

THE CASH INTRIGUE
By **GEORGE RANDOLPH CHESTER**
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SYNOPSIS

Phillip Kelvin, accompanied by his negro bodyguard, Sam, invades Wall street with \$2,000,000 in a dress suit case and begins selling stocks, going short 4,000 shares daily. He meets Rensselaer, an old comrade.

They call upon Elsie White and her poverty-stricken family. Elsie apparently loves Phillip. Broker Gallen warns Kelvin he will be ruined, but Kelvin continues to sell stocks.

Kelvin tells Wall street magnates that a billion dollars of actual currency has been withdrawn from circulation by Henry Breed's bread trust. The cash corner causes a panic in stocks. Banker Pellman endeavors to see Breed.

Breed refuses to release cash and stop the panic. Kelvin declines to assist Pellman, who discovers that Breed is the power behind Kelvin's stock operations.

Business goes to smash. Thousands are starving. Kelvin assists Elsie White, who learns that he has caused the panic. She becomes Lillian Breed's maid at Forest Lakes, the Breed estate.

Breed shows Lillian and Kelvin his steel vault in the cellar, containing millions in cash. His ambition is to concentrate all the money in the United States in this vault.

Blagg, Breed's wireless operator, plans a social revolution. He hates Breed and loves Lillian. Breed and Kelvin plan to control all the railroads. Breed sends for Rollins, a great railroad man.

CHAPTER XIII.

Breed came out and called Rollins into the library, where Kelvin was already seated. The old man was almost childish in his admiration of his two lieutenants, as he chose to call them.

"I have been waiting for years for this," said he, rubbing his clawlike hands together as he looked from the one to the other of them. "In all my years of money making my only worry was that when the time came I might not find capable men through which to wield the ultimate power I craved. Like most worry, it was wasted. You two young men have done wonderful work, but it has only just begun."

"Precisely my errand," said Rollins, with a rather wan smile. "The work is only just begun, and at the outset I have found so much opposition that I ran down here for moral support."

"You've come to the right place," laughed Kelvin. "At Forest Lakes we are dealing almost exclusively in moral support."

"Backed by the dead weight of more cash than was ever in one man's control since time began," chuckled Breed. "What are your difficulties, Mr. Rollins?"

"Well," said Rollins, "I have practically put the United Steel corporation out of business as a monopoly. Here is a communication I had from MacDougal. If ever a big man made a whim in a letter MacDougal is the man, and here is this whim." And with huge contempt he tossed down a three page missive which Kelvin read, with a smile.

"The answer," went on Rollins, "is open heart steel and the control of transportation. I have put them in direct competition with our own plants, and they are underbidding us. I intend to let them have some large contracts at a price we cannot touch. Now I begin to have dreams."

"I don't see any difficulty in that," laughed Kelvin. "A man doesn't dream many dreams in the face of failures. It's success that brings dreams. I have dreams of my own. I have done a little thinking about these dreams of late."

"I know you have," interposed Rollins. "Somebody has been doing a great deal of thinking around here. At first I thought it was Mr. Breed, but now I know that he hires his thinking."

Breed himself was the first to acknowledge by a chuckle the truth of this remark.

"I used to have to do it myself when I was poor," he admitted, "but that is not the way to success. You can't get rich that way any more than you can by performing all your own manual labor. My success is built on an unusual ability to discover men who can think for me. But you two go ahead and exchange your dreams; I am interested."

"I have no objection to telling mine," said Kelvin. "I want to do a little trust business."

"I've tried it, and that's why I'm here," laughed Rollins. "Trust busting, with absolute control of every mile of railroad in the United States, is the easiest thing in the world. Raymer, Speed, Melton Sears & Co. and all the others have been making life a burden to me. Strangely enough, they don't want to be drawn and quartered."

"I hate them, every one," suddenly snapped Breed. "A dozen times they tried to gobble me up in the early days. I have their photographs, too, waiting to be checked off."

"We'll let you check them off by and by," replied Rollins. "They are crippled now, but it was a task. Even with all my experience I didn't appreciate the full extent of the private car graft. It was a colossal trick, serving merely as a disguise for excessive and absurd rebates."

"Well, you stopped it," Kelvin consoled him.

"Yes, I stopped it," admitted Rollins, with a sigh, "and the next thing that

happened I had all the big packers on my neck."

"The only way to forget the attacks of the packers," suggested Kelvin, "is to attack the other monopolies. Hamstring them the first stroke."

"Good!" said Rollins, with relief. "It's a pleasure to find that we want the same thing without argument. It's simple enough. I've merely to establish my flat freight rate without undue reduction for quantity and without rebate, thus giving the small shipper an equal chance with the big one. The interstate commerce law may then go out of commission, for we will do the same work which it was designed to do, but in which it failed."

Kelvin and Breed exchanged glances. "Don't misunderstand me," went on Rollins. "I consider the trusts as much a product of natural law as the attraction of gravitation, but where they attain to stupendous fatness merely on abuses they cease to fulfill the need which brought them into existence. The greatest abuse of which the monopolies have been guilty is in transportation. Probably more than half of the freight carried is shipped by large corporations, nearly every ton of it being subject to a rebate or drawback of some sort, and this drain on the railroads, amounting to millions every year, must be made up by the small shippers. I can lower the present ostensible cost of transportation on a flat rate basis and make more money for our stockholders."

Breed looked at Kelvin inquiringly. Phillip nodded his head.

"I have been over some of the figures," said Breed. "The aggregate is appalling, but I am afraid that, after all, we shall be compelled to allow certain concessions in certain places."

Rollins turned slightly pale. "I have been waiting for that remark," he said, "but I want you to understand that there will be no concession of any sort. One exception I grant you, and that is the secret rebate on Mr. Breed's bread, wheat and cereal shipments, which was agreed upon in the first place; other than that, absolutely none. I propose to manage these united railroads unhampered or I propose to create such a stench that public opinion will revolt at the next stockholders' meeting and you will be utterly unable to secure proxies. Without proxies you have no railroad domination."

Again Breed and Kelvin exchanged glances. Again Phillip nodded his head.

"You are quite right in your contention, Mr. Rollins," admitted Kelvin. "But you misunderstand us. We don't intend to interfere with your absolute control. We do hope, however, to have you see that our way of planning is right. Until then we shall not even bother you with advice. In the meantime promulgate your flat rate sheet and we'll stand behind you."

Rollins studied the matter over for some time. "Very well," said he. "I think that I shall remain at Forest Lakes for a month or so. I had just as lief have the avalanche of protests come to me here as in New York. I understand by this that you will neither promise nor attempt to make any concessions to these people."

"Absolutely none," declared Kelvin. "We'll give you our bond on that."

"Your word is enough at present," replied Rollins dryly. "If you will stick to the letter of that I am perfectly satisfied."

After Rollins had left the room Kelvin turned inquiringly to Breed. "Will he come in?" he asked anxiously.

"When the time is ripe, yes," asserted Breed confidently. "It is in his blood, and when the time comes he'll listen."

That evening Rollins met Elsie White coming down the kitchen steps and joined her. She was so frank, so wholesome, that he always had an indefinite impression of being the better for having talked with her, even though nothing of moment had been said.

"How the country agrees with you!" he observed as he joined her. "You were looking rather pale when I first saw you here, but you have found some marvelous rouge among these trees."

"I like it very much," she admitted, turning his compliment with a smile. "I have already grown to have a certain amount of supercilious pity for city dwellers."

"They really need it," he agreed, with a laugh, "and to prove that I am sincere in that remark I am going to stop with you for a month or so."

"Good!" she exclaimed. "More people to enjoy Forest Lakes is all that we need."

"Do they never have any visitors?" Rollins inquired, "week end parties and the like?"

"Never," she replied. "For festivities of that sort they go down occasionally to Mr. Breed's other place in Virginia, but Mr. Breed is very jealous of having any social life whatever here."

Rollins strolled by her side until they reached the cottage, where the garrulous Mrs. White met them at the door.

Mrs. White was delighted to be introduced to Mr. Rollins.

"Elsie has told me all about what a fine man you are, and fine men are scarce enough any place. Are you going to stay long this time?"

"He promises us a month at least, mother."

"That's nice," asserted Mrs. White. "It's fine to have a lot of good looking men around. My goodness! I tell Elsie she never will have a chance to get married if she stays here."

Rollins was so thankful to Elsie that she laughed from sheer amusement and gave him a chance to join her. His amusement and also his repressed embarrassment were heightened when, after Elsie had invited him to sit on the vine clad little front stoop, Mrs.

White suddenly and conspicuously absented herself. The two were silent for a time, when they heard approaching voices.

"You had better come in with us," said the voice of Blagg from just beyond the corner of the house. "The organization now numbers more than a quarter of a million, all of the down-trodden, sworn to serve the best interests of the poor."

"But if they are all poor people what can they do to help themselves?" objected the voice of Ben White.

"Rise up and overwhelm the existing condition of things by the mere weight of numbers," responded Blagg quickly and tensely. "Moreover, the organization is not so poor as you might think. It has quite a snug little sum in its own treasury, and, besides that, I know where there is \$1,500,000,000 in cash that we can seize upon the moment we rise. Look here, Mr. White, I want to explain to you the system of our organization."

By the sound of the voices they were slowly walking away. Elsie turned to Rollins with a troubled frown.

"I don't like this Mr. Blagg," she declared. "He talks nearly every evening with father about some secret society he wishes him to join, and I am afraid."

Rollins laughed easily. "These socialistic organizations never do anything," he told her.

He thought no more of the matter just then, but he did think more and more frequently of Elsie White as the days wore on. He knew that he had lost caste with Mrs. Rensselaer the first time she saw him with Lillian's maid, but he did not care to hold caste with Mrs. Rensselaer. The Rollins men folk had held it as their right to marry whom they chose, and he began a deliberate courtship of Elsie White.

He avoided Lillian Breed from fastidious choice, but he spent much time in his spare hours with Kelvin and young Rensselaer.

One drowsy night he had dropped to sleep upon a bench on the porch in the shadow of a climbing rosebush. He was awakened by the scrape of chairs and became conscious of low and tense voices quite near him.

"You, too, could love as I love," said the voice of Blagg, trembling with repressed intensity, "could love with seething brain, with pounding pulses, with a heart the throbs of which would hurt and hurt and hurt!"

"You are almost poetical in your anatomy of the emotions," drawled the contemptuous voice of Lillian Breed. "I had no idea that the love of money could affect one in that precise way."

"You don't mean that slur," he protested angrily. "You know that if you had not a dollar I would still have for you this hunger that starves me, this thirst that parches me, this flame that burns me, this agony that makes me cry out in the night."

"You ought not to encourage yourself in that attitude," she said, with less contempt. "You are making a breach in the confidence that is placed in you here."

"I would make a breach in the wall of heaven," he retorted passionately. "I would break and destroy it utterly, would grind it to atoms, would scatter its dust to the four winds, if by that I might win you. And you could love, I tell you, as madly as I do."

"Yes," she admitted slowly, "but not you."

"I know," he responded bitterly, "but you are wasting your affections. Kelvin cares for no one but himself."

"Who told you to speak his name? Don't make me hate you."

"I'd rather that than indifference," he declared, "so hate me, for hate at least is an emotion. As for Kelvin, I will not be silent about him, for I think you're mistaken about even yourself. It is not Kelvin to whom you are attracted, but the force he represents. The power to achieve, that is what you worship, but in your dreams of the power he might acquire you are blind to other possibilities. I, too, can give you power. Join with me and future historians will acclaim us as the great liberators of the chained and manacled American public."

"Splendid!" she exclaimed, laughing lightly. "I didn't even know they needed liberation."

"You have much to learn," he returned. "Do you know that the army of the unemployed now numbers nearly a million? Do you know that there is an organization among them and their more fortunate brothers, aggregating a quarter of a million, which is sworn to change the existing order of things so that every man shall have an equal opportunity? Listen a moment. I could gain control of this organization and increase it to 10,000,000 if I had

your opportunities to command a billion and a half dollars of cash."

"Of what are you talking?" Her tone now was a frightened one.

"The possibilities of a new and glorious order of things, a new social sys-



"YOUR TALK IS PERFECTLY SILLY, BUT IT IS AMUSING."

tem, a new form of government which shall guarantee to every man an equal distribution of earning capacity. I need to rally 10,000,000 men to the new cause. It will cost \$150 per man. That amounts to a billion and a half of dollars. You have, let us say, influential friends who have plenty of money—solid cash. Join me, help me to raise this money; help me to carry through to its glorious conclusion this enormous benefit to humanity, and no king and queen will have a firmer and a more honored place in history than we shall have."

"It is a dream of folly," she protested. "You would expend all this enormous amount of money if you had it in promoting only a new reign of terror."

"By no means," he declared and laughed. "My 10,000,000 men would need but to show their teeth and it would all be over. There need not be a blow struck."

The voice of Mrs. Rensselaer broke in upon them, peremptorily calling upon Lillian for some music.

"Coming," replied Lillian. She turned to Blagg. "I must go in now," she said to him. "Your talk is perfectly silly, but it is amusing, too. I find it quite—curious—and interesting."

She hurried into the house, leaving Blagg alone on the porch. As soon as she had gone Blagg stepped down into the grounds and disappeared. Rollins sat quite still and thought for a long, long time.

(To be continued.)

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