

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 Gallison 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Kelvin tells Wall street magnates that a billion dollars of actual currency has been withdrawn from circulation by Henry Breed's bread trust.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.

Kelvin tells Lillian he would make himself emperor if he could. She volunteers to be his empress. Rollins refuses to cooperate with Breed. Lillian makes love to Kelvin.

Breed, instigated by Kelvin, offers bread to the public at cost. They gain control of all the railroads and make Rollins manager. Dr. Zephan discovers Breed worshipping his billion and a half of cash.

Zephan tells Breed he will be a jibbering idiot in a year if his miserly habits continue. Rollins refuses rebates to big shippers.

Blagg asks Lillian to join him in forming a new government with the aid of Breed's cash. Breed and Kelvin scheme for control of congress.

Breed plans to make Kelvin and Rollins president and vice president. They smash three big trusts. Kelvin buys Long Island acreage.

Blagg's spies watch Kelvin. He buys three big New York city districts which oppose him politically. Lillian pursues Kelvin, who compromises her.

Kelvin is shot at. Breed shows more signs of insanity. Lillian becomes Kelvin's mistress. Kelvin and Rollins are nominated for president and vice president. Kelvin gives homes to dispossessed people.

Kelvin and Rollins are elected. Blagg tries to kill Kelvin. Elsie White reveals her love for Kelvin and is discharged by Lillian.

Kelvin as president plans to become emperor and with Rensselaer as secretary of war organizes a great army. Kelvin tells Rensselaer he contemplates nothing serious concerning Lillian.

Breed shows Kelvin the crown, scepter and ermine robe he has bought to use as emperor. Rensselaer proposes to Lillian and is rejected. Commerce is paralyzed. Thousands are starving.

Ellian traps Kelvin, compelling him to announce their engagement. Elsie saves Kelvin from an infernal machine. Kelvin proclaims himself emperor. Rollins defies him. Elsie helps Rollins escape.

Kelvin alienates Elsie's love, jilts Lillian, and she joins Breed's army. Breed, who wanted to be emperor, denounces Kelvin, who goes after Breed's treasure. The people rise against Kelvin.

CHAPTER XXV.

THROUGH the dark woods at Forest Lakes there came hurrying from the northern boundary of the estate an active figure, making his way steadily toward the big graystone house. Occasionally in the denser shadows he stopped to listen. He knew that a dozen or so of picked mountaineers had been left on guard, flintlike men, who would much rather shoot first and inquire afterward in these troubled times. He was congratulating himself upon his good fortune in escaping these men when as he rounded the corner of the house two of them stepped forward with leveled guns.

"Throw up your hands! Come in the light!" commanded the one nearest him and flashed the glow of an electric pocket lantern in his direction. "Are you Sumner Rollins?"

"Yes," replied Rollins, relieved, and began to lower his hands.

"Hold up your hands! Wait a minute!"

Rollins instantly raised his hands again, feeling rather ridiculous, while the guard stepped to the door and rang the bell. He had no more than rung it when the door opened and Elsie White stood revealed in the flood of light.

"Come in, Mr. Rollins," she cheerily invited. "I have been waiting for you these three nights."

"Waiting for me?" he exclaimed as he strode up and took both her hands in his own. "I don't see how that could be. I have been trying for a week to get word to you, but could find no way. I knew that with the telegraph control in the hands of Blagg no message was safe. How

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did you find out that I was coming?" "I don't know," replied Elsie, dropping her eyes as she gently disengaged her hands and closed the door. "I just seemed to know it. You see—and now she looked up at him frankly—"I knew that you were aware of our danger."

The light of joy leaped into his eyes. Once more he caught at her hands, and she blushed as she drew them behind her.

"They are waiting for you," she said. "I think that the danger is growing very near. There are armed soldiers just about a mile south of the gate."

"I thought I heard a murmur of voices as I came through the woods from the north," said Rollins, puzzled again, "but the sound seemed to come from the east, and it seemed to me, too, that an orderly night march of disciplined men would not betray itself in that way."

Elsie had opened the door of the library, and the tableau that met Rollins' gaze was so startling that he stopped transfixed. Behind the long library table at the far end of the room in a



"WELCOME TO OUR COURT!" CACKLED BREED.

high backed chair sat old Henry Breed, the richly jeweled crown upon his jerkily nodding head, the robe of ermine and carmine upon his emaciated form, the diamond tipped scepter in his hand. At one end of the table sat Jens Nelson and at the other end Dr. Zephan, peering through his thick spectacles at Rollins and grinning through his bushy red beard, while Mrs. Rensselaer sat aloof in a corner, thinking her own thoughts.

"Welcome to our court!" cackled Breed. "Welcome to our court! What plenipotentiary have we here?" and his head nodded so violently that the heavy crown jerked off and fell upon the table.

Dr. Zephan calmly caught it as it was about to roll to the floor, carefully pushed out a dent that had been made in the soft gold and restored the crown to Breed, who, after many bobbing attempts, placed it again upon his head.

"I shall examine the envoy's credentials and present him to your majesty in due time and form," sonorously announced Zephan, with an evident enjoyment of the mockery that Rollins, in his shocked abhorrence, could not understand.

"Quite right," agreed Breed. "Quite right. Let all things be done in due form," and, apparently resolved not to interfere with proper observances, Breed drew his old, well worn Bible to him and began to mumble to himself garbled quotations, of which vengeance was the chief burden.

"I am the prime minister," Zephan stated with burlesque gravity, arising and shaking hands with Rollins. "Our friend Jens, here, is the lord high chamberlain. Mrs. Rensselaer is the first lady in waiting. If you behave yourself, Rollins, we'll make you a duke or an earl or something. Pick out your title—anything you please."

Rollins smiled thinly, but he could not take his eyes nor his mind from the appalling wreck of Henry Breed, the richest man the world had ever known or perhaps ever would know, the man who, starting without a dollar, had in the course of an ordinary lifetime compassed half the wealth of a nation to his own use and through that half controlled the balance of it. And he was come to this end!

Nelson roused Rollins to immediate business.

"What is the news?" he asked abruptly.

Rollins turned to him with relief.

"I have a force of more than fifteen hundred good, solid men who will be here inside of half an hour to protect the vaults. I am quite sure that an attack will be made upon them tonight. I have been collecting my forces for a week against this moment and watching Kelvin through the spy of whom you told me. When they get the Gatlings into the garage today I knew the time was growing very short. We made a forced march tonight, making a straight cut to get here."

"They have Gatlings, you say?" asked Nelson, troubled.

"Fourteen of them from the government arsenal mounted in automobiles. If my men get here in time I want to ambush the expedition from behind the wall and have my sharpshooters puncture their tires and pick off their gunners. Kelvin is to be among them. If we can capture him the whole problem is solved."

"But they have Gatlings," protested Nelson.

"We have ambush and strategy," insisted Rollins confidently. "If only my forces can arrive in time!"

"You have done wonders," said Nelson admiringly. "How have you managed it? I thought we were helpless."

Rollins shrugged his shoulders.

"Kelvin had one enemy he could not throttle, and that was the American press, which, after all is the staunch foundation upon which our liberty has been founded and upheld. Upon the instant of his proclamation Kelvin had a censor ready to take ostensible charge of every newspaper office in the United States. He might as well have put infants there. In some cases the censors were intimidated, in others they were hoodwinked, in others they were bound and gagged and in some places killed. The eastern newspapers on the very first day issued my call to arms, and, though the telegraph was closed to us, within two days the appeal was being printed in Chicago and St. Louis, spreading farther west every day since the proclamation. In every village and every country settlement men are arming—the sort of men who always respond to the call of patriotism, the sort of men who know when their country and their homes are in danger and who are willing to die to defend them. Nelson, you can't whip men like that!"

Zephan, whose whole bearing until now had been like the flippancy of an overgrown, mischievous schoolboy, smiled and nodded his head approvingly.

"It is the existence of such men as these followers of yours and yourself, Rollins, that reconciles me to America," he admitted. "I have damned you as a whole more than once as being a race of people who are plunging themselves into nerve bankruptcy; but, after all, there is something in the fundamentals of this country different from any other nation. There is a healthiness in the body politic which, if nature be given a chance, can throw off all its cancers. America needs just some such eruption as this to clear her blood and let the healthy molecules like you and Nelson here get to work. Nelson was fortunate enough to earn the scholarship grade entitling him to be supported by Breed through his college career and conceived himself bound in simple loyalty! Strange, isn't it?"

"I know," nodded Rollins, with a kindly glance at Jens. "Breed gave him to me for my secretary, and he was a spy on all my acts."

"He was more than that," went on the doctor. "He was passed on to Kelvin when Phillip I. became president, and when Jens found that Kelvin actually meant to declare himself emperor, to the exclusion of Breed and everybody else, he set up a system of spies of his own and helped Blagg place the bombs that were intended to blow Kelvin out of his throne! All this, mind you, in spite of the fact that he does not quite approve of everything that has been done by our royal friend back here and that he does not believe any one man should control so much cash."

"Cash!" suddenly broke in the shrill voice of Breed, and the crown bumped from his glistening bald head upon the table in front of him and rolled to the floor. "Cash!" and his wrinkled old face weakened into an expression of desperate intentness. "The greatest force in all the world—the power that can totter thrones and disrupt governments; that can cause wars and support them and end them; that can build cities and devastate them! Cash!" His voice rose in a shrill crescendo, but before its quaverings had ceased there came another sound much more startling—the unmistakable, never to be forgotten "Marsellaise!"

There came a loud cheer, impregnated with the same fury as the song, and then the blows of rails and logs upon the heavy iron gates, a fusillade of shots from the rifles of the guards, screams of agony and answering shots.

"Too late!" groaned Rollins. "It is not Kelvin's army, but Blagg's! God help us!"

A piercing scream, as if it might have been that of a cat in mortal anguish, came from the end of the room where Henry Breed sat alone nodding his head and mumbling and mowing in his pitiful pomp.

"Cash!" he shrieked. "My cash!"

There was a metallic crash and another mad cheer. The gates had given way, and then the mob came pouring in. Rollins, who was unconsciously reaching for his pistol, found his fingers caught in a soft hand and felt a gentle pull. He obeyed the tugging immediately and allowed himself to be led toward the rear of the building.

"This way," Elsie White urged. "I must hide you."

"My men!" he protested. "They should be approaching the grounds by this time, and now I must lead them by a different way."

"Don't go!" she begged of him. "If they see you crossing the open spaces they will chase you and shoot you as they would a wild animal!"

"I cannot help it," he answered calmly. "I must go."

He raced on through to the kitchen hall, but he did not let go of her hand, and now it was she who led. He reached the rear door and threw it open.

"Come!" he said simply.

She looked up at him a moment and then gently stepped out beside him, closing the door after her. He paused for a moment with sudden mastery to gather her in his arms, and for just that moment she laid her head in surrender upon his shoulder. She knew now that her dreams of Kelvin had been but the outcome of a youthful ideal—an ideal which had made her see Phillip through distorted eyes.

which had clouded her vision to this sterling love.

"It looks like desertion," said Rollins, "but we can do no good here."

He struck out with her along the path, but she pulled against his direction.

"This way," she insisted, "straight back from the house to the garden and around past the kennels. Then we can be under cover all the way."

In the meantime in the library the voice of Jens Nelson, cool and collected, inquired:

"How shall we prepare to die—standing or crouching?"

Dr. Zephan, standing where he had been, looked swiftly about the room. They two were the only occupants. Two sharp, resounding shots echoed just outside the hall door.

"The guards!" exclaimed Zephan. "They are still at the door. There is a part of your America, the part that I love. What wonderful material for my book. Come! If we must die let us die crouching," and without waiting he raced up the stairs, heading toward the attic.

Nelson hesitated a moment. Two more shots rang out, followed by howls of hate, and then a fusillade of bullets spattered against the walls, crashed through the glass and imbedded themselves with soft thuds into the heavy woodwork of the doors. Nelson hesitated no longer, but followed the doctor.

(To be continued.)

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