

# THE FORTUNE HUNTER

Novelized by  
**LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE**  
From the Play of the  
Same Name by  
**WINCHELL SMITH**

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and Louis Joseph Vance

(Continued from last Saturday.)

"By the way, did you get your invitation to Josie Lockwood's party, Mr. Duncan? I happened to see it on the hall table this evening."  
"Yes," he assented quietly.  
"It's to be the social event of the year. I hope you'll enjoy it."  
"I'm not going. It's against the rules at first—I mean business rules. I'll be so busy at the store, you know."  
Alone, I was fain to confess he baffled my understanding.

The rush of business to Graham's began the following morning. Duncan's hands were full almost from the first, and he had to delegate such matters as making final disposition of his stock and getting acquainted with it to the intervals between waiting upon customers. Old Sam must have put up more prescriptions in the next few days than he had within the last five years. Everybody wanted to take a look at the renovated store, shake Sam's hand and see what the new partner was really like. Sothern & Lee's was for some days quite deserted, especially after Duncan took a leaf out of their book, bought an ice cream freezer and began to serve dabs of cream in the soda.

Will Bigelow even dropped round and bought samples of the tobacco stock, from two-fors up to ten-centers, and smoked them with expressive snorts. Tracy Tanner's soda and cigarette trade was transferred bodily to Graham's from the first, and Roland Barnette gave it his patronage, albeit grudgingly, as soon as he found it impossible to shake Josie Lockwood's allegiance. I say grudgingly because Roland didn't like the new partner and had said so from the first. But every one else did like him almost without exception. His attentiveness and courtesy were not ungrateful after the way things were thrown at you at Sothern & Lee's, we declared.

Duncan certainly did strive to please. No man ever worked harder in a Radville store than he did. And from the time that he began to believe there would be some reward for his exertions, that the business was susceptible to being built up by the employment of progressive methods, he grew astonishingly prolific of ideas, from our sleepy point of view. The window displays were changed almost daily, to begin with, and were made as interesting as possible. We learned to go blocks out of our way to find out what Graham & Duncan were exploiting today. And daily bargain sales were instituted, low priced articles of everyday use, such as shaving soap, toothbrushes and the like, being sold at a few cents above cost on certain days, which were announced in advance by means of hand lettered cards in the show windows, whereas formerly we had always been obliged to pay full list prices.

Still earlier in his career as a business man he noticed that the local practitioners wrote their prescriptions on odd scraps of paper.  
"That's all wrong," he declared. "We'll have to fix it." And by next morning the job printing press back of the courthouse was grinding under an order from Graham & Duncan's, and a few days later every physician within several miles of Radville received half a dozen neat pads of blanks with his name and address printed at the top and the advice across the bottom, "Go to Graham's for the best and purest drugs and chemicals." The backs of the blanks were utilized to request people living out of reach, but on rural free delivery routes, either to mail their prescriptions and other orders in or have the physicians telephone them, promising to fill and dispatch them by the first post.

For he had a telephone installed within the first fortnight and the next day advertised in the Gazette that orders by telephone would receive prompt attention and be delivered without delay. Tracy Tanner became his delivery boy, deserting his father's stables for the obvious advantages of \$3 a week with a chance to learn the business.  
Starting with a line of five and ten cent packages of indigestible sweets, Duncan in time made arrangements with a big Pittsburg confectionery concern to ship him a small consignment of pound and half pound "fancy" boxes of chocolates and bonbons twice a week. And taffy pulls and fudge parties lapsed into desuetude.

Later Sperry introduced him to an association of druggists, of which he became a member, for the maintenance and exploitation of the cigar and tobacco trade in connection with the drug business.  
Again, he treated Radville to its first circulating library, establishing a branch in the store. One could buy a book at a moderate price and either keep it or exchange it for a fee of a few cents.

Undoubtedly he made the business hum during those first few months, and after that it settled down to a

steadily forward movement. The store became a social center, a place for people to meet. In time Tracey was promoted to be assistant and another boy engaged to make deliveries.  
But this chronicle of progress has run away altogether with a desultory



BETTY WAS WORKING IN THE SHOP.

pen, which started to tell why Duncan didn't want to go to Josie Lockwood's party. I was long in finding out, but not so long as Duncan himself, perhaps, by which I mean to say that he was conscious of the desire not to go and determined not to without stopping to analyze the cause of that desire more than very superficially.

It happened, toward the close of the eventful day already detailed at such length, that as Duncan was entering the house with a load of boxed goods he heard voices in the store—young voices, of which one was already too familiar to his ears. He paused, waiting for them to get through with their business and go, for he had no time to waste just then, even upon the heinous of his manufactured destiny. Betty was then working in the shop (old Sam having gone upstairs for a little rest, who was overwrought and weary with the excitement of that day), and it was Duncan's hope that she would be able to serve the customers without his assistance.

There were two of them, you see—Josie and Angie Tutill—hunting, as usual, in couples. And while he waited, not meaning to eavesdrop, but unwilling to betray his whereabouts by moving, he heard very clearly their passage with Betty.

He overheard first, distinctly, Betty responding in expressionless tones: "Hello, Angie. Hello, Josie."  
There ensued what seemed a slightly awkward pause, then Josie, smilingly sweet, "Did you get the invitation, Betty?"

Betty moved into Duncan's range of vision, apparently intending to come and call him. She turned at the question, and he saw her small, thin little body, and pinched face on silhouette against the fading light beyond. He saw, too, that she was stiffening herself as if for some unequal contest.

"The invitation?" she questioned dully, but with her head up and steady.

"Why," said Josie, "I sent you one—to the party, you know—my lawn feet next week."  
I give the local pronunciation as it is. "Did you?"

"I gave it to Tracey for you," persisted the tormentor. "Didn't you get it?"  
Betty caught at her breath inaudibly. Only Duncan could see the little spasm of mortification and anger that shook her.

"Oh, perhaps I did," she said shortly. "I'll ask Mr. Duncan to wait on you."  
She swung quickly out into the hallway, slamming the door behind her and so darkening it that she didn't detect Duncan's shadowed figure. And if she had meant to call him she must have forgotten it, for an instant later he heard her stumbling up the stairs, and as she disappeared he caught the echo of a smothered sob.  
He waited motionless, too disturbed at the time to care to enter the store and endorse Josie's rapid advances, and through the thin partition there came to him their sharp comments on Betty's ungracious behavior.

"Well!"  
Josie said finally: "Oh, come on. Don't let's wait any longer. I don't think it's healthy to drink soda so soon before dinner, anyway."  
Angie glanced significantly at Josie, saying:  
"And, besides, we only wanted to hear—"  
Their voices with their footsteps diminished. Duncan allowed a prudent interval to elapse, entered the store and began to bestow the goods he had brought in.

While he was at work the light failed. He stopped for lack of it just as Betty came downstairs.  
"Hello!" he said cheerfully. "Know where the matches are?"  
"Yes," she moved behind a counter and fetched him a few. "Are you most done?" she inquired, not unfriendly, as he took down from its bracket one of the oil lamps.  
"Hardly," he responded, touching a light to the wick and replacing the chimney. "It's a good deal of a job."  
"Yes."

He replaced the lamp and in the act of turning toward another caught a glimpse of the girl's face, pale and

drawn, her eyes a little reddened. And with that common sense departed from him, leaving him wholly a prey to his impulse of pity. "Oh, thunder!" he told himself, thrusting a hand into his pocket. "I might as well be broke as the way I am now." He produced the scanty remains of his "grutstake."



ANGIE GLANCED SIGNIFICANTLY AT JOSIE.

"Miss Graham?"  
"Yes?" she asked, wondering.  
"Could you get a party dress for thirty-four dollars?"  
"Thirty-four dollars?" she faltered.  
He discovered what small change he had in his pocket. It was like him to be extravagant, even extreme. "And fifty-three cents?" he pursued, with a nervous laugh.

"Heavens!" the girl gasped. "I should think so!"  
"Then go ahead!" He offered her the money, but she could only stare, incredulous. "I'll stake you."  
"Oh, no, Mr. Duncan," she managed to say.  
"Oh, yes!" He tried to catch one of the hands that involuntarily had risen

toward her face in a gesture of wonder. "Please do," he begged, his tone persuasive, "as a favor to me."  
But she evaded him, stepping back. "I couldn't take it; I couldn't really."  
"Yes, you can. Just try it once and see how easy it is," he persisted, pursuing.

"No, I can't." She looked up shyly and shook her head, that smile of her mother's for the moment illuminating her face almost with the radiance of beauty. "But I—I thank you very much—just the same."  
"You're awful kind," she said softly, still smiling, "but I don't care to go now. I'm—"  
"Don't care to go! Why, you were insisting on going a little while ago."  
"Yes," she admitted simply, "I know I was. But I've been thinking over what you said since then, and I— I've made up my mind I'd be out of places there."  
"Out of place?" he echoed, thunderstruck.  
"Yes, I've concluded I belong here in the store with father." She half turned away. "And I guess folks is better off if they stay where they belong."



SAM HAD MONEY TO THE DIGNITY OF A FROCK COAT.

hours and closing up time. He attended church with admirable regularity, both morning and evening services, on Sunday, the midweek prayer meeting and Friday evening choir practice, for in the course of time he had been won over to join the choir and modestly discovered to our education a baritone voice wholly untrained, but not unpleasing. Josie Lockwood sang contralto and Bees Gabriel what we were informed was soprano—only Radville called it a treble. Tracy Tanner pumped the organ and puffed audibly in the pauses, a singular testimony to his devotion to Angie Tutill, who "just sang" with the others chiefly because she was Josie's nearest friend.

Nat had settled down to a pretty steady correspondence with Kellogg, chiefly on business matters. Kellogg was investigating old Sam's burner and seemed quite impressed with its possibilities. He had quarreled with Roland's friend Barnham on Duncan's representations and ordered him out of the office of J. J. Bartlett & Co., it seemed. Later he opened up negotiations with a corporation known as the Modern Gas company, I believe, a competitor of Consolidated Petroleum, and in due course representatives of both concerns came to Radville, examined the burner and retired, noncommittal. Then Bartlett sent a requisition for a model and supplied the funds for making it, thus demonstrating his confidence.

As for old Sam, he had risen to the dignity of a frock coat and felt himself an aristocrat for the first time in his life.  
I don't remember just how soon it was, but it was shortly after the formation of the firm of Graham & Duncan that the young man received his

first invitation to dinner at the Lockwoods'. He accepted, of course, whether he wanted to or not, for there could be no excuse for his refusing a Sunday bid, and the Lockwoods made quite an event of it. The Soules were invited because they were Araminta Lockwood's brother and sister-in-law, and the Godfreys came over from West- erty to grace the board as representatives of the Lockwood strain.

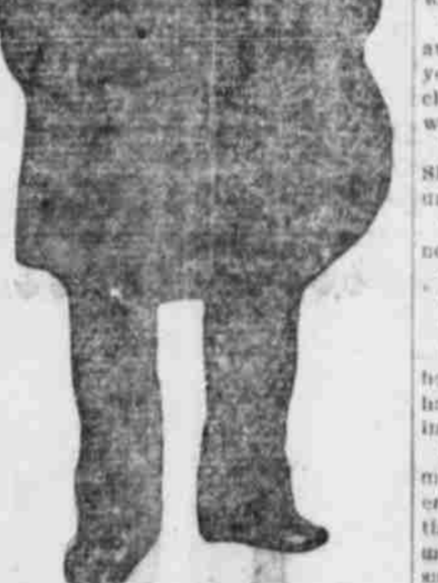
At the conclusion of the meal, which endured throughout two interminable hours, the elder men folk withdrew to the garden and the lawn. Nat was left to Josie, who conducted him to the side porch, out of sight of everybody, and planted herself in a baggy ham mock there. She was gay, even brilliant within her limitations, arch, naive, coquettish, shy, petulant, by turns, animated by a sense of conquest. She supplied the major part of the conversation, chatting volubly on the thousand subjects she didn't understand, the dozen she did in the most ingenious manner imaginable she laid herself open to advances, not once but a score of times, and when he failed to respond according to the code of Radville had the wit to mask her chagrin, did she feel any. Very probably she laid his lack of responsiveness at the door of his shyness in quality he was wholly without and liked him the better for it.

It was on this day that she extracted from him his promise to join the choir. He acceded through amity alone.  
"I don't care whether you can sing or not," she confessed, with a look. "But I do want somebody to walk home with me that I like."  
"That's a nice way of putting it," Duncan considered without enthusiasm.  
"Roland Barnette's always walked home with me, but I think he's just tiresome."  
"Why?" inquired the young man, with some interest.  
She averted her head, plucking at the strands of the hammock. "Oh, you know," she said diffidently.  
"Oh?" Nat was enlightened. "Then I'm sorry for Roland."  
"Why?"  
"I can't blame him, you know. He couldn't help this. The time, the place, the girl, inspired—indeed, incited—one to banality."  
"Why?" she persisted.  
"Oh, you know." He caught the intonation of her previous words precisely.

She had the grace to blush and hang her head, but he received a thrilling side-long glance.  
"Ah! Aren't you awful to talk that way, Mr. Duncan?"  
"Yes," he admitted meekly.  
"Then you will join the choir?"  
"Oh, yes," he agreed listlessly.  
"I'm so glad."  
He thanked her, but avoided her eye. "We might as well begin tonight," she suggested presently, with diffident, downcast eyes.  
"What—the choir?" He was startled.  
"Oh, I couldn't without a rehearsal."  
"No, I didn't mean that."  
"No?"  
"I mean about Roland." She was paying minute attention to the lace insertion of her skirt.  
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"Yes; I mean— You know what I mean, Mr. Duncan?"  
"I assure you I do not, Miss Lockwood."  
"About not walking home with him any more. I don't want to. I wish you'd commence tonight instead of choir practice night. I'd much rather walk home with you."  
"After evening service, you mean?" She nodded. "It'll be a great pleasure."  
"Really?" She gave him her eyes now.  
"Really," he assured her.  
"Ah, I don't believe you mean that!"  
"But indeed I do."  
It was not until nearly 5 o'clock that he was given a chance to escape. He had even then to refuse inflexibly an invitation to stay to supper.

Minta Lockwood—an expansive woman, generously convex—almost smothered him with appreciation of his thanks. She held his hand in a large, moist palm and beamed upon him, saying, "Now't you know the way, Mr. Duncan?"  
"Yes," Blinky insisted, blinking roguishly, "drop in any time. Take pol- luct. We're plain people, Mr. Duncan, but alas glad to see our friends. Drop in any time."  
Josie accompanied him to the front gate, where etiquette required him to linger for a parting chat.  
"Goodby." The girl gave him her hand. "I'm real glad you came—at last."  
"The pleasure has been all mine," insisted the gallant bromide, fishing the trite phrase desperately from the gray vacancy of his thoughts.  
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Josie returned to the family con- clave, to interrupt a symposium on Duncan's qualities.

Duncan wrote to Kellogg in his room that night after church. "I don't want to sound immodest, but it looks as if you were right, old man—apparently there's nothing to it."  
"Probably I should have stayed on for supper, but I couldn't; I should have choked. As it was, my soul was writhing. Another ten minutes and I should have jumped down on the lawn and run round the house on all fours, rapping and fanning at the mouth, and have wound up by bling old Hinky."  
"The worst of it all is I know I'm ungrateful; I know they mean well. But why is it that people who mean well almost invariably grate upon your sensibilities like the screeching of a slate pencil?"  
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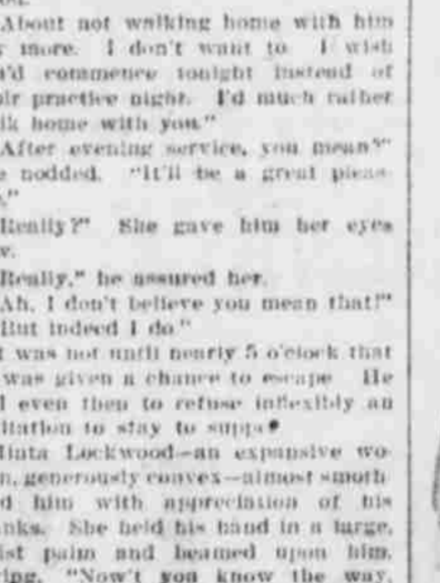
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One has more time to think unselfishly in Radville than in a great city, where there's rarely more time than enough to think of one's own concerns. And Duncan was making time to think about others, notably Betty Graham. The girl was, as usual, shy, reticent, reserved. She kept her thoughts to herself, sharing the most intimate not even with old Sam, who would talk. But Duncan divined that she was unhappy.

He saw her go and come, a wistful shadow on the borders of his occupations, self contained, a little timid, but at the same time brave in her own quiet, uncomplaining fashion. And the distant look in those soft eyes he divined to be one of longing for that which she might not possess—the advantages that other girls had, socially and educationally; the pleasures they received, the thousand and one slight things that make existence life for a woman. He saw her drooping insensibly day by day, growing a little paler, a shade more aloof and listless. And he became infinitely concerned for her.

(To be Continued.)



I WANT SOMEBODY TO WALK HOME WITH ME.

I've got something to do I'm not so strong for it as I was. But I gave you my word. . . . Only mind this—if the rules prescribe a perpetual course of Sunday dinners on family it's going to break down on family it's a natural born diver. There are limits to human endurance, and I'm human, whatever else I am not."

### CHAPTER XVI.

SUMMER stammered to his close. A drowsy autumn settled upon our valley, in which its traditional peace seemed but the more profound.  
Josie Lockwood announced that she was going away to school in New York for the winter. Pete Willing took the pledge and kept it almost a month. Will Bigelow secured time tables and laboriously mapped out his semiannually contemplated trip to the east—like the others, destined never to come off. Tracey Tanner went to work for Graham & Duncan. Roland Barnette paid untentious attentions to Bess Gab-



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Ar. Beach Points . . . 1:20 p. m.  
Ar. Bay City . . . . . 2:04 p. m.  
Ar. Tillamook . . . . . 2:25 p. m.  
Lv. Tillamook . . . . . 7:55 a. m.  
Lv. Bay City . . . . . 8:15 a. m.  
Lv. Beach Points . . . 9:00 a. m.  
Ar. Hillsboro . . . . . 1:25 p. m.  
Ar. Portland . . . . . 4:10 p. m.  
Through tickets on sale at city ticket office, Third and Washington streets, on Fourth and Yamhill, to all points on the P. R. & N. Further particulars from the city ticket agent or agent Fourth and Yamhill streets.  
**John M. Scott,**  
General Passenger Agent,  
Portland, Oregon.