

THE FORTUNE HUNTER

Novelized by LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE From the Play of the Same Name by WINCHELL SMITH

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In one of Rudyard Kipling's writings he tells of "the ship that found herself," and in "The Fortune Hunter" we have the fascinating narrative of "a youth who found himself." The youth is like the ship—he had to have his course laid straight before his career began to make substantial headway. The story of Nat Duncan is one that in dramatic form, as written by Winchell Smith, has attracted the attention of thousands of playgoers throughout the country. As a novel, written by Louis Joseph Vance, it becomes a narrative of profound appeal to the young and old and especially to those of us who in our youth dwell in a rural district far enough removed from the metropolitan centers to be practically a world in itself and to itself. Usually it is the country lad who ventures into the great cities to seek fortune and fame's favor. But here we find a down to date city youth, who, a failure at everything he had undertaken, invades the rural districts to make a millionaire of himself. That which befalls him prompted a great New York newspaper editor to say, "Every American should read this great story," for "The Fortune Hunter," in spite of its enjoyable humor, subtly pointed by its talented authors, teaches the vital lesson of the need of charity and tolerance for the less fortunate of human beings.

CHAPTER I. RECEIVER at ear, Spaulding, of Messrs. Atwater & Spaulding, importers of motoring garments and accessories, listened to the switchboard operator's announcement with grave attention, acknowledging it with a toneless "All right; send him in." Then, hooking up the desk telephone, he swung round in his chair to face the door of his private office and in a brief ensuing interval painstakingly ironed out of his face and attitude every indication of the frame of mind in which he awaited his caller. It was, as a matter of fact, anything but a pleasant one. He had a distasteful duty to perform, but that was the last thing he designed to become evident. Like most good business men, he nursed a pet superstition of two, and of the number of these the first was that he must in all his dealings present an inscrutable front, like a poker player's. Captains of industry were uniformly like that, Spaulding understood. If they entertained emotions it was strictly in private. Occasionally this attitude deceived others. Notably now it bewildered Duncan as he entered on the echo of Spaulding's "Come!" He had apprehended the visage of a thunderstorm with a rattle of brusque complaints. He encountered Spaulding as he had always seemed—a little, urbane figure with a blank face, the blinker for glasses whose lenses seemed always to catch the light and, glaring, mask the eyes behind them; a prosperous man of affairs, well groomed both as to body and as to mind; a machine for the transaction of business with all a machine's vivacity and temperamental responsiveness. It was just that quality in him that Duncan envied, who was vaguely impressed that if he himself could imitate, however

minutely, the phlegm of a machine he might learn to ape something of its efficiency and so ultimately prove himself of some worth to the world and incidentally to Nathaniel Duncan. "Good afternoon, Mr. Spaulding," he said, replying to a nod as he dropped into the chair that had indicated. A faint smile lightened his expression and made it quite engaging. "Good afternoon," Spaulding surveyed him swiftly, then faced his fat little fingers and contemplated them with detached intentness. "Just get in, Duncan?" "On the 8:30 from Chicago. I got your wire," he resumed. "I mean it got me—overtook me at Minneapolis." "You haven't wasted time." "I fancied the matter might be urgent, sir. I gathered from the fact that you wired me to come home that you wanted my advice."



BETTY GRAHAM

ing down my weekly checks, bad luck to you not to have a man who could earn them." His desperate honesty touched Spaulding a trifle. At the risk of not seeming a business man to himself he inclined dubiously to relent, to give Duncan another chance. "Duncan," he said, "what's the trouble?" "I thought you knew that; I thought that was why you called me in with my route half covered." "You mean?" "I mean I can't sell your line." "Why?" "God only knows. I want to badly enough. It's just general incompetence, I presume." "What makes you think that?" Duncan smiled bitterly. "Experience," he said. "You've tried—what else?" "A little of everything, all the jobs open to a man with a knowledge of Latin and Greek and the higher mathematics—shipping clerk, timekeeper, cashier, all of 'em." "And yet Kellogg believes in you." Duncan nodded dolefully. "Harry's a good friend. We roomed together at college. That's why he stands for me." "He says you only need the right opening?" "And nobody knows where that is, except my fortunate employers. It's the back door going out for mine every time. Oh, Harry's been a prince to me. He's found me four or five jobs with friends of his, like yourself. But I don't seem to last. You see, I was brought up to be ornamental and irregular rather than useful, to blow about in motorcars and keep a valet busy sixteen hours a day, and all that sort of thing. My father's failure—you know about that?" Spaulding nodded. Duncan went on gloomily, talking a great deal more freely than he would have talked at any other time, suffering, in fact, from that species of auto-hypnosis induced by the sound of his own voice recounting his misfortunes which seems especially to affect a man down on his luck. "That smash came when I was five years out of college—I'd never thought

"but what's the use of my coming out?" Duncan made as if to rise, suddenly remembering himself. "You're not. Go on." "I didn't mean to. Mostly, I presume, I've been blundering round an explanation of Kellogg's kindness to me, in my usual ineffectual way, but I felt an explanation was due you, as the latest to suffer through his misplaced interest in me." "Perhaps," said Spaulding, "I am beginning to understand. Go on, I'm interested. About the fish market?" "Oh, I just happened to think of it as a sample experience, and the last of that particular brand. I got \$9 a week and earned every cent of it inhaling the atmosphere. My board cost me \$6 and the other \$3 afforded me a chance to demonstrate myself a captain of finance, paying laundry bills and clothing myself, besides buying lunches and such like small matters. I did the whole thing, you know, one schooner of beer a day and made my own cigarettes. Never could make up my mind which was the worst. The hours were easy, too; didn't have to get to work until 5 in the morning. I lasted five weeks at that job before I was taken sick. Shows what a great constitution I've got." "And then?" "Oh—Duncan roused. "Why, then I fell in with Kellogg again; he found me trying the open air cure on a bench in Washington square. Since then he's been finding me one berth after another. He's a sure enough optimist." Spaulding shifted uneasily in his chair, stirred by an impulse whose unwisdom he could not doubt. Duncan had assuredly done his case no good by painting his shortcomings in colors so vivid; yet somehow, strangely, Spaulding liked him the better for his open hearted confession. "Well"—Spaulding stumbled awkwardly. "Yes; of course," said Duncan promptly, rising. "Sorry if I tired you." "What do you mean by 'Yes, of course'?" "That you called me in to fire me—and so that's over with. Only I'd be sorry to have you sore on Kellogg for saddling me on you. You see, he believed I'd make good, and so I did in a way; at least I hoped to." "Oh, that's all right," said Spaulding uncomfortably. "The trouble is, you see, we've nothing else open just now, but if you'd really like another chance on the road—I'll be glad to speak to Mr. Atwater about it." "Don't you do it!" Duncan counseled him sharply, aghast. "He might say yes. And I simply couldn't accept; it wouldn't be fair to you, Kellogg or myself. It'd be charity, for I've proved I can't earn my wages, and I haven't come to that yet. No!" he concluded with determination and picked up his hat. "Just a minute," Spaulding held him with a gesture. "You're forgetting something—at least I am. There's a month's pay coming to you. The cashier will hand you the check as you go out."

"A month's pay?" Duncan said blankly. "How's that? I've drawn up to the end of this week already, if you didn't know it." "Of course I knew it. But we never let our men go without a month's notice or its equivalent, and—" "No," Duncan interrupted firmly—"go; but thank you just the same. I couldn't—I really couldn't. It's good of you, but—now," he broke off abruptly, "I've left my accounts, what there is of them, with the bookkeeping department, and the checks for my sample trunks. There'll be a few dollars coming to me on my expense account, and I'll send you my address as soon as I get one." "But, look here"—Spaulding got to his feet, frowning. "No," reiterated Duncan positively, "there's no use. I'm grateful to you for your toleration of me and all that, but we can't do anything better now than call it all off. Goodby, Mr. Spaulding." Spaulding nodded, accepting defeat with the better grace because of an innate conviction that it was just as well after all. And, furthermore, he admired Duncan's stand, so he offered his hand—an unusual concession. "You'll make good somewhere yet," he asserted. "I wish I could believe it." Duncan's grasp was firm since he felt more assured of some humanity latent in his late employer. "However, goodby." "Good luck to you," rang in his ears as the door put a period to the interview. He stopped and took up the battered suit case and rusty overcoat which he had left outside the junior partner's office, then went on, shaking his head. "Much obliged," he said huskily to himself, "but what's the good of that. There's no room anywhere for a professional failure, and that's what I am—just a ne'er-do-well I never realized what that meant



"I'VE LOST MY JOB AGAIN."

little—mostly by gratitude and such consideration as he purposed now to exhibit by removing himself and his distresses from the other's ken. Here was an end to comfort for him, an end to living in Kellogg's rooms, eating his food, busying his servants, spending his money, not so much borrowed as pressed upon him. There crawled in his mind a clammy memory of the sort of housing he had known in past days, and he shuddered inwardly, smelling again the effluvia of dank oilcloth and musty carpets, of fishballs and fried ham, of old style plumbing and of \$9 a week humanity in the unwashed raw, the odor of misery that permeated the lodgings to which his lack of means had introduced him. He could see again, and with a painful vividness of mental vision, the degenerate "brownstone fronts" that mark those haunts of wretchedness, with their flights of crumbling brownstone steps leading up to oaken portals haggard with flaking paint, flanked by squares of soiled note paper upon which inept hands had traced the warning, not "Abandon hope all ye who enter here," but "Furnished rooms to let with board." And to this he must return, to that treadmill round of blighted days and joyless nights must set his face. Alighting at the Grand Central station, he packed the double weight of his luggage and his cares a few blocks northward on Madison avenue ere turning west toward the bachelor rooms which Kellogg had established in the roaring Forties, just the other side of the avenue—Fifth avenue. The elevator boy, knowing him of old, neglected to announce his arrival, and Duncan had his own key to the door of Kellogg's apartment. He let himself in with furtive stealth. As was quite right and proper, Kellogg's man Robbins was in attendance, a stupefied Robbins, thunderstruck by the unexpected return of his master's friend and guest. "Good Lord!" he cried at sight of Duncan. "Beg your pardon, sir, but—it can't be you!" "Your mistake, Robbins. Unfortunately it is," Duncan surrendered his luggage. "Mr. Kellogg in?" "No, sir. But I'm expecting him any minute. He'll be surprised to see you back."

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COTTON STATES LINE UP FOR THE ROCK HILL PLAN

Special to The News. Rock Hill, S. C., Feb. 12.—Mayor John T. Roddey has been asked by President J. M. Cherry, of the Carolina Traction Company, to take entire charge of the celebration to be held on the occasion of the operation of the street cars along Main street for the first time. While the date has not been definitely fixed Mayor Roddey is busy outlining the program and arranging for the occasion. When asked regarding the celebration this morning Mayor Roddey said:

For Rent

- 1 brick store on Graman St. Extension.
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Great Interest In Y. M. C. A. Move

Special to The News. Rock Hill, S. C., Feb. 12.—Since the discussion of the needs of a Y. M. C. A. was begun several days ago much interest has been taken in the move and an association will doubtless be organized within the next few weeks. This organization before the erection of a building is made possible by the offer of Mayor Roddey to donate rooms as soon as such an organization is placed on a working basis. Mayor Roddey this morning stated that he would give to the association free of charge the use of the entire second floor and roof garden of his building on Railroad street, a few yards north of the new passenger station, the use of the building to be given over as soon as the association was organized and placed on a working basis—as soon as the young men show that they mean business, to use Mayor Roddey's expression. The building offered is at a place easily accessible and when the new passenger station is in use and the street put in condition will be an ideal location, the street cars running by the door. The hall is a large one and a secretary's office could be fitted up, leaving plenty of room for a reading room and such amusements as might be desired most. The roof garden is fitted with tables and chairs and has a dumb waiter running up, making it convenient for congenial gatherings in the summer time. Taken all in all the quarters would, it is believed, fill the needs of a building until the association could be properly organized and put on a working basis; then when the people of the city really awake to the good such an organization can accomplish in building up the city, both morally and physically, it will be much easier to secure subscriptions for a suitable Y. M. C. A. building than would be the case were a campaign to be launched now. The offer of Mayor Roddey will doubtless be the first thing considered by the committee appointed to consider the Boy Forward under the Men and Religion Forward Movement, and there is little doubt but that the offer will be accepted and an association formed.

Swallowed the Whistle.

Policemen on trial at headquarters are as apt at excuse as men in other lines, if not more so. Former Inspector Williams used to tell of an officer who was charged with having lost his whistle. When asked to explain, he said: "You see, I went home last night and put my whistle on the table. I turned round and, bless me, one of my kids was choking and nearly black in the face. You see, commissioner he'd swallowed the whistle." "Is he dead?" asked the sympathetic commissioner. "No, sir," was the reply. "He isn't dead, but he's got the whooping cough, and now every time he coughs the whistle blows and the cop on post comes a-runnin'!"

Well Known Baptist Preacher Found Dead

Atlanta, Feb. 12.—Dr. J. M. Brittain, pastor of the Temple Baptist church, and one of the best known ministers in Georgia, was found dead in bed at his home here yesterday morning. Death was due to heart failure. He was 69 years old and was a Confederate veteran.

Indian Killed on Track.

Near Rochelle, Ill., an Indian went to sleep on a railroad track and was killed by the fast express. He paid for his carelessness with his life. Often it's that way when people neglect coughs and colds. Don't risk your life when prompt use of Dr. King's New Discovery will cure them and so prevent a dangerous throat or lung trouble. "It completely cured me, in a short time, of a terrible cough that followed a severe attack of Grip," writes J. R. Watts, Floydada, Tex., "and I regained 15 pounds in weight and a guaranteed, 50c and \$1.00, trial bottle free at W. L. Hand & Co.

An ounce of hustle is worth a pound of luck.

Presidentially speaking, things seem to be T.R.able.