

THE NEW ADVENTURES OF J. RUFUS WALLINGFORD

By GEORGE RANDOLPH CHESTER, Creator of "Wallingford," and CHARLES W. GODDARD

Read the story and then see the moving pictures

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Lord Southpaugh

THE woman in the next room screamed again. Blackie Daw winced in sympathy; Wallingford grinned; the gray mustached man in the corner sat in patient misery, as he had from the first, and held his swollen jaw.

"I don't think it hurts as much as it did, Jim," decided Blackie, looking up with a hopeful smile. "Stop me. I think I want to go home."

"Stay right where you are and have it out," chuckled Wallingford. "You brought me along to keep you here, and I'll do it if I have to sit on you."

He cast a sidelong glance at the man in the corner. "You won't if I say not!" indignantly aware Blackie as his riotous tooth gave his nerves another thrust.

The woman in the operating room emitted a final yelp, which made Blackie grip the arms of his chair and groan because he had thoughtlessly grinded his teeth.

"For that you get another dose," roared Wallingford, aggravatingly cheerful, and, producing a beautiful, mounted pocket flask, he poured Blackie a generous drink.

The quiet man in the corner exhibited his first sign of human intelligence, as his pain dulled eyes followed that interesting process.

"Have a little relief?" offered Wallingford, who was a habitual good Samaritan with liquor.

"I don't drink, thank you," replied the man, talking coarsely and smiling with one side of his mouth.

"Lucky man!" envied Blackie. "Now I'll do you good."

"But I'll take one this time," added the stranger, eyeing the bottle determinedly.

The dentist, who had tried to conceal his necessarily cruel contention with a pink mustache, hurried out to the water cooler with a glass upon which was a bright red spot, and erythroid grew solemn.

"Hello, Bessmer! How's Oak Center?" the dentist greeted the stranger. "Which of you is next?"

And brutal speculation kindled his eye as he looked at them over.

"I'm it, I guess," acknowledged Blackie, cornered. "Give me another drink, Jim, quick!"

"I'll be ready for you in a couple of minutes," the dentist cheerfully assured him and walked into the operating room, humming a care-free little song.

"I think that man," commented Blackie. "He has an unkind face."

A woman wearing a heavy veil and carrying a much crumpled handkerchief came through the waiting room, followed by the dentist, who rubbed his hands together in pleasant anticipation as he bowed to Blackie. There was an unmistakable gleam of ferocity in his eyes.

"You may come with me now," he remarked softly.

Blackie rose and followed with much careless bravado.

"He's a stockholder in my company," a discontented shrug with this. "I see," Wallingford smiled. "Is Oak Center a pretty fair business town?"

"For some lines," stated Bessmer, with distinct and quite visible inward reservations. "It's really a farming town and very rich, but it gives slight support to manufacturing."

"You must be a manufacturer," guessed Wallingford.

"I am in a small way," acknowledged the other, still frowning. "I have a malleable iron foundry and have secured capacity business on a process of my own."

"Capacity is good enough."

"The trouble is with the size of the capacity," explained Bessmer, with a dry laugh.

"When a shabby business can't borrow money it sells stock," observed Wallingford, with a wisdom born of such experience. "You are incorporated?"

"Two hundred and fifty thousand I've \$125,000 worth of stock in the treasury. The \$25,000 I sold of the other half went at 50 per cent."

"I suppose you'd be willing to clean up the treasury shares for your \$50,000," suggested Wallingford.

The man jumped at that. "Show me now!" he begged.

"You're shamefully honest," mused Wallingford, studying him in minute detail.

"I hope so," returned Bessmer sincerely.

"I'll go to Oak Center and look at our plant," promised Wallingford. "I have \$50,000 which hasn't done a useful thing except come to me since it was printed."

Blackie Daw returned from the operating room with the dentist.

"The girls were correct in their suggestion," said Wallingford as soon as they were alone, and he produced a letter from his pocket. "This is the best report they have made of any town."

"They're crackbracks, especially Violet." And Blackie, blowing a kiss at the ceiling in honor of pretty Violet Warden, took the letter. It was a Violet's handwriting, and Blackie drew another kiss at the letter as he read. "Mr. Bessmer will be in River City today to see his dentist, Mr. Frank. Mr. Bessmer's business is the only unprofitable concern in which Mr. Spoojer has an interest, so we believe that you might find this the best approach to the \$50,000 of which Mr. Spoojer robbed us on the death of our father."

When Bessmer returned from the dentist Wallingford declared that he would ride over to Oak Center with him on the 2:40 train to talk over the purchase of stock.

Mr. Bessmer, much relieved as to law and with renewed hope as to business, took a seat in the parlor car of the 2:40 train, correctly gauging that the resplendent Wallingford would ride there or nowhere. The train waited its appointed four minutes, its bell clanged, its whistle tooted, its smoke puffed, and it pulled out and still no Wallingford!

"Well, Mr. Bessmer, how's the jaw?" inquired a cheerful voice at his elbow, and looking up, he found Blackie Daw, laden with a suit case a hatbox, an Oxford and a saxophone case.

"Haven't any, so far as the celluloid is concerned," responded Bessmer, his heart jumping with the sudden memory that Blackie Daw was in the same line of business as the man who had failed him. "I didn't notice you getting on the train."

"You were looking for Jim Wallingford; that's the reason," laughed Blackie, stowing grips in every available corner and sitting down like a real sport, with no regard whatever for the tails of his Prince Albert. "I side tracked him."

Mr. Bessmer contracted his brows and turned on Blackie a glance of disapproval. "That was not fair to either Mr. Wallingford or myself," he charged.

"It's all in the game," declared Blackie lightly. "I saw he had a business opportunity with you, so I had a phoney telegram delivered to him and sent him on a wild goose chase; then I made your dentist tell me all about the Bessmer Malleable Process company, and here I am!"

Mr. Bessmer could not see the joke. "Mr. Wallingford might have purchased my stock," he protested.

"So might I," Blackie consoled him. "On the other hand, Mr. Wallingford might not have purchased it and I may not. Tell me the news."

Blackie, studying him interestedly while he talked, admired the shrewdness of Wallingford, who insisted that Bessmer was entirely too honest to be intrusted with the details of even a "square" scheme for his own benefit.

J. Rufus Wallingford paused opposite the corner of the Bessmer Malleable Process company and made a comprehensive estimate of it. It was a more or less toy plant, but radiated the impression of extreme business.

With a nod of satisfaction Wallingford walked into the office, where Mr. Bessmer, with gray flings on his hat and his hair and mustache and even clinging to his eyebrows, was bent over a much soiled building plan. Two other men, who had clay on their boots and mortar on their clothes, were leaning their elbows on the once neat drawing and figuring on its margin with rusty blue pencils.

"I'm in no hurry, Mr. Bessmer," said Wallingford cheerily. "When you're not so busy I'll take up with you the matter of the purchase of that stock."

Mr. Bessmer seemed somewhat embarrassed. "I'm very sorry to say you're late," he returned, his conscience smiting him that he had helped to trick

his friendly big stranger out of a possibly profitable deal. "You don't mean to say you've sold it?" protested Wallingford.

In spite of his compunction, a gleam of satisfaction lit Mr. Bessmer's eyes. "Well," he said apologetically, "the pot cash was offered me, and now I'm building my extensions."

"I bet I know who bought it," declared Wallingford, with a trace of an eyebrow.

"Your friend, Mr. Daw," admitted Bessmer, flushing slightly. "I'm afraid that Mr. B. F. Croats has a ten share certificate. Do you suppose he would sell it?"

"Blinky Croats?" smiled Peter. "Blinky would sell his girl's photograph. He needs the money."

"Thanks for the information," replied Wallingford and left the store.

After this Wallingford went home, well satisfied with his day's work, but he had not finished it, for just before dinner Peter Wilks came to him and jubilantly sold him Blinky Croats' stock, battling desperately for \$85 a share—and winning.

By this time every wise person in town was whispering that Bessmer stock was as valuable as diamonds.

Eli Spoojer looked at Wallingford with a benevolent smile and rubbed his bony old knees very, very gently. "Yes, I am Mr. Spoojer," he acknowledged to Wallingford's query, and his voice was full of human kindness, "and you are Mr. Wallingford, I am sure."

Wallingford smiled with fully as much benevolence as Mr. Spoojer had exhibited. "I seem to have been accurately described," he returned and ceased to study Mr. Spoojer with any degree of curiosity.

"Certainly," agreed Mr. Spoojer. "Any gentleman endeavoring to buy control in a local concern for the benefit of a trust is sure to be much discussed."

"It's the sad truth," admitted Wallingford, very visibly annoyed by the fact. "The public works a double swivel spotlight on any one connected with a big concern such as I am supposed to represent. Personally I shrink from publicity, but since I can't what do you want for the Bessmer stock?"

"We are coming on," approved Mr. Spoojer, much gratified. He had been so eager as to be almost impatient. "I have ten shares of my own and twenty-five shares which I yesterday accepted from clients of mine to apply on mortgage payments which were in arrears."

"Thirty-five shares," figured Wallingford in a disappointed tone. "Is that all?"

"That is all for the present," regretfully admitted Mr. Spoojer. "The price will be a hundred and twenty-five."

"Murder!" exclaimed Wallingford, pleased and yet shocked that his plans had worked so extremely well. "Why, you are trying to take advantage of what you consider to be my necessity."

"Tut, tut!" chided Mr. Spoojer, with angelic forgiveness of that harsh charge. "You offered my friend Peter as high as a hundred and ten. And young Mr. Martin, who was anxious to buy my stock to sell to you at a profit, offered me a hundred and five. The price, Mr. Wallingford, is a hundred and twenty-five. At that quotation I am really conferring a benefit upon you."

"I appreciate it," concluded Wallingford dryly. "How much is thirty-five times a hundred and twenty-five?"

"Four thousand three hundred and seventy-five dollars," replied Mr. Spoojer promptly, glancing at some figures on his desk. "Here is the stock." And he drew forward the neat little pile which had reposed just before his eyes.

Wallingford opened his obese pocket book, and the mild eyes of Mr. Spoojer took on the passing expression of twin needles.

"Of course they will not sell stock to you at the factory," he conjectured, watching hungrily as Wallingford counted out the money and noticing thirstily that the subtraction of this amount made scarcely any impression upon the sum total.

"Not a share," laughed Wallingford. "They know who I am and what I want. Moreover, I don't imagine the new assistant manager would sell to any one who would sell to me."

"At the present moment," added Mr. Wallingford, with a trace of vindictiveness, "there is nothing I desire so much as to have every share of the Bessmer stock taken away from Mr. Daw."

Blackie Daw, who had in perfection what is known as the bealer's touch, was extracting with a huge magnet an iron fling from the eye of a fellow workman when Eli Spoojer called, and he positively refused to talk business in the emergency hospital.

"You might enable me to increase my little investment in this establishment—that is, if you made the price of the stock low enough," said Mr. Spoojer, with the air of one conferring a favor after Blackie had finished his operation.

"I haven't much to sell," Blackie told him, looking decidedly uncomfortable. "I couldn't possibly let go of enough to weaken Mr. Bessmer's control of the company."

Mr. Spoojer was shocked that he should ever conceive such an idea. "No one, I am sure, would wish to injure Mr. Bessmer, who is a very honest, hard working business man. He has the respect and even affection of the entire community, including myself. If you chose to sell any of the stock how much would you want for it?"

"Par," announced Blackie slyly. "My dear young man!" expostulated Mr. Spoojer in stern but kindly tones. "The stock has never been worth more than 50 per cent, and I'll guarantee that you paid even less than that for it."

"Par," repeated Blackie gently, but

firmly, and lit a cigarette. "At that I'll only sell you fifty shares. I understand that Jim Wallingford's buying up this stock, and I wouldn't run the risk of much of it falling into his hands. He'd put my friend Bessmer right out of his own shop and turn it over to the trust."

"I'll take those fifty shares at par," Mr. Spoojer slowly observed after thinking a long, long time. "If I were you I would not say anything to Mr. Bessmer about it just now. Suppose I come over tonight and see you at your hotel?"

Mr. Spoojer was busy writing him out a check. "Here is \$5,000 for your fifty shares," he stated, holding it with both hands for impressiveness. "Just think how little those fifty shares cost you and how much profit I am giving you! Multiply that by the balance of your stock and think it over."

Mr. Spoojer returned to Wallingford's hotel triumphantly.

"I can get you fifty shares of that stock," he announced, delighted to give Wallingford so much pleasure, "but you'll have to raise the price to \$135."

Wallingford eyed him with a secret sorrow that he was doing the man no harm. "It's extortion!" he protested.

"I can't get it for you for less," declared Mr. Spoojer, seemingly and that such was the case.

"I don't believe I want it at all," suddenly decided Wallingford.

"Why not?" demanded Spoojer, in breathless fright.

"Because you have only fifty shares of it. My instructions are to secure control, and I'm beginning to be discouraged about it."

"You buy this fifty shares at the price I named and I'll tell you some good news," promised Eli, with exultant playfulness.

"Do you mean that you can secure all of it?" asked Wallingford eagerly.

"I believe that I can," jubilated Eli and rubbed his hands over and over each other.

"I will pay \$135 a share for every share of Bessmer stock that you sell me from now on," Wallingford truthfully answered.

An English gentleman with broad checked clothes, monocle, flowing yellow mustaches and two young and beautiful ladies, one brown eyed and one blue, dropped into town that evening, registered at the leading hotel and asked numerous questions about the Bessmer plant, its reliability, its capacity, its expansion and every other leading fact. After having asked these questions in the places where they would most rapidly circulate he called on Mr. Wallingford and held a long, long secret conference. That settled it the English gentleman was a lord, certainly not less, and he was negotiating for munitions of war to be made at the Bessmer plant.

In the privacy of Wallingford's rooms, had the public but known it, the lord's name was plain Onion Jones, and nothing more serious than a bottle of wine was discussed.

Mr. Spoojer waited until sharp 10 o'clock the next morning, when he was ushered into Mr. Daw's rooms.

There ensued a most witty conversation, in which Mr. Spoojer pointed out to the young man that he must not fly in the face of Providence by refusing the handsome fortune that lay at his door. And Mr. Spoojer was elated by

United States currency; then he saw Mr. Daw parted.

The latter gentleman dashed into the express office next to his hotel and inquired how soon they would put packages in a car headed for New York.

The merriment in the festively lighted yard of the Bessmer Malleable Process company was at its height when Eli Spoojer, learning that Wallingford had gone straight there from the 9 o'clock train, repaired to the scene of the festivities.

A big table, built in the form of a hollow square, with a snowy cloth and decorated with carnations, champagne pails and whole roast pigs, to say nothing of chickens and such minor articles of inner comfort, filled the yard, and at the center of the head table, flanked by Wallingford on one side and Bessmer on the other, stood Blackie Daw in his blackest Prince Albert, making a farewell speech to

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"I'll take those fifty shares at par," Mr. Spoojer slowly observed.

mind my going through your factory unattended I'll hunt him up."

Wallingford found Blackie in overalls, the idol of the workmen. He had been made assistant manager of the plant.

On his way out Wallingford stopped at Bessmer's invitation to inspect the plans for the glorious extensions.

"I've dreamed of this for ten years," stated Bessmer happily. "Did you secure any stock?"

"Not a share," answered Wallingford, much disappointed. "Mr. Daw won't sell."

"I sympathize with you," announced the jubilant Bessmer. "The local papers are full of the extensions we're making. I believe we have Oak Center awakened at last to manufacturing possibilities. This stock will be worth real money by and by."

"I believe it," admitted Wallingford. "I don't mind confessing now that I wished to buy it for another corporation."

Not only Mr. Bessmer, but the two mortar decorated contractors looked up at him with sharp attention. The monopoly, eh?

"Petey Wilks," read Wallingford from Blackie's list, "the leading sport of the village and might be as high as \$2. Wears a gray puff tie on Sundays and the other two on weekdays. Proprietor of father's shoe store and almost real devilish. Ten shares."

Armed with that description, Wallingford had no trouble in picking out Petey in Wilks' shoe emporium.

"I believe this is Mr. Wilks," guessed the stock speculator pleasantly, noting that Petey was a particular dresser and had his trousers pressed.

"That's what they're talking around," assented young Mr. Wilks, who was strong on repartee.

"I understand you have some stock in the Bessmer Malleable Process company."

"Somebody's been telling," was the sly retort.

"Would you care to sell it?"

Petey Wilks had the chin of an idiot and the smile of a fool, but he had the eyes of a miser. "Don't reckon I want to sell it," he instantly returned. "The papers are full of how Wil Bessmer is making all sorts of improvements."

"You paid \$50 a share for your stock," stated Wallingford, respecting Petey's shrewdness. "I'm willing to say that it