

The Girdle of the Great

A STORY OF THE NEW SOUTH

By John Jordan Douglass

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CHAPTER XXV.

"The Mills of the Gods."

One who chanced to see Mr. Hector MacDonald on a certain day in July would have noticed striking changes in his appearance. His smooth-shaven face was thinner than usual and noticeably wrinkled and careworn. Much of his cool, calculating attitude had been lost; he was almost a nervous wreck. The strain of the desperate game which he had been playing with fortune and misfortune had sapped his strength. The Wall Street speculations had long been going against him; he had reached the ebb of his golden tide. Still, like the desperate gambler, he was always hoping for a lucky turn, comforting his perturbed spirit with certain maxims, such as "It's an ill wind that blows nobody good."

For another reason, too, the banker had continued to speculate; that whenever one gets entangled in the intricate meshes of the great Wall Street net, one never knows how to get out. Mr. MacDonald had depended on a fortunate rise in cotton.

"We must make a big throw today," he said to Gabriel one morning. "Everything is ripe for it. We'll yet make a big haul. What say you?"

"It's high time we were doing something," growled Gabriel, who had just received a rebuff from an unexpected quarter and was, therefore, in no great good humor.

Accordingly, the banker cast his bank bills, or the bank bills of his depositors, upon the "water." He was confident of a "big haul." He had supreme confidence in "Poindexter & Co.," his agents. They were old and reliable. They knew all the wiles and whims of the "Bulls and Bears." They had always kept Mr. MacDonald fully posted.

But shortly after this deposit (which was by far the largest he had made with them), "Poindexter & Co." went to the wall. The news came to Mr. MacDonald like a thunderclap from a clear sky. It almost prostrated him. His eyes rolled in his head, his face became colorless and flabby. He knew that he was doomed. The figures on the wall-paper of his sanctum changed form again; this time they became long bars of white and black, like the stripes of furies. Almost on the heels of the Wall Street disaster the State Bank Examiner arrived in Ansonville. He was the pale cashier whom Mr. MacDonald had discharged, and the banker now what the rigid examination would reveal.

Owing to the lateness of the train, it was night when the Bank Examiner arrived, and the examination was, therefore, postponed till next morning. Mr. MacDonald, having learned from Ananias Blake that the Bank Examiner had arrived, hurriedly summoned Gabriel to his private office.

"We've got to get away from here, or else go to the Penitentiary," said Mr. MacDonald with a straggling sigh. "We have only \$500 in the bank. Let's divide and skip."

He took a step forward.

"You earth scum!" she cried, her beautiful eyes aflame with infinite scorn. "Do you think you can frighten me, coward!" Her hand fell swiftly to her side, and from her girdle she removed an exquisite near-handled pen-knife. "I do not fear death. Why should I fear you? Only this—death—is preferable to you."

"Maxy! Maxy!" remonstrated Mr. MacDonald, his face purple from the nervous strain he was undergoing. "Try to be reasonable, dear. Gabriel only means to do right. He loves you."

"I hate him!" she exclaimed, stamping her foot. "I would sooner love a frog."

"You hate me, then?" Gabriel cried, a terrible expression in his eyes. "Take that back or die!" He drew a pistol and leveled it at her heart. Ananias Blake's earth-colored face faded to a lifeless gray; he stood rooted to the floor, paralyzed in every limb. But the banker, with a last noble impulse—the supreme cleaving of blood to blood—grasped Gabriel's arm and, with all his feeble strength, sought to wrest the pistol from him. In some way, whether intentionally or not was never known, the weapon discharged, the ball entering the banker's breast. He sank to the floor with a groan, the blood weltering from the wound. He tried to speak, but his voice sank with a gurgling gasp. A convulsive shudder passed through his frame, and he was dead. He had robbed the pale cashier of his triumph, and gone up to face his record on the greater book.

Maxine had fainted and lay upon the floor. Gabriel threw the pistol beside her and, in company with Ananias, rushed from the room and ran rapidly down the street. Near a crossing they passed a man who was coming towards the banker's house.

In the glittering glare of a nearby street lamp they recognized the Bank Examiner. He recognized them, too, but beneath the cover of the night they were soon far from possible pursuers.

The Coroner's Jury summoned to hold an inquest over the banker's body reported:

"We find that Hector MacDonald came to his death from a pistol-shot wound at the hands of one Gabriel Allen."

The conclusion was reached by the jury on the evidence given by the State Bank Examiner and the merchant who had sold Gabriel Allen a pistol and cartridges. It was further substantiated by the Register of Deeds, who swore that Gabriel had purchased a marriage license the evening before the tragedy.

Rocky Heights to buy a valuable body of timber land, which he meant to sell to a syndicate. The owner of the land was down South on business and Doctor Allen had merely deposited the money for safe-keeping.

The mortgage on Rocky Heights was held by a crusty old miser who would certainly foreclose. The doctor discovered later that the Brandon Place had been "sulted" and possessed no gold-bearing quartz at all. He was eventually forced to give up Rocky Heights and move to Ansonville, where he spent the remainder of his days in a little tenement house.

Shortly after the banker's burial Maxine had received a letter from Major Graves, urging her to come to New York and make her home with him. His house was kept by a maiden sister—a most companionable woman, despite her spinsterhood—and Maxine consented to go.

It was not without a severe struggle, however, that she turned her face from the South. It was doubly dear to her—her birthplace and birthright. Moreover, it was the land of his hope. Fate had been cruel to her—had by unusual circumstances plucked from her the idol of her soul.

Very sadly she packed her trunks, lingering over every little faded flower, every little keep-sake, bedewing them with tears.

(To be Concluded Tomorrow.)

The Year and the Calendar.

After Julius Caesar corrected the calendar the year was still 11 minutes 14 seconds too long, amounting to one day in 128 years. As the centuries passed the interval between the commencement of the year and the spring equinox grew less. It was not, however, until 1582 that anything was done about it. Then Pope Gregory XIII. set out to remedy the difficulty. This he did by directing the suppression of ten days outright. In order to provide for the future he ordered that all century years (1700, 1800, etc.) which would ordinarily be leap years should be common years unless they were multiples of 400. This arrangement, which still holds good, leaves only one day too much in 3,400 years. A French scientist has proposed dropping an additional day in the year 3,200 and repeating the process every 3,200 years. This would leave us short one day every 30,000 years, which may be considered correct enough for all practical purposes. At any rate, the matter is not pressing.—New York Post.

Wigg—"Bejones has joined a suicide club." Wagg—"I suspected as much; I saw him buying a chafing dish the other day."—Philadelphia Record.

Tell a woman she is clever and she will like you; tell her she is beautiful and she will be your friend for life.

NEIGHBORHOOD FAVORITE.

Mrs. E. D. Chaires, of Harbor, Maine, speaking of Electric Bitters, says: "It is a neighborhood favorite here with us." It deserves to be a favorite everywhere. It gives quick relief in dyspepsia, liver complaint, kidney derangement, malnutrition, nervousness, weakness and general debility. Its action on the blood, as a thorough purifier makes it especially useful as a spring tonic. This grand alterative tonic is sold under guarantee at Woodall & Sheppard's drug store, 50.

Y. M. C. A. MOVEMENT IN LENOIR

Special to The News.

Lenoir, N. C., April 22.—A large number of the business and professional men of Lenoir met at the graded school auditorium Monday night to discuss ways and means incident to organizing and maintaining a Young Men's Christian Association for our town. The movement was enthusiastically endorsed by nearly every man present and several speeches were made by some of the most influential men of our town in favor of the organization, urging the necessity for an early establishment of an institution of this kind.

For two weeks past Messrs. J. B. Atkinson and A. V. Miller have circulated two papers asking the support of all who were interested in a movement of this kind and succeeded in securing over 200 names pledging themselves to support this movement, and, if organized, to help maintain the organization, thereby assuring the promoters of this good work that they will do their several parts toward making an institution of this character as part of the town of Lenoir.

HOW IS YOUR STOMACH?

Easy Way to Strengthen It and Get Well.

A good digestive system, one that acts so that you do not know that you have a stomach, is God's birthright to every man—to every woman. If digestion is weak, if food turns into gas, if you suffer after eating, if you are sleepless, nervous and out of sorts—the stomach is diseased and prompt action should be taken.

W. A. Ennis, a well known builder in Syracuse, tells an easy way to strengthen the stomach and get well when he writes: "Mi-o-na Stomach Tablets have done more for me in one week than all the doctors the two years I was under their care. Thanks to Mi-o-na, I can work once more, the first time in over a year."

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Beautiful Mahogany Parlor Tables, \$8.50, Sale Price.....\$ 6.50
Beautiful Golden Oak Parlor Tables, \$3.50, Sale Price.....\$ 2.50
Beautiful Golden Oak Parlor Tables, \$18.00, Sale Price.....\$13.75
Beautiful Golden Oak Library Tables, \$12.50, Sale Price.....\$10.00
Beautiful Golden Oak Library Tables, \$14.50, Sale Price.....\$11.75
Beautiful Mahogany Library Tables, \$16.50, Sale Price.....\$12.25
Another large shipment of Mattings just received.

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You no doubt have been wanting one for a long while, but have delayed your purchase because of price. This sale clears the way of that objection and makes it possible to buy a

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32.50 " " " " 24.00
35.00 " " " " 26.50
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Realizing the necessity of a fine felt mattress at a moderate price, we have decided to make this mattress and place it on the market at this remarkably low price. We guarantee the PURITY Felt Mattress to be as comfortable and as satisfactory as any felt or hair mattress on the market regardless of price. It is made from a fine quality of felt and covered with fancy art ticking and will not pack or get in lumps. Order one and if you are not pleased with it when you see it, ship it back at our expense. Order direct from us, as we do not sell this mattress through agents.

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