantly at the gaudily papered ceiling, not through business remaining on his back, but through sheer inertia.

"Why," he reflected aloud, "it does not seem reasonable, but I'm actually looking forward to the delicious disappoinment of church next Sunday!"

"Me?"

"If Kellogg could only see me how I must have done something to deserve this in my mispent life."

"Wonder if nothing ever happens here, I'd give a whole lot, if I had it, for a good rousing fire on Main street—the Bigelow House for choice."

"And it's got me to the point of drooling to myself, like those fellows you read about who get lost in the desert."

"Come! Get out of this! And, my boy, remember to 'count that day lost whose low descending sun sees nothing accomplished, nothing done."

"Probably misquoted, at that."

Suddenly he rose and dressed.

He was late at the breakfast and silent and reserved throughout that meal. Poor Miss Carpenter thought him dissatisfied and hung round his chair, purring with a solicitude that almost maddened him. As soon as possible he made his escape from the house.

The walk he indulged in that morning took him in a wide circle—south on the road to the Gap, then east-

ward, crossing the railroad and the river, north through a smiling agricultural region, east to the Flats. He was trucking up Main street toward Center shortly after 11.

Recognition of Leonard & Call's familiar shop front fired him with a spirit of adventure and enterprise. He stopped short, thoughtfully rubbing his

small mustache the wrong way, his vision glazed to the embarrassingly candid window displays.

"It'd be an awful thing for me to do."

"Think of yourself, man, jumpin' counters in and out among all those—those things like a lunatic monkey performin' on a Monday mornin's clothesline!"

He thought deeply and sighed. "It ain't moral."

"But it's one of the rules; it must be done. Harry said a ribbon clerk was a social equal."

"Come, now! No more shenanigan! Bruce up! Be a man!"

"A man? That's the whole trouble. I am a man. I've got no business in a place like that."

He turned and moved away slowly. But the idea had him by the heels. He struggled against a growing resolution to return. Then enlightenment came to him suddenly. He paused again, grappling with this amazing revelation of self.

"Greatest Scott! Harry was right, darn him! He said this place would reconstruct me from the inside out, and vice versa, and, by jinks, it has! I actually want to work!"

"Can you beat that—me?"

He swung back to Leonard & Call's, mentally reviewing his instructions.

"Let's see. I was to wait at least a month to let the shopkeepers get accustomed to the sight of me. Hiram, Harry certainly has a cute way of expressing his thought. But it can't be helped. I can't wait. If I do I'll throw up the job."

"I'm to walk in and say politely: 'I'm looking for employment. If at any time you should have an opening here that you can offer me I shall endeavor to give satisfaction. Good day.'"

"But be careful not to press it. Just say it and get right out."

With the air of a man who knows his own mind he pulled open the wire screen door and strode in.

Two minutes later he emerged, breathing hard, but with the glitter of determination in his eye.

"I wouldn't've believed I could get away with it. Here goes for the next promising opening."

He headed for Sothorn & Lee's drug store.

"Wonder what that fellow would have said if I'd had the nerve to wait and listen."

In the drug store he experienced less difficulty in making his speech and exit. He flattered himself that he accomplished both gracefully, even impressively. And indeed you may believe he left a gaping audience behind him. So likewise at Godfrey's notion and stationery shop.

"Now, this afternoon," he mused, "I'll wind up the job. By night every one in town will know I want work."

It was 2 o'clock or thereabouts, when, shaping his course toward Radville's commercial center, Duncan hesitated on the corner of Beech street, cocking an incredulous eye up at the weather worn sign which has for years adorned the side of Tut-hill's grocery—a hand indicating fixidly:

THIS WAY TO
GRAHAM'S DRUG STORE.

"Two druggists in Radville?" he mused. "Is it possible? Then it's Harry's mistake if the scheme fails. He said this was a one horse country

town, but I'm sient if it isn't a thrivin' metropolis! Two! Here, I'm going to have a look."

He turned up Beech and presently discovered the object of his quest, a two story building of "frame," gulleless of the ardent caress of a paint brush since time out of mind. On the ground floor the windows were made up of many small square panes, several of which had been rudely mended. Through them the interior glimmered darkly. In the foreground stood a broken bottle, shaped like a mortar and pestle and half full of pink liquid. Beside it reposed a broken parking box in which binary camphor balls nestled between torn sheets of faded blue paper.

Of these a silent companion in misery stood on the far side of the window, a towering pagoda-like cage of wire in which (strapped, doubtless, by means of some mysterious bait known only to alchemists) three worn but brutal looking sponges were apparently slumbering in exhaustion. Back of these a dusty plaster cast of a male figure lightly draped seemed to represent the survival of the fittest over some strange and deadly patent medi-

calteration with a princely gesture. "I don't mind that part," he insisted. "Mr. Graham, if you'll teach me the drug business I'll work for you for nothing."

He said it earnestly, for he meant it just a bit more seriously than he himself realized at the moment, and I'm glad to think it was because Sam's serene and gentle, guileless nature had appealed to the young man.

"Between you and me," he hurried on, "it's this way—I've been here for two weeks with nothing to do but look at a book, and it's got me crazy enough to want to work."

As for Sam, as soon as he recovered he shook his head in thoughtful depression. "Well, I swan!" he said. "I guess you must find it pretty slow down here. But," brightening, "if you feel that way about it I'd better take you over to Sothorn & Lee's. They'd be glad to get you at the price?"

"And in a week they'd think they were overpaying me," Duncan argued. "No; I've been there. Why not try me on here?"

"Well, I'm just a little bit afraid you wouldn't learn much, my boy. I don't do business enough to give you a good idea of it."

Duncan brushed this impatiently aside. "How much business are you doing here now?"

"Some days"—Graham reckoned it on his fingers—"I take in a dollar or two and some days nothing. There's my sody fountain," he said, with a jerk of a thumb toward it—"got that fixed up a little while ago, and it's bringing in a little—not much. You see, I need more sirups. I've only got vanilla now."

"Soda water!" Duncan jumped at the idea. "Hold on! All the girls round here drink soda, don't they?"

"Oh, yes," said Graham abstractedly.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE thought infused new life into the younger man's waning purpose. "Mr. Graham, I wish you'd let me come in here for awhile. I don't care about wages."

Graham lifted his shoulders resignedly. "Well, my boy, it don't seem right, but if you really want to work here for nothing I'll be glad to have you, and if things look up with me I'll be glad to pay you."

Abruptly he found his hand grasped and pumped gratefully.

"That's mighty good of you, Mr. Graham. When can I start?"

"Why, whenever you like."

In a twinkling Duncan's hat and gloves were off. "I'd like to now," he said. "Where can we get more sirups?"

"Unfortunately I'll have to buy them."

"How much?" Duncan's hand was in his pocket in an instant.

"Oh, no; you mustn't do that." Sam backed away in alarm. "I couldn't allow it, my boy. It's good of you, but—"

"Either, Nat told himself, 'I'm asleep or some one's refusing to take money from me.' He grinned cheerfully. "Oh, that's all right," he contended aloud. "I'll draw it down as soon as we begin to sell soda." He selected a bill from his slender store. "Will \$5 be enough?"

"Oh, yes, but it wouldn't be right for me to—"

But by this time Duncan was press-

ing the

insisted. "How can we build up trade without sirup?"

"But—but—"

"And how can I learn the business without trade?" He closed Graham's unwilling fingers over the money and skipped away.

Sighing, Graham gave over the unequal argument. "Well, if you're satisfied, my boy. But I'll have to write to Elmira for it."

"Telegraph!" Graham laughed. "That would kill Lew Parker, I guess."

"Who's he?"

"Telegraph operator and ticket agent."

"Well, he won't be missed much. Telegraph and tell 'em to send the goods C. O. D. Please, Mr. Graham. We want to get things moving here, you know. We've got to build up the business. We'll put out some signs and—and, well, we'll get the people in the habit of coming here somehow. You'll see."

He raked the poverty stricken shelves with a calculating eye, all his energy fired by enthusiasm at the prospect of doing something. Graham watched him with kindling liking and admiration. His old lips quivered a little before he voiced his thanzinn.

"You—you know, my boy, you've got splendid business ability," he asserted, with whole souled conviction. Duncan almost recoiled. "What?" he cried.

"I was just saying you have wonderful business ability."

(To be Continued.)



"WILL \$5 BE ENOUGH?" he insisted.



HIS HEAD WAS BOWED.



"WELL, I DECLARE!" HE SAID, RISING.

AN GRAHAM RUGS & CHEM C L S RESCRIPTION CARE LY C FOUNDED "Looks like the very place for one of my acknowledged abilities," said Duncan. He turned the knob and entered, advancing to the middle of the dingy room.



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