

# THE FORTUNE HUNTER

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

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(Continued from last Saturday.)

He caught sight of his hat abruptly, ceased talking, grabbed the hat and



"HERE! HOLD ON! WHERE ARE YOU GOING?"

Jammed it on his head, muttering, then started on a run for the door. "But what's the matter?" demanded Kellogg, thunderstruck. "Here! Hold on! Where are you going?" "To the only place I can get any consolation. I'm going to church!"

## CHAPTER XXII

**B**UT at the doorstep of the Methodist church Nat hesitated. The building was dimly lighted, for it was choir practice night, and the door was ajar, but he couldn't bring himself to enter.

Having and ranting with the extravagance of youth, he passed through the village, out into the open country, and, in the course of an hour and a half, back, all blindly, circling back to the store, in the course of his wanderings, as instinctively as a carrier pigeon shapes its course for home.

It was with incredulity that he found himself again in that cheerful, cherished, homely place. But there he was when he came out of his abstraction—there in those familiar surroundings, with Tracey's round red face beaming at him over the cigar stand like a lively counterfeit of the round red moon he had watched lift up into the skies, back there in the still country-side, just as he paused to turn back to town.

He recollected his faculties and resumed command of himself sufficiently to acknowledge Tracey's greeting with a moody word.

"All right, Tracey," he said abruptly. "You may go now. I'll shut up the store."

He looked at his watch and was surprised to discover that it was no later than half past 8. He seemed to have lived a lifetime in the last few hours.

"Thank you, sir," said Tracey, with a gush of gratitude. "I'll be glad to get off. Angle's waitin'."

"Angle?"

"Good evening, Mr. Duncan."



THE MILITANT MRS. WILLING.

"Oh, Miss Tutbill! Nat discovered that little rogue, all smiles and dimples and blishes, not distant from his elbow. 'I didn't see you—I was thinking.'"

"Guess we know what you was thinkin' about," observed Tracey, bringing his hat round the counter. "Everybody in town's talkin' about it."

"About what?"

"Ah, you know about what, and we're mighty glad of it, and we want to congratulate you, don't we, Angle?"

"Oh, yes, indeed, Mr. Duncan. It's just too sweet for anything."

"O Lord!" groaned Nat. "I'm awful glad you done it when you did," pursued Tracey, oblivious to Nat in his own ecstatic temper. "I guess I wouldn't never 've got up the spunk to—to tell Angle what I did to-night 'f it hadn't been we was talkin' 'bout your engagement to Josie. Then, somehow, it just seemed to bust right out of me, like I couldn't hold it no longer. Didn't it, Angle?"

"Oh, Tracey, how can you talk so?" "Then you're engaged, too?" Nat inquired, rousing himself a little and smiling feebly upon them.

"Yes, sir."

"I'm glad to hear it. It's great news. Now, run along, both of you, and don't forget you'll never be so happy again. With what he thought an expiring

flash of humor he raised his hands above their heads. "Bless you, my children!" he said solemnly. "Now, for heaven's sake, beat it!"

Alone he went to the prescription desk and, opening one of the drawers, took out the firm's books. After that for some fifteen minutes there was nothing to be heard in the store save Nat's breathing and the scratching of his pen as he figured out a trial balance.

Brisk footfalls disturbed him. He sighed and moved out into the store to find Kellogg there, suave and easy, as always, yet with that in his manner, perceptible perhaps only to a friend of long standing like Nat, to betray a mind far from complacent.

"Oh, you're here!" he cried, with a distinct start of relief. "I've been looking all over for you."

"I just got in." Nat brushed aside explanations curtly, intent upon his purpose. "Hurry, I've got something to say to you. I'm not going through with this thing."

"You're not?"

"No, and that's final. I was just on the point of drawing you a check for three hundred—that's all my share of the profits of this concern so far—and my note for the balance. I'll pay that up as soon as I'm able, and I'll work like a terrier until I do. But, as for the rest of it, I'm through."

"Oh, you are?" Kellogg took a chair and tipped back, frowning gravely. "But what about your word to me?"

"There's nothing to that," said Duncan without heat. "The word of honor of a man who'd stoop to a trick as vile as I have doesn't amount to a continental shipmaster. I'd rather be dishonored by breaking it than by ruining a woman's life."

"Very well, if you feel that way about it," said Kellogg as coolly. "And you may keep your check and note; I wouldn't take them. You can pay me back when it's convenient—I don't care when. But what I want to know is what you mean to do."

"I mean to do the only thing left to do. I'm going to shut up here and then see Lockwood and Josie and tell them the whole story."

"Hm!" Kellogg reflected, quizzical. "You've got a pleasant little job ahead of you."

"I don't care about that. I deserve all that's coming to me. I owe Josie a duty. Why, it's awful, Harry, to trick a girl into caring for you and then to—"

"Break her heart?" Kellogg's tone was sardonic.

"That's what I meant."

"Don't flatter yourself, my boy. Josie Lockwood doesn't love you. She just set herself to win you because you're the best chance she's seen." Kellogg laughed quietly. "The system would have worked just as well if any one else had tried it."

"Do you think so—honest?" Nat's eagerness to believe him was undiminished.

"I'm sure of it. The trouble is that people will any you've thrown her over—there isn't any one in Badville who hasn't heard the news by this time—and that's going to make the girl feel pretty cheap, but only for a while. She'll get over it and solace herself with the next best thing. And don't forget—you lose a fortune."

"No, I don't." Duncan disclaimed. "I never had it, and now I don't want it."

"That's true enough," Kellogg admitted evenly. "And I hope you'll always feel that way about it; but, believe me, you'll find plenty of money a great help if you want to live a happy life."

"There are better things than money to make a man happy. I'll pass up the

money and try for the others."

"That's true too. But when did you find it out?"

"Here—this last year. You know I had everything my heart desired until the governor cashed in, and I used to think I was a pretty happy kid in those days. But now I've learned that you can beat that kind of happiness to death. Harry—Duncan was growing almost sentimental—the real way to be happy is to work and have your work amount to something and—and to have some one who believes in you to work for."

"Is this a sermon, Nat?"

"Call it what you like. It goes, just the same. That's what I've found out this year."

## CHAPTER XXIII

**K**ELLOGG let his chair fall forward and rose, imprisoning Nat's shoulders with two heavy but kindly hands.

"And you're right!" he cried heartily. "I'm glad you had the backbone to back out, Nat. It was a low down trick, and I'm ashamed of myself for proposing it. I did it, I presume, simply because I'm a schemer at heart and I knew it would work. It did work, but it's worked a finer way than I dreamed of—it's made a man of you, Nat, and I'm mighty glad and proud of you!"

Nat averted with amazement. "What's charged you all of a sudden?" he demanded blankly.

Releasing him, Kellogg resumed his seat, laughing. "Well, a number of things. Among others, I've talked with Graham, and I've met his daughter."

"Oh-h?"

"And that reminds me"—Kellogg changed the subject briskly—"I understood from you that Graham was sole owner of that patent burner."

"So he is."

"He says not. I had a proposition to make him from the Mutual people, and he referred me to you, saying that you controlled the matter."

"I've not the slightest interest in it," Nat protested.

"I know you haven't, but Graham insisted you owned the whole thing. I pressed him for an explanation, and he finally furnished one in his rambling, incoherent, fine old way. He admitted that there wasn't any sort of existing contract or agreement of any kind, even oral, between you, but just the same you'd been so good to him and his girl that he'd made up his mind—some time ago, I gather—to make you a present of the burner, but naturally he forgot to tell you about an insignificant detail like that."

"Of course that's nonsense. I wouldn't and shan't accept."

"Of course you won't. I did you the honor to discount that. But he wouldn't say a word about the offer, yes or no—just left it all up to you. He says you're a business man and that he's often thought what a help you must have been to me before you left New York."

Nat laughed outright. "Can you beat that? But what is the offer?"

"Fifty thousand cash and 10,000 shares of preferred stock—\$100 par."

"What's that worth?"

"At the market rate when I left town 78." Kellogg waited a moment. "Well, what do you say?"

"Say? Great Caesar's ghost! What is there to say? Wire 'em an acceptance before they get their second wind. You don't know how good this makes me feel, Harry. I can't thank you

enough for what you've done. This'll square me with Graham to some extent, and I can clear out!"

"No, you can't, Mr. Smarty! You ain't been cute enough."

Both men, startled by the interruption, wheeled round to discover Roland Barnette dancing with excitement in the doorway, the while he beckoned frantically to an invisible party with out. "Come on!" he shouted. "Here he is!"

"What's eating you, Roly Poly?" inquired Nat, too happy for the money to cherish animosity even toward his one-time rival.

"You'll find out soon enough," snarled Roland. "Mr. Lockwood's got something to say to you, I guess."

And on the heels of this announcement Lockwood strode into the store, Josie clinging to his arm, Pete Willing—a trifle more sanely drunk than he had been some hours previous—bringing up the rear.

"So," snarled Blinky, halting and transfixing Nat with the stare of his cold blue eyes—"so we've found you, eh?"

"Oh? I didn't know I was lost."

"No nonsense, young man. I ain't in the humor for foolin'." Blinky was unquestionably in no sort of humor at all beyond an evil one. "I come here to have a word with you."

"Well, sir?" Nat's tone and attitude were perfectly pacific.

"Ah, there ain't no use beatin' round the bush. You've behaved yourself ever since you come to Badville and insinuated yourself into our confidence, 'spite of the fact that nobody in town knows who you were before you came. But now Roland's laid a charge agin you, and I want to know the rights to it."

"Well," Roland interposed cockily, "I accused him of it tonight, and he didn't deny it."

"What's more," Lockwood continued, with rising color. "Roland says he can prove it."

"Prove what?" Nat insisted. "Get down to facts, can't you?"

"That you're a thief, with a reward out for you," said Roland. "You're that Morrimor Henry what absconded from the Longacre National bank in New York."

There fell a brief pause. Nat bowed his head and tugged at his mustache, his shoulders shaking with emotion variously construed by those who watched of him. Presently he looked up again, his features gravely composed.

(To Be Continued.)

## CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

(From the New York Journal.)

The great number of Americans that had the pleasure of meeting Governor West of Oregon during his recent trip throughout the country with the other governors of the northwest were impressed by him as a man modern in thought, kind in heart and sharing in truly advanced good ideas.

Of those that met him not one will be surprised to learn that he has taken a firm stand against that form of murder, impersonal and general, but murder none the less, which is called capital punishment.

The state of Oregon, setting an excellent example to the rest of the country, will vote this year upon the abolition of capital punishment.

And Governor West, expressing the best sentiment of the best men in his state, acts without delay, and announces that exercising his power as governor he will permit no official killings between this date and next December, when the people will have decided the question by their ballots.

It is unfortunate that there should be any man bitter, revengeful and primitive and savage enough to believe that the murder by the government of men that have committed murder can be called now necessary, useful or excusable.

We all know the great power of example.

The father that would cure his boy of lying must not lie in the hearing of that child.

The father that would discourage brutality and vice in his children must not himself be brutal and vicious or hope to excuse himself on the ground that his authority permits that which is forbidden to childhood.

And the state that does not wish its citizens to commit murder in anger for revenge or on any pretext must not itself be guilty on any pretext of committing an official murder.

Capital punishment is brutal, degrading; it encourages murder and does not discourage it.

Ignorant criminality must often say to itself, "If the highest power in the land, the government, thinks it right to kill, why should I not think it right?"

There was a day when witnesses were tortured brutally in every so-called civilized country of the world to make them tell the truth—even when they were accused of no crime.

This was the rule everywhere only a little more than 100 years ago. Men, ordinarily humane and wise, said: "If you abolish torture of witnesses you will no longer get truth and justice will suffer."

But torture of witnesses was abolished by the French revolution.

It was the rule in England only a little more than 100 years ago to hang a human being guilty of stealing an article worth a few shillings. And in one pathetic case a kind hearted man committed perjury and swore that the property stolen from him was worth less than the sum that involved capital punishment in order to save a mere boy from death.

It was said that if the petty thief were no longer hanged, if property worth a few shillings were not protected by the public hangman, thieving would be universal and property insecure.

But England and the other countries that called themselves civilized ceased punishing the petty thief with the death penalty. And there is less stealing now than there was then, and property is more secure than it used to be.

Men that mean well will tell you that if you stop punishing murder with murder, if you cease to do to the murderer what he has done to his victim, you will make life insecure and murder more frequent. But that is not so.

Murder, thieving and every other feature of degraded human life depend not upon savage laws, but upon intelligent, conscientious national character accompanying benevolent government.

There is no capital punishment in Switzerland under any circumstances. And in America, in proportion to the population, we have at least 10 times as many murders as they have in Switzerland, where there is no guillotine, no electric chair and no hangman's noose.

A witty Frenchman defended capital punishment by saying: "If the murderers don't want capital punishment let them give it up themselves. Let them stop killing." His exact

words were, "Que messieurs les assassins commencent." That was witty but inaccurate. It is for the government, for the heart and the conscience of the people, to set a good example. Only the stupid would suggest that the good example comes from the murderer.

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A mother's kindness teaches children to be kind. Government decency and kindness will set a higher standard even among the lowest.

Capital punishment should be abolished.

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Address to business men at the Nash Grill 12:15 p. m.

Business men are urged to be present.

Noonday meeting at Meeker's, 1 p. m.

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