

Here Is a Powerful Story of Failure and Sacrifice and Love and Courage and Success Copyright by Fleming H. Revell Co.

CHARACTER TEST

ONFIDENCE and good-nature are easy for folks who are already prosperous and

successful. The true strength of a man's character is revealed, however, in adversity. Tear the foundation from beneath one who has always enjoyed advantages of wealth and position, and see if he has the backbone to conquer evil days-to rise above circumstances and win. In "Web of Steel" we have the story of a man whose foundation is destroyed. His fight to rebuild it makes the novel. It is not merely entertaining fiction; it is a piece of inspiring literature. We feel sure all of our readers will enjoy this Cyrus Towsend Brady serial.

THE EDITOR.

CHAPTER I.

-1-Love of Woman.

If meetings only lived up to their anticipations, life would be a succession of startling climaxes. It had been some months since Meade had seen Helen Illingworth. He had dreamed of meeting her every day and had pictured the meeting differently and more rapturously after every letter. As a matter of fact the whole thing was casual and ordinary to the last degree. It always is,

Doctor Severence, a retired physician, who was vice president and financial man, and Curtiss, the chief engineer of the bridge company, were hard upon Miss Illingworth's heels as she stepped down from the car to the station platform. He saw her, as it were, surrounded by prosaic men. The woman he loved got the same welcome and the same handshake as her father and the other two men. It was not until big Abbott, who had been belated by some sudden demand of work, came sweeping down the platform to engage the attention of the men that the anxious Meade had a moment with the girl herself.

Now Helen Illingworth had also been seeing visions, so that she had been as many years. And with thoughts burn- went on quickly to prevent him from ress to his father, every step taken ingly torrential at hand to give them mission. utterance, they only spoke common-

places! "How is the bridge getting along?" asked the girl, repeating her father's words of a few minutes before, as these two fell behind the others march- have almost forgotten out here in the had got into his blood. It had become ing down the long platform, while the wilderness,"

maid standing by the private car with the porter looked curiously after the moving group and wondered if that gray-green, long-legged young man was the reason for the New York gown!

"It's doing splendidly," was the answer, and even with his heart full of dare touch the hem of her garment. voice. "It is the greatest bridge that was ever erected," he said.

"How you love it," said the girl. hour. As the great steel web rose, his



He Lingered About It.

disappointed as he. The only real sat- heart expanded with it. He took pride ture-to the completion of the soaring isfaction that either of them could take in it even more when they began to cantilever reaching out to meet its these big compression members. When in the situation lay in the fact that the push the suspended span across the companion on the other side-the great I first studied your father's drawings, other was there. It was midsummer river on the outer end of the completed International, which was to be the tie I wondered if he had made the lacing and the girl was dressed in some light, cantilever, toward its fellow rising on that bound, with web of steel, two strong enough to hold the webs." filmy fabric which well became her ra- the other side. He lingered about it great countries which lay breast to when the rest of the workaday world breast; already in touch save for the gone into," said Meade quickly. you all about it. All that he could drawn to rest. Frequently late in the night he had arisen and had left the sheet-iron shack he occupied near the proprlthat work (for the topography of the land and the course of the river had deter- tion and wide experience. To a thorartist mined the location of the bridge far ough technical training at Harvard, in from any town), and in the moonlight the Lawrence Scientific school, had lightly. "I examined the webs and lache had gazed bewitched by the great been added a substantial record of ings carefully this afternoon. They web of steel, all its mighty tracery deli- achievement. A fine bridge which he seem to be as right as possible." cately silvered, faintly outlined, laceike, lofty, lifted high into the heavens. phantly achieving the design despite fief moment from which she recalled the attention of old Colonel Illing-

ing, passionate, and words embarrass- taking advantage of her incautious ad- under the superintendence of Abbott, the heaviest trusses, the-" "Hang the clothes," said the man, erector, but of much less capacity as radiant once more in that admission, a scientific designer or office engineer. "since you will allow it, I will come Meade had watched its daily growth it's beginning to obsess me, too."

have to tell me which fork to use. I other man in similar case, the work

"It isn't six months since you were at our house."

"Six months! It's a thousand years," he went on, "and I'm going to take you out on the bridge after dinner. It's great at any time. It's the most magnificent sight on earth even now, but the girl by his side whom he longed in the moonlight-there it is now," he to clasp in his arms but did not even pointed as the little group walked past the station which had hid the view some little enthusiasm came into his and the great structure suddenly was revealed to them.

The four men ahead had stopped and stood silent. There was something Did Meade love the bridge? Ah, awe-inspiring and tremendous about there could be no doubt as to that. the great, black, outreaching, far-He had studied its growth hour by extending arms of steel. The first sight of it always gave the beholder a little

shock. It was so huge, so massive, so grandly majestic, and withal so airy, seen against the impressive background of deep gorge and palisaded wall and far-off mountains. So ether-borne was it in its perfect proportion that even duli and stupid people-and none of these were that-felt its overpowering presence. Meade and the girl stopped too. After one glance at the bridge. she looked at him. And that was typical. For the first time he was not at the moment aware of, or immediately responsive to, her glance. And that, too, was typical. She noted this with a pang of jealousy.

"You love the bridge," she said softly.

He straightened up and threw his head back and looked at her.

"I thought so," he said simply-"until today, but now"-he stopped again. "But now?" she asked.

"I have just learned what love really me by a bridge," he answered directly. Yet Bertram Meade, the younger, did shoe-the great steel base on top of promise of lasting its time." the pier which carries the whole struc-

a man of great practical ability as an with what I can rake up. But you'll with the closest attention. Like every

a part of his life. He loved the bridge; yet more he loved Helen Illingworth.

CHAPTER II.

The Witness for the Defense.

One of the pleasant evidences of the possession of riches is in the luxury of a private car. Although Colonel Illingworth was personally a man of simple tastes as became an old campaigner, there was no appointment that wit could devise or that money could buy which was lacking to make his private car either more comfortable or more luxurious in its napery, glass,

china and silver, the dining table needed not to apologize to any other anywhere. The colonel was most punctilious in dressing his part and Meade and Abbott were both scrubbed to within an inch of their lives, but, climbing about the bridge, their hands were scratched, roughened, stained and torn. Aside from that, Meade was certainly most presentable, and old Abott, in spite of his indifference to man bridge engineer?" such matters, looked the able and pow-

erful man he was. The conversation at dinner was at first light and frivolous.

"I'm lost," began Abbott, "overpowered with all this silver and glass and china.'

"Yes," laughed Meade, "we should have brought along our granite ware efficients he felt to be safe." and tincups, then we would be free from the dreadful fear that we are going to drop something or break something."

said the colonel with heavy pleasantry, "so long as the bridge stands."

"And that is going to be forever, isn't s and the lesson has not been taught it, Mr. Meade?" asked Helen quickly. "I don't think anything built by man will survive quite that long," he antruly love the bridge which he had swered as much to her father and the seen grow from the placing of the first others as to her, "but this gives every

> "You know," observed Curtiss, "there was some question in my mind about

"That matter was very thoroughly

nicest girls of the land for half as I get so tired of black and white," she | care, constantly reporting the prog- | biggest thing in the world. It's the longest cantilever, the greatest span, "I've heard all about ft," interrupted

the girl, waving him into silence, "ever since you began it. Sometimes I think

"You don't look like it," whispered Meade, under cover of the general laugh that greeted her remark. "What do I look like?" she whis-

pered back quickly, in return. But Meade had no opportunity to tell her.

"It is not exactly a subject for dinner conversation," said the colonel with sudden gravity, "but all of us here, even you, my dear, must realize how much that bridge means to us. I won't go so far as to say that its failure would ruin us, but it would be hard for us to survive."

"Have you ever known anything that my father designed to fail?" asked Meade somewhat hotly. "No, and that is why we took his

plans in spite of-"

"In spite of what, sir?"

"In spite of Curtiss here and some others."

"Mr. Curtiss," said Meade, turning to the chief engineer, "if it will add anything to your peace of mind, I will assume my full share of responsibility for the matter. You know the books by Schmidt-Chemnitz, the great Ger-

Curtiss nodded.

"At first I-that is, we-thought that there might possibly be weakness in those compression members, but I checked them with the methods he advocates and then submitted the figures to my father, and then he went through the whole calculation and applied co-

"I'm willing to take your father's judgment in the matter rather than Schmidt-Chemnitz', or anybody's," said Curtiss, "so successful has been his career."

"Now that I have seen the members in place I have no doubt that they will stand," said the colonel.

"Sure they will," added Abbott with supreme and contagious confidence, an assurance which helped even Meade to believe.

"Of course we all know," said Doctor Severence, who had been long enough in touch with engineering to learn much about it, "that there is always more or less of experimenting in the design of a new thing like this."

"Yes," said the colonel, "but we don't want our experiment to fail in this instance."

"I have heard so much about it." said the girl, standing by the door. "I want to see it when the workmen are all off and it is all quiet, in the moonlight."

"Very well. You had better change your dress, Helen, before you go," said the colonel, turning to Abbott and engaging him in conversation on technical matters.

"I'll wait for you at the front door of the car," said the engineer, his heart beating like a pneumatic riveter and sounding almost as loud in his ears. "I won't be long," she whispered as she left him.

Helen did not want to waste time any more than Meade did. So, instead of taking her father's advice, all she did was to cover her beautiful shoulders with a light wrap and hasten to the car door in the shortest possible time. Every moment they were apart, since the sum-total in which they could be together was so small, was a moment lost.

"Now," she said, coming out of the door of the car and descending the steps toward him, eagerly expectant, 'I want a prize for my swiftness."

"A prize !" returned the man, "why, you've been gone years, and you haven't even changed your gown. You



can't go out on a bridge in that gown

"You can break anything you like,"

diant beauty. Meade could look at a bit of structural steel work and tell have told you abou s she wore was that its:

ate, but with a Helen look

theu Mes efficient things liked .! son why yet not for th On that soft looked as subtly would at one time or an woman he loves appear, an moved from things strenuous another world! He was wearing rough clothes, flannel shirt, khaki sers, henvy shoes and leggings were his habitual use at work. trasted with her filmy and delica colored fabric his well-worn drab habiliments stood forth hideo That is, he thought so, and th trast somehow seemed typica difference between them as h ered her.

There was the careless in of conscious power in the the engineer which differen, from most of the men with had been thrown in contact life. The International Brid biggest thing of the kind ; company or any other Ame tural plant had ever un constant topi her fath

butterily a steam he

They were strained when left to themselves as if to work." one had not been all over the world

"Well?" she asked.

"Yes, naturally," he found himself ying in a conventional tone of voice, means a great deal to me. My ier-'

Oh, your father," she began indifently, although she knew and liked great engineer.

is his crowning work and-' our beginning."

t is not in me, or in any engineer, gin where my father left off," he "But this will count a great ecause through father's kindness some hand-

lieve you did it all," interruptgirl.

broke into sudden laughter, and erriment had that boyish ring ked. He seemed to think that sufficient answer to that statefor he went on quickly. ow long shall you stay?" in spite of himself he could not is anxiety out of his voice. ink father's going on to the city

ne tomorrow-probably in the

's face fell. on as that?"

one like the International, uld enjoy standing by and ou work.' to the work. Abbott does e men, of course.' ork is the work that makes d profitable the labor of the answered. "You plan, you est only follow. By the r told me to ask you and cause of the opposition. itt to dine with us tonight in

the presence of

younger, have been charged with the confident that we provided latticing that he had been all wrong and his great responsibilities of the bridge had enough to take up all the stresses. I father all right, so that he entered it not been for his exhaustive prepara- looked into that matter myself," he had erected in faraway Burma, trium-He fell into a little reverie for a all sorts of difficulties, had attracted not worry about that."

worth, the president of the Martlet Bridge company.

his eye for a long time. When he commissioned his father, Bertram Meade, Sr., to prepare the plans for the great International, the most-sought-for and famous of bridges, he had noted with satisfaction that the older man, who stood first among bridge engineers on the continent, had associated with himself his son. Mende, Jr., had recently returned from South America, where he had again shown his mettle. The two worked together in the preparation of the designs for what was to be the crown and triumph of the older man's life, the most stupendous of all the

cantilever bridges in the world. The great engineer had a high idea of his only son's ability. He was willing to proclaim it, to maintain it, and defend it against all comers except himself. When the two wills clashed, he recognized but one way, his own. The relations between the two were lovely but not ideal. There was leadership not partnership, direction rather than co-operation. The knowledge and experience of the boy-for so he loved to call him-where of course nothing try to persuade him to stay compared to those of his father. When, we seen lots of bridges built in discussing moot points, the younger man had been unconvinced by the calculations of the elder, he had been laughed to scorn in a good-natured way. His carefully set forth objections, even in serious matters, had been overborne generally, and by trium- here to me I'll get it in place in short phant calculations of his own the father had re-enforced himself in his conclusions; and the more strongly be-

Young Meade's position was rather anomalous. He had no direct supere's mood changed into positive vision of the construction. He was

I can't," he said dejectedly. "I his father. He had welcomed the posihaven't any clothes, neither has Ab- tion because it gave him an opportu- be finished, so that we can all go back bott. We left our dress suits behind nity to see from the very beginning the to normal life again." bwkward and con- us when we came into the wilderness erection of what was to be the great-

"Oh," she laughed. "What difference world had ever trod upon, the wheels is the bridge is an obsession with us other had not queened it among the It will be a relief. I like you that way. He had followed with the utmost has ever handled. Indeed, it is the and-"

which was concerned with it had with- mighty river that flowed between them. was the very point which I myself had boldly. By no means would Meade, the questioned, but father is absolutely

went on with much emphasis. "I guess it's all right," said Curtiss

"It

"Those trusses," said Abbott emphat-

ically, "will stand forever. You need

"Are you going to finish this job on time?" asked Severence, the vice presidem. "You know the financial end of He had kept the young man under it is mine, and much depends upon the you care to accept it. On the strength date of completion."

"That depends upon you people at the shop, doctor. If you get the stuff



It Had Been a Part of His Life.

order," answered Abbott.

"We aren't worrying about anything with you and Meade on the job, Abbott," said the colonel genially,

"Yes, you are, father," said the girl, ing wonderingly at the two. Ever since the International has been started you have scarcely been able to

"I hope so, too," assented the colonel, est cantilever bridge the feet of the "and I guess you are right. The fact on man's jobs for a decade and the does that make? Come just as you are, of the world had ever rolled across. all. It is the biggest job the Martlet out on the bridge. The moon is rising

"They won't," said the young man

He had long since persuaded himself upon his defense and the defense of the bridge with enthusiasm. He was ready to break a lance with anybody on its behalf."

"Well," began the colonel, "we have every confidence in your father and in you. I don't mind telling you, Meade, it need not go any further, that when this bridge is completed we shall be prepared to make you personally a very advantageous offer for future relations with the Martlet company if of your probable acceptance we are already planning to venture into certain foreign fields which we have hitherto not felt it to our interest to enter."

"That is most kind of you, Colonel Illingworth," said the young man gratefully, "and it appeals to me very strongly. I have been associated with father latterly. He wants to retire with the completion of this bridge, and before I open any office of my own I should like the advantage of further experience. Such a connection as you propose seems to me to be ideal, from my point of view. No man could have any better backing than the Martlet Bridge company."

"Well, we shall look to you to be worthy of it," said the colonel kindly.

His glance vaguely comprehended his daughter as he spoke. Colonel Illingworth was a very rich man. The Martlet Bridge company was nearest his heart, but he had many other interests. His only daughter would eventually be the mistress of a great fortune. Meade was not poor. Of course, his means were limited compared to Colonel Illingworth's great fortune, but what he had earned, saved, and invested was sufficient-yes, even for two. And he would inherit much more. Old Meade had not been the greatest englneer of his generation for nothing. Independent and self-respecting, young Meade could not be considered a fortune hunter by anybody. He was the kind of man to whom a decent father likes to intrust his daughter. Old Colonel Illingworth found himself gaz-

After dinner the men sat out on the observation platform with their cigars there as resident engineer representing give a thought even to me. I'm tired and coffee. For those that liked it of it. I hope the old thing will soon there was something in tall glasses in which ice tinkled when the glasses were agitated, but Meade declined all three.

"With your permission, sir," he said, "I am going to take Miss Illingworth

tracks, piles of steel, rough wooden planks, paint and-"

"Can't I?" she said ; "you just see." "I hate to see you spoll your dress," he said uncertainly as she stopped.

Really what gown on earth was worth half an hour of her society? At least that is the way he felt about it. and evidently she felt the same way.

"It is settled, then," she said, slipping her arm through his as they walked down the long wooden platform near the siding. At the end of the platform, as they turned about the temporary station and storehouse, before them rose the bridge. The moon was rising over the high hills that sprang up from the steep clifflike bank of the other side of the vast river. They saw her round, red, full face through an interlacing tracery of steel The lower part of the bridge was still in deep shadow. Indeed, the moon had just cleared the hills of the opposite bank of the great gorge cut by the broad river flowing swiftly in its darkness far below. At the farther end of the suspended arm extending far over the water the top of the traveler glistened. The cantilever on the opposite shore, incomplete and sunk under a high rise of sand, was still in shadow and not yet discernible.

Unwittingly the woman drew a little near the man. He became more conscious than before of the light touch of her hand upon his arm. It was very still where they stood. The shacks of the workmen had been erected below the bridge about a quarter of a mile to the right along the banks of the little affluent of the main stream. They could hear faint but indistinguishable noises that yet indicated humanity coming from that direction. The fires in the machine house and in the engines were banked. Lazy curls of smoke rose to be blown away in the limitless areas of the upper air. In the darkness all the unsightly evidences of construction work were hidden.

"Oh." said the woman, drawing a long breath, "I don't wonder that you love it. Isn't it beautiful, flung up in the air that way? One would think it wasn't steel but silver and gold and-" "Time was," said the man, "when I loved a thing like that above everything except my father, but now-"

Young Meade comes out of his dream with a terrific bump -the real story begins with the next installment. Tell your friends to read "Web of Steel," the best serial of the year.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)