

THE FORTUNE HUNTER

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

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CHAPTER V.

THE next morning I went out for a walk. I lingered a moment outside Sam Graham's old and much neglected drug store, thinking of the change that had come over it since the death of Margaret Graham. Betty's mother, for, despite its out of the way location, the shop had not always been unprofitable. While Margaret lived (my heart still ached with the memory of her name) Sam's business had prospered. She had been one of those women who can rise to any emergency in the interest of her loved ones. The first to realize Sam's improvidence and lack of executive ability, she had taken hold of the business with a firm hand and made it pay—while she lived.

During Margaret's regime, as I say, the shop had thrived. Sam had few ill wishes in Radville. The trade came his way. Then Betty was born, and Margaret died.

Most of this I have on hearsay. I left Radville shortly after my marriage and did not return until some months after Margaret's burial. By that time the shop had begun to show signs of neglect. Its stock was decimated, its trade likewise. Sam was struggling with his inventions more fiercely than ever—seeking forgetfulness, I always thought. The business was allowed to take care of itself. He had always a serene faith in his tomorrow.

Now, the little shop had been far distanced by the competition of Sothorn & Lee. It was twenty years behind the times, as the saying is. Small, darksome, dreary and dingy, it served chiefly as a living room for Sam, his daughter and his crochets as well as for his workshop. He had a bench and a ramshackle lathe in one corner, where you might be sure to find him futilely pottering at almost any hour. He owned the little building—or that portion of it which it were a farce to term the equity above the mortgage—and Betty kept house for him in three rooms above the store.

I pushed the door open and entered. He looked up with his never failing smile of welcome and a wave of his hand.

"Howdy, Homer! Come in. Well, well, I'm glad to see you. Sit down. I think that chair there by the stove will hold together under you."

"What are you doing, Sam?" I asked. "Fixin' up the sody fountain. Meant to get it workin' last month, Homer, but somehow I kind of forgot."

He rubbed away briskly at the single faucet which protruded above the counter, lathering it briskly with a metal polish that smelled to heaven.

"Do much sody trade, Sam?" He paused, passing his worn old fingers reflectively across a chin



SAM GRAHAM.

snowy with a stubble of neglected beard. "No," he allowed thoughtfully, "not so much as we used to now that Sothorn & Lee 've got this newfangled notion of puttin' ice cream in a nickel glass of sody. Most of the young folks go there now, but still I get a call now and then, and every little bit helps." He rubbed on defeciously for a moment. "Course I'd do more, likely, if I carried a bigger line of flavors."

"How many do you carry?" "One," he admitted—with a sigh, "really." While I filled my pipe he continued to rub very industriously. "Why don't you get more?" He flashed me one of his pale, genial smiles. "I'm thinkin' of it, Homer, soon's I get some money in—next week, mebbe. There's a man in N' York that mebbe can be interestin' in one of my inventions, Roland Barnette says. Mebbe he'd be willin' to put a little money in it, Roland says, and of course if he does I'll be able to stock up considerable."

I sighed covertly for him. He rubbed, humming a tuneless rhythm to himself.

"Roland's got to write to him about it." "What invention?" I asked, incredulous. "Sams put down his bottle of polish and came round the counter, beaming. Nothing pleases him better than an opportunity to exhibit some one of his innumerable models. 'I'll show you, Homer,' he volunteered cheerfully, shuffling over to his workbench. He



'I'LL SHOW YOU, HOMER.'

rasped a match over its surface and applied the flame to a small gas bracket fixed to the wall. A strong rush of gas extinguished the match, and he turned the flow half off before trying again. This time the vapor caught and settled to a steady brilliant flame as white as and much softer than acetylene.

"There!" he said in triumph. "What d'ye think of that, Homer?" "Why," I said, "I didn't know you had an acetylene plant."

"No more have I, Homer." "But what is that, then?" I demanded.

"It's my invention," he returned proudly. "I've been workin' on it two years, Homer, and only got it goin' yesterday. It's goin' to be a great thing, I tell you." "But what is it, Sam?" "It's gas from crude petroleum, Homer. See!" he continued, indicating a tank beneath the bench which seemed to be connected with the bracket by a very simple system of piping, broken by a smaller, cylindrical tank. "Ye put the oil in there—just crude as it comes out of the wells, Homer. It don't need refinin', and it runs through this and down here to this, where it's vaporized—much the same's they vaporize gasoline for automobile engines, you know—and then it just naturally flows up to the bracket, and there ye are."

"It's wonderful, Sam," said I, wondering if it really were. "And the best part of it is the economy, Homer. A gallon will run one jet six weeks, day in and out. And simple to install. I tell ye—" "Have you got it patented yet?" "Yes, siree! Took out patents just as soon as it struck me how simple it 'ud be—more than two years ago. Only, of course, it took time to work it out just right, specially when I had to stop now and then 'cause I needed money for materials. But it's all right now, Homer; it's all right now."

"And you say Roland Barnette's writing to some one in New York about it?"

"Yes; he promised he would. I explained it to Roland, and he seemed real interested. He's kind, very kind." I was inclined to doubt this and would probably have said something to that effect had not a shadow crossing the window brought me to my feet in consternation. But before I could do more than rise Colonel Bohun had flung open the door and stamped in. He stopped short at sight of me, misguided by his nearsighted eyes, and singled me out with a threatening wave of his heavy stick.

"Well, sir," he snarled, "I've come for my answer. Have you sense enough in your addled pate to understand that, man? I've come for my answer!"

"And may have it, whatever it may be, for all of me," I told him. His face flushed a deeper red. "Oh, it's only you, is it, Littlejohn? I took you for that fool Graham in this dirty dark hole. Where is he?"

I looked to Graham, and he followed the direction of my gaze to the work bench, where Sam stood with his back to it, his worn hands folded quietly before him. He seemed a little whiter than usual, I thought, and perhaps it was only my fancy that made him appear to tremble ever so slightly, for he was quite calm and self-possessed—so much so that I realized for the first time there was another man in Radville besides myself who did not fear old Colonel Bohun.

"I'm here, colonel," he said quietly. "What is it you wish?" The colonel swung on him, shaking with passion. But he held his tongue until he had mastered himself somewhat, a feat of self-restraint on his part over which I marvel to this day.

"You know well, Graham," he said presently. "You got my letter—the letter I wrote you a week ago?" "Yes," said Sam, with a start of comprehension. "Yes, I got it."

"Then why the devil, man, don't you answer it?" Sam's apologetic smile sweetened his face. "Why," he said haltingly, "I'm sure I meant no offense; but, you see, I'm a very busy man, I forgot it."

"The devil you forgot it! D'ye expect me to believe that, man?" "I'm afraid you'll have to." Bohun was speechless for a moment.

stricken dumb by a sudden seizure of fury. But again he calmed himself. "Very well; I'll swallow that insolence for the present." "It wasn't meant as such, I assure—" "Don't interrupt me! D'you hear? I've come for my answer. Yes, I've come down to that, Graham. If you can't accord me the common courtesy of a written reply I've come to hear it from your mouth."

Sam nodded thoughtfully. "Mebbe," he said, "you forget you have failed to accord me the common courtesy of any sort of communication whatever for twenty years, Colonel Bohun. Even when my wife, your daughter, died you ignored my message asking you to her funeral."

"Be silent!" screamed the colonel. "Do you think I'm here to bandy words with you, fool? I demand my answer."

"And as for that," continued Sam as evenly as if he had not been interrupted, "your proposition was so preposterous that it could have come only from you and deserved no answer. But since you want it formally, sir, it's no."

For a moment I feared Bohun would have a stroke. The back of the chair I had just vacated and his stick alone supported him through that dumb, terrible transport. He shook so violently that I looked momentarily to see the chair break beneath him. There was insanity in his eyes. When finally he was able to articulate it was in broken gasps.

"I don't believe it," he stammered. "It's a lie! I don't believe it. It's madness. The girl wouldn't be so mad."

"What is it, father?" I don't know which of us three was the most startled by that simple question in Betty Graham's voice. Sam, at all events, showed the least surprise. The old colonel wheeled toward the back of the store, his jaw dropping and his eyes protruding as though he were confronted with a ghost—as, in a way, he was. Even I had been struck by that strange, heartrending similarity to her mother's tone, and even I trembled a little to hear that voice, as it seemed, from beyond the grave.

Betty stood at the foot of the staircase, alarmed by the noise of the colonel's raging, she had stolen down unheard by any of us. And in that moment I realized as never before that the girl had more of her mother

in her than lay in that marvelous reproduction of Margaret Graham's voice. As she waited there one detected in her pose something of her mother's quiet dignity, in her eyes more than a little of Margaret's tragedy. Of Margaret's beauty I saw scant trace, I own, but in those days my eyes were blinded by the signs of overwork and insufficient nourishment that marred her young features, by the hopeless dowdiness of her garments.

Abruptly she moved swiftly to her father's side and slipped her hand into his. "What is it, father?" she repeated, eying Colonel Bohun coldly.

"Why, Betty," he said, tremulous—"why, Betty, your grandfather here has been kind enough to offer to take you and educate you and make a lady of you, and—and we were just talking it over, dear—just talking it over."

"Do you mean that?" she flung at Bohun.

He straightened up and held himself well in hand. "Is it the first you have heard of it?"

"Yes," she looked inquiringly at her father.

"Why didn't you tell her?" Bohun persisted harshly. "Were you afraid?"

"No," Sam shook his head slowly. "I wasn't afraid, but it was unnecessary. You see, Betty, Colonel Bohun is willing to do all this for you on several conditions. You must leave me and never see me again. You mustn't even recognize me should we meet upon the street. You must change your name to Bohun and never permit yourself to be known as Betty Graham. Then you must—"

"Never mind, daddy, dear," said the girl. "That is enough. I know now. I understand why you never told me. It's impossible. Colonel Bohun knew

that when he made the offer, of course. He made it simply to harass you, daddy. It's his revenge."

"And that's your answer, miss?" snapped the colonel, bristling with wrath. "I would not," she told him slowly, "accept a favor from you, sir, if I were starving."

Bohun drew himself up. "Then starve," he told her and walked out of the shop.

CONTINUED TOMORROW.

DOC WHITE SOLVES A STANDING PUZZLE

Doc White, the left-hand pitcher of the Chicago White Sox, has a convincing answer for the everlasting question. "Why can't a left-hand batter successfully hit a southpaw twirler?" White's answer to the query was, "It's the simplest thing in the world. The majority of pitchers in the big leagues are right-handed, are they not? When you were a kid and played in lots of the majority of pitchers then were right-handed, were they not?"

"Admitting that, isn't it reasonable to assume that a ball player from his earliest days to the time he gets into the big league hits against right-hand-pitchers twice as often as he does against southpaws?"

"Well, that's the answer and that's all there is to it."

"If the big leagues should decide to carry half dozen left-hand pitchers and only one or two right-handers, you would find all these fellows who cannot hit left-handed pitchers would soon be able to solve the post-side shoots."

"Take Ty Cobb, for instance," says White. "I used to like to pitch against him when he first broke into the American league. He was the easiest kind of a proposition for me. But now—well, I can't fool him any more, and no other left-hander can; I don't care who he is."

"It is claimed that Vean Gregg, the Cleveland southpaw, was the only man who could serve up something. Ty couldn't hit last season. This may be true, but you can gamble that if Gregg stays in the American league very long Cobb will be able to get him."

N. Y. World.

Tap an Underground River. Georgetown, Col., Feb. 16.—Workmen drilling 6,550 feet from the portal in the Marshall-Russell mine tunnel unearthed what they believe to be an underground river. After firing several dynamite blasts in the tunnel, workmen started to clear away rock and earth loosened by the shots.

A sudden rush of water filled the tunnel to a depth of four feet, sweeping ore cars before it and turning several of them completely over. All the workmen escaped. It is said this is the first occurrence of its kind ever recorded in Colorado.

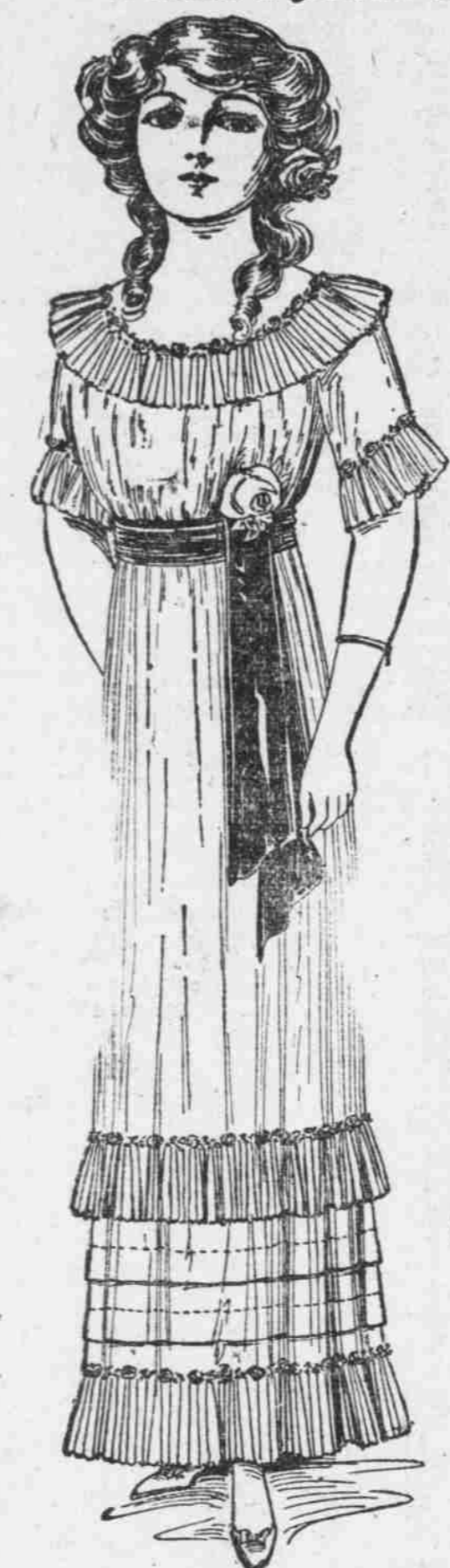
There are lots of things we should either forget to remember, or remember to forget.

DAILY FASHION TALKS

BY MAY MANTON

A FANCY GIRLISH FROCK.

SUCH a simple girlish frock as this one is charming for many occasions. Made with low neck and short sleeves it is adapted to dancing parties and the like; made with high neck and with or without undersleeves, it is suited to graduation and occasions of the kind. It can be made from any pretty girlish material that is thin enough to be made full successfully, and it can be trimmed with the same, with contrasting material or with frills of lace. In the illustration it is made of mesaline while the trimming is plissé chiffon headed with rose-bud banding. Chiffon or crépe métère with gathered frills of shadow lace would be charming for the dress could be made entirely of chiffon or net with the frills of the same. When made as shown in the back view, it becomes adapted to simple materials, and yoke and under-sleeves can be of net or lace. The dress consists of blouse and skirt. The blouse is made all in one piece and can be finished either with or without a lining. The skirt is straight and finished with hem and tucks. If a high neck frock with lining is desired, the lining can be faced to form a yoke and under-sleeves can be inserted in its armholes. For the high neck frock without lining, the under-sleeves can be omitted and the yoke can be joined to the neck edge.



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that when he made the offer, of course. He made it simply to harass you, daddy. It's his revenge.

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Cry "Next!" to Gov. Wilson.

Trenton, N. J., Feb. 16.—Every razor maker in the United States seems to have read that Gov. Wilson, while shaving with an old-fashioned razor, cut his lip last week.

When he returned to Trenton from his trip to Kentucky and Chicago, in his mail were six safety razors, a written guarantee with each that each one was better than any other razor, and that none of the razors was so ill-bred as to cut the lip of a man who has so much use for an uninjured lip as the New Jersey executive.

Every mail is bringing more razors. They range from the cheapest to the most expensive, and some of the boxes bear Gov. Wilson's name in gold letters.

It was suggested that as the governor has so many razors now he should send one to each of the other aspirants for the democratic nomination for president, first removing the safety guard.

Clothes may not make the man, but the lack of them would, to say the least, be embarrassing.

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 is 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.

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