The Magnificent Ambersons By Booth Tarkington

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A DARK-EYED LITTLE BEAUTY OF NINETEEN.

Synopsis.—Major Amberson had made a fortune in 1873 when other people were losing fortunes, and the magnificence of the Ambersons began then. Major Amberson laid out a 200-acre "development," with roads and statuary, and in the center of a four-acre tract, on Amberson avenue, built for himself the most magnificent mansion Midland City had ever seen. When the major's daughter married young Wilbur Minafer the neighbors predicted that as Isabel could never really love Wilbur all her love would be bestowed upon the children. There is only one child, however, George Amberson Minafer, and his upbringing and his youthful accomplishments as a mischief maker are quite in keeping with the most pessimistic predictions.

CHAPTER II-Continued.

"Your sister stole it for me!" George instantly replied, checking the pony. "She stole it off our clo'esline an' gave It to me."

"You go get your hair cut!" said the stranger hotly. "Yah! I haven't got any sister!" "I know you haven't at home,"

Georgie responded. "I mean the one that's in jail."

"I dare you to get down off that pony!" Georgie jumped to the ground, and

the other boy descended from the Rev. Mr. Smith's gatepost—but he descended inside the gate. "I dare you out-Alde that gate," said Georgie.

"Yah! I dare you half way here. I dare you-"

But these were luckless challenges, for Georgie immediately vaulted the fence-and four minutes later Mrs. Malloch Smith, hearing strange noises, looked forth from a window; then screamed, and dashed for the pastor's study. Mr. Malloch Smith, that grimyard and found his visiting nephew being rapidly prepared by Master Minafer to serve as a principal figure in a pageant of massacre. It was with great physical difficulty that Mr. Smith managed to give his nephew a chance to escape into the house, for Georgie was hard and quick, and in wach matters remarkably intense; but the minister, after a grotesque tussle, got him separated from his opponent and shook him.

"You stop that, you!" Georgie cried flercely, and wrenched himself away. "I guess you don't know who I am!"

"Yes. I do know!" the angered Mr. Smith retorted. "I know who you are, and you're a disgrace to your mother! Your mother ought to be ashamed of herself to allow-"

"Shut up about my mother bein' ashamed of herself!"

Mr. Smith, exasperated, was unable to close the dialogue with dignity. "She ought to be ashamed," he repeated. "A woman that lets a bad boy like you-"

But Georgie had reached his pony and mounted. Before setting off at his accustomed gallop he paused to interrupt the Rev. Malloch Smith again. "You pull down your vest, you ole billygoat, you!" he shouted, distinctly. "Pull down your vest, wipe off your chin-an' go to h-!"

Such precocity is less unusual, even in children of the Rich, than most grown people imagine. However, it was a new experience for the Rev. Malloch Smith, and left him in a state of excitement. He at once wrote a note to George's mother, describing the crime according to his nephew's testimony, and the note reached Mrs. Minafer before Georgie did. When he got home she read it to him sorrowfully.

" Dear Madam: Your son has caused a painful distress in my household. He made an unprovoked attack upon a little nephew of mine who is visiting in my household, insulted him by calling him vicious names and falsehoods, stating that ladies of his family were in jail. He then tried to make his pony kick him, and when the child, who is only eleven years old, while your son is much older and stronger, endeavored to avoid his indignities and withdraw quietly, he pursued him into the inclosure of my property and brutally assaulted him. When I appeared upon this scene he deliberately called insulting words to me, concluding with profanity, such as "go to h-," which was heard not only by myself but by my wife and the lady who lives next door. I trust such a state of undisciplined behavior may be remedied for the sake of the reputation for propriety, if nothing higher, of the family to which this unruly child be-

Georgie had muttered various interruptions, and as she concluded the

reading he said: "He's an ole liar!"

"Georgie, you mustn't say 'liar.' Isn't this letter the truth?"

"Well," said Georgie, "how old am "Ten."

"Well, look how he says I'm older than a boy eleven years old." "That's true," said Isabel. does. But isn't some of it true,

Georgie felt himself to be in a difsculty here, and he was silent. "George, did you say what he says you did?"

"Which one?" say, 'Go to h-?'

ment longer; then he brightened. "Listen here, mamma; grandpa wouldn't nomenon resulting from the adult faintly amused condescension. There George became pink with mortificawould her warm

"Georgie, you mustn't-"

him, would they? - He doesn't ever know you, does he, mamma?"

"That hasn't anything to do with it." "Yes, it has! I mean: none of the Amberson family go to see him, and they never have him come in their house; they wouldn't ask him to, and prob'ly wouldn't even let him."

"That isn't what we're talking about."

"I bet," said Georgie emphatically, "I bet if he wanted to see any of 'em, he'd haf to go around to the side door !"

"No, dear, they-"

"Yes, they would, mamma! So what does it matter if I say somep'm' to him he didn't like? That kind o' people, I don't see why you can't say anything you want to to 'em!"

"No, Georgie. And you haven't answered me whether you said that dreadful thing he says you did." "Well-" said Georgie. "Anyway,

he said somep'm' to me that made me mad." And upon this point he offered no further details: he would not exhasty condemnation of herself: "Your mother ought to be ashamed," and "A woman that lets a bad boy like you-" Georgie did not even conthese insolences,

Isabel stroked his head. were terrible words for you to use, dear. From his letter he doesn't secal a very tactful person, but-"

"He's just riffraff," sald Georgie. those bad words he speaks of? Where did you hear anyone use them?"

places. I guess Uncle George Amberson was the first I ever heard say 'em. Uncle George Amberson said 'em to papa once. Papa didn't like it, but Uncle George was just laughin' at was laughin."

"That was wrong of him," she said, but almost instinctively he detected the lack of conviction in her tone. It was Isabel's great falling that whatever an Amberson did seemed right to her, especially if the Amberson was either her brother George or her son George. "You must promise me," she said feebly, "never to use those bad words again."

"I promise not to," he said promptly-and he whispered an immediate codicil under his breath: "Unless I get mad at somebody!" This satisfied a code according to which, in his own sincere belief, he never told lies.

"That's a good boy," she said, and he ran out to the yard, his punishment

As an Amberson he was already a public character, and the story of his adventure in the Rev. Malloch Smith's front yard became a town topic. Many



Promeno "Pull Down Your Vest, You Ole Billygoat."

people glanced at him with great distaste thereafter, when they chanced "Did you tell him to-to- Did you to encounter him, which meant nothing to Georgie, because he innocently Georgie looked worried for a mo- believed most grown people to be necessarily cross looking as a normal phewipe his shoe on that ole story teller, state; and he failed to comprehend was a difference, however. The grand- tion as his mother called his attention

the transfer

certainly most people believed a story Mrs. Amberson's funeral, when Georgie was eleven. Georgie was reported to have differed with the undertaker about the seating of the family; his indignant voice had become audible: "Well, who is the most important person at my own grandmother's funeral?" And later he had projected his head from the window of the foremost mourners' carriage, as the undertaker happened to pass.

"Riffraff!" There were people grown people they were—who expressed themselves longingly: they did hope to live to see the day, they said, when that boy would get his come-upance! (They used that honest word, so much better than "deserts," and not until many years later to be more clumsily rendered as "what is coming to him.") Something was bound to take him down some day, and they only wanted to be there! But Georgie heard nothing of this, and the yearners for his taking down went unsatisfied, while their yearning grew the greater as the happy day of fulfillment was longer and longer postponed.

CHAPTER III.

Until he reached the age of twelve Georgie's education was a domestic process; tutors came to the house, and those citizens who yearned for his plain to his mother that what had taking down often said: "Just wait till bearded preacher, came to the front made him "mad" was Mr. Smith's he has to go to public school; then he'll get it!" But at twelve Georgie was sent to a private school in the town, and there came from this small and independent institution no report, sider excusing himself by quoting or even rumor, of Georgie's getting anything that he was thought to deserve; therefore the yearning still persisted, though growing gaunt with feeding upon itself.

The yearners were still yearning when Georgie at sixteen was sent "You mustn't say so," his mother away to a great "prep school." gently agreed. "Where did you learn "Now," they said brightly, "he'll get it! He'll find himself among boys just as important in their home town as he "Well, I've heard 'em serreval is, and they'll knock the stuffing out of him when he puts on his airs with them! Oh, but that would be worth something to see!" They were mis taken, it appeared, for when Georgie returned a few months later he still papa, an' then he said 'em while he seemed to have the same stuffing. He had been deported by the authorities, the offense being stated as "insolence and profanity;" in fact, he had given the principal of the school instructions almost identical with those formerly objected to by the Rev. Malloch

> But he had not got his come-upance and those who counted upon it were embittered by his appearance upon the downtown streets driving a dogcart at a criminal speed, making pe destrians retreat from the crossings, and behaving himself as if he "owned the earth."

When Mr. George Amberson Mina fer came home for the holidays at Christmastide in his sophomore year, probably no great change had taken place inside him, but his exterior was visibly altered. Nothing about him encouraged any hope that he had received his come-upance; on the contrary, the yearners for that stroke of justice must yearn even more itchingly: the gilded youth's manner had become polite, but his politeness was of a kind which democratic people found hard to bear.

Cards were out for a ball in his honor, and this pageant of the tenantry was held in the ballroom of the Amberson mansion the night after his arrival. It was, as Mrs. Henry Franklin Foster said of Isabel's wedding, "a big Amberson-style thing." All "old citizens" recognized as gentry received cards, and of course so did their dancing descendants.

The orchestra and the caterer were brought from away, in the Amberson plied the speaker's personal detachmanner, though this was really a gesture-perhaps one more of habit than indifferent amusement was what of ostentation—for servitors of gayety George felt when his mother, with as proficient as these importations a gentle emphasis, interrupted his inwere nowadays to be found in the town. It was the last of the great, long-remembered dances that "everybody talked about"-there were getting to be so many people in town that no later than the next year there were too many for "everybody" to hear of even such a ball as the Ambersons'.

George, white-gloved, with a gardenia in his buttonhole, stood with his mother and the Major, embowered in the big red-and-gold drawing room downstairs, to "receive" the guests: and, standing thus together, the trio offered a picturesque example of good looks persistent through three generations. The Major, his daughter and his grandson were of a type all Amberson: tall, straight and regular, with dark eyes, short noses, good chins: and the grandfather's expression, no less than the grandson's, was one of the queer-looking duck with them, and that. I expect to do a good deal of that the distasteful glances had any son's unlined young face had nothing personal bearing upon himself. If he to offer except this condescension: shake his hand. This work for idle to a white-bearded guest waiting to Sydney was an Amberson exaging you know Satan finds work replied:

Man & was word in the water to

ably, as to mutter, "Riffraff!" Pos- | face, conscious of its importance, but | connection by marriage with the Am sibly he would have shouted it; and persuasive rather than arrogant, and not without tokens of sufferings withthat went round the town just after stood. The Major's short white hair was parted in the middle, like his grandson's, and in all he stood as briskly equipped to the fashion as the exquisite young George.

Isabel, standing between her father and her son, caused a vague amazement in the mind of the latter. Her age, just under forty, was for George a thought of something as remote as the moons of Jupiter: he could not possibly have conceived such an age ever coming to be his own: five years was the limit of his thinking in time. Five years ago he had been a child not yet fourteen; and those five years were an abyss. Five years hence he would be almost twenty-four; what the girls he knew called "one of the older men." He could imagine himself at twenty-four, but beyond that his powers staggered and refused the task. He saw little essential difference between thirty-eight and eightyeight, and his mother was to him not a woman but wholly a mother. The woman, Isabel, was a stranger to her son; as completely a stranger as if he had never in his life seen her or heard her voice. And it was tonight, while he stood with her, "receiving," that he caught a disquieting glimpse of this stranger whom he thus fleetingly encountered for the first time.

Youth cannot imagine romance apart from youth. That is why the roles of the heroes and heroines of plays are given by the managers to the most youthful actors they can find among the competent. Both middleaged people and young people enjoy a play about young lovers; but only middle-aged people will tolerate a play about middle-aged lovers: young people will not come to see such play, because for them middle-aged lovers are a joke-not a very funny one. Therefore, to bring both the middle-aged people and the young people into his house the manager makes his romance as young as he con. Youth will indeed be served, and its profound instinct is to be not only scornfully amused but vaguely angered by middle-aged romance. So, standing beside his mother, George was disturbed by a sudden impression, coming upon him out of nowhere, so far as he could detect, that her eyes were brilliant, that she was graceful and youthful—in a word that she was romantically lovely.

He had one of those curious moments that seem to have neither a cause nor any connection with actual things. There was nothing in either her looks or her manner to explain George's uncomfortable feeling; and yet it increased, becoming suddenly a vague resentment, as if she had done something unmotherly to him.

The fantastic moment passed; and even while it lasted he was doing his duty, greeting two pretty girls with whom he had grown up, as people say, and warmly assuring them that he remembered them very well-an assurance which might have surprised them "in anybody but Georgie Minafer!" It seemed unnecessary, since he had spent many hours with them no longer than the preceding August. They had with them their parents and an uncle from out of town; and George negligently gave the parents the same assurance he had given the daughters, but murmured another form of greeting to the out-of-town uncle, whom he had never seen before. This person George absently took note of as a "queer-looking duck." Undergraduates had not yet adopted "bird." It was a period previous to that in which a sophomor would have thought of the Sharon girls' uncle as a "queerlooking bird," or, perhaps, a "funnyface bird." In George's time every human male was to be defined at pleasure as a "duck;" but "duck" was not spoken with admiring affection, as in its former feminine use to signify a "dear"-on the contrary, "duck" imment and humorous superiority. An terchange of courtesies with the nieces to present him to the queerlooking duck, their uncle. This emphasis of Isabel's, though slight, enabled George to perceive that she considered the queer-looking duck a person of some importance; but it was far from enabling him to understand why. The duck parted his thick and longish black hair on the side; his tie was a forgetful-looking thing, and his coat, though it fitted a goodenough middle-aged figure, no product of this year, or of last year either. Observing only his unfashionable hair. his preoccupied tie and his old coat. the Olympic George set him down as a queer-looking duck, and having thus completed his portrait took no interest in him.

wouldn't have anything to do with have been affected only so far, prob- say. It was a handsome, worldly old lold John's boast that in spite of his his stately jowl furnished with an Ed- Exchange. THE RESIDENCE ARE NOT A TOWN THE

医智思智思知思知思知思知知识知识知识知识知识知识知识 识现识别知识知识知识知识 bersons he never had worn and never would wear a swaller-tail coat. Members of his family had exerted their influence uselessly - at eighty-nine conservative people seldom form radical new habits, and old John wore his "Sunday suit" of black broadcloth to the Amberson ball. The coat was square, with skirts to the knees; old John called it a "Prince Albert" and was well enough pleased with it, but his great-nephew considered it the next thing to an insult.

The large room had filled, and so had the broad hall and the rooms on the other side of the hall, where there were tables for whist. The imported orchestra waited in the ballroom on the third floor, but a local harp, 'cello, violin and flute were playing airs from "The Fencing Master" in the hall, and people were shouting over the music. Old John Minafer's voice was louder and more penetrating than any other, because he had been troubled with deafness for twenty-five years, heard his own voice but faintly, and liked to hear it. "Smell o' flowers like this always puts me in mind o' funerals," he kept telling his niece, Fanny Minafer, who was with him; and he seemed to get a great deal of satisfaction out of this reminder. His tremulous yet strident voice cut through the voluminous sound that filled the room, and he was heard everywhere.

Presently George's mortification was increased to hear this sawmill droning harshly from the midst of the thickening crowd: "Ain't the dancin' broke out yet, Fanny? Hoopla! Le's push through and go see the young women folks crack their heels! Start the circus! Hoopsey-daisy!' Miss Fanny Minafer, in charge of the lively veteran, was almost as distressed as her nephew George, but she did her duty and managed to get old John through the press and out to the broad stairway, which numbers of young people were now ascending to the ballroom. George began to recover from the degradation into which this relic of early settler days had dragged him. What restored him completely was a darkeyed little beauty of nineteen, very knowing in lustrous blue and jet; at sight of this dashing advent in the line of guests before him George was fully an Amberson again.

"Remember you very well indeed!" he said, his graciousness more earnest than any he had heretofore displayed. Isabel heard him and laughed.

"But you don't, George!" she said. 'You don't remember her yet, though of course you will! Miss Morgan is from out of town, and I'm afraid this is the first time you've ever seen her. You might take her up to the dancing; I think you've pretty well done your duty here."

"Be d'lighted," George responded formally, and offered his arm, not with a flourish, certainly, but with an impressiveness inspired partly by the appearance of the person to whom he offered it, partly by his being the hero of this fete, and partly by his youthfulness-for when manners are new they are apt to be elaborate. The little beauty intrusted her gloved fingers to his coatsleeve, and they moved away together.

As he conducted Miss Morgan through the hall toward the stairway they passed the open double doors of a cardroom, where some squadrons of older people were preparing for action, and, leaning gracefully upon the mantelpiece of this room, a tall man, handsome, high-mannered and sparklingly point-device, held laughing converse with that queer-looking duck; the Sharon girls' uncle. The tall gentleman waved a gracious salutation to George, and Miss Morgan's curiosity was stirred. "Who is that?"

"I didn't catch his name when my mother presented him to me," said George. "You mean the queer-looking

"I mean the aristocratic duck." "That's my Uncle George. Honorable George Amberson. I thought everybody knew him."

"He looks as though everybody strange feelings within him: an exalought to know him," she said. "It seems to run in your family."

If she had any sly intention it skipped over George harmlessly. "Well, of course, I suppose most everybody does," he admitted-"out in this part of the country especially. Besides Uncle George is in congress: the family like to have someone there."

"Why?"

"Well, it's sort of a good thing in one way. For instance, Uncle Sydney Amberson and his wife, Aunt Amelia, they haven't much of anything to do with themselves-get bored to death around here, of course. Well, probably Uncle George'll have Uncle Sydney appointed minister or ambassador or something like that, to Russia or Italy or somewhere, and that'll make it pleasant when any of the rest of The Sharon girls passed on, taking the family go traveling, or things like traveling myself when I get out of col-

personal bearing upon himself. If he to offer except this condescension; shake his hand. This was George's gerated—more pompous than gracious; hands to do?" She quickly replied: "I mean: none of the Ambersons had perceived such a bearing he would the grandfather's had other things to great-uncle, old John Minafer: it was too portly, flushed, starched to a shine, "He must be something like you."

ward the Seventh neard. Alnely wise full-bodied, showed blond hair exuberantly plnk, fat face cold under a tiara; a solid, cold bosom white-hot necklace; great, cold arms, and the rest of her bea upholstered. As George ascende broad stairway they were the aunt and uncle he was pleased to point out to a girl fro of town, as his appurtenances in the way of relatives. At sight of the the grandeur of the Amberson hand was instantly conspicuous as a pen nent thing: it was impossible to don't that the Ambersons were intrene in their nobility and riches, being polished and glittering berriers were bear wer were as solid as they were brilly

CHAPTER IV.

The hero of the fete, with the eyed little beauty upon his reached the top of the second flip stairs; and here, beyond a space landing, where two proud-like day tended a crystalline punch bowl in wide archways in a rose-vine into framed gliding silhouettes of walken already smoothly at it to the casting of "La Paloma." Old John Minde evidently surfeited, was in the act of leaving these delights escorted by middle-aged man of commonplace in pearance. The escort had a dry, had face upon which, not ornamental but as a matter of course, there per a business man's short mustache; to his thin neck showed an Adam's apple but not conspicuously, for there va nothing conspicuous about him. Bak ish, dim, quiet, he was an unnoting



George Danced Well and Miss Morgan Seemed to Float.

able part of this festival, and although there were a dozen or more middle aged men present, not casually to be distinguished from him in general as pect, he was probably the last person in the big house at whom a stranger would have glanced twice. It did not enter George's mind to mention to Miss Morgan that this was his father, or to say anything whatever about

Mr. Minafer shook his son's hand unobtrusively in passing.

"I'll take Uncle John home," he said in a low voice. "Then I guest I'll go on home myself-I'm not s great hand at parties, you know. Good night, George."

George murmured a friendly enough good night without pausing. Ordnarily he was not ashamed of the Minafers; he seldom thought about them at all, for he belonged, as most Amer ican children do, to the mother's family-but he was anxious not to linger with Miss Morgan in the vicinity of old John, whom he felt to be a dis-

He pushed brusquely through the fringe of calculating youths who were gathered in the arches, watching for chances to dance only with girls who would soon be taken off their hands and led his stranger lady out upon the floor. They caught the time instantly, and were away in the waltz.

George danced well, and Miss Morgan seemed to float as part of the mo sic, the very dove itself of "La Palo ma." George became conscious of tation of soul, tender but indefinite, and seemingly located in the upper part of his diaphragm. The stopping of the music came

upon him like the waking to an alarm clock; for instantly six or seven of the calculating persons about the entryways bore down upon Miss Morgan to secure dances. George had to de with one already established as a belle, it seemed.

"Old times starting all over again! My Lord!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

One for Mamma. I sent my small daughter into the front room to do some dusting. Not hearing her around, I stepped quietly into the room and found her sitting idly by the window with her work unfinished. I said to her: Don't