



54-40 OR FIGHT

BY EMERSON HOUGH
AUTHOR OF THE MISSISSIPPI BUBBLE
ILLUSTRATIONS BY MAGNUS G. KETTNER
COPYRIGHT 1909 BY BOBBY-MERRILL COMPANY



WASHINGTON GOSSIP

The Bryces and Gould-Decies Wedding



Decies and her daughter, Hon. Mrs. Wilkerson, bore down upon the capital for a nice little visit with the former naval attaché of the American embassy at London and Mrs. Gibbons.

When the visitors arrived they were promptly and fearfully feasted afternoon and evening—at the homes of smart society, at the country clubs, and, incidentally, over to the White House they journeyed one pleasant afternoon and drank five o'clock tea with Mrs. Taft. Next thing everybody knew the Dowager Lady Decies was dining over at the British embassy.

Now the story goes that the ambassador didn't go to the wedding because he isn't fond of wearing his gold-laced clothes. Mrs. Bryce, who has a naively frank enjoyment of the glamour and glitter of ambassadorial prominence and such internationally glorious international events as the Gould-Decies wedding, likes nothing better than to get properly "fixed up" and be among "those present," and she wasn't pleased a bit when the ambassador shrugged his scholarly shoulders and, thinking how much more comfy he would be sitting at home with a nice well-thumbed book on his knee, stopped pat in Washington. However, Mrs. Bryce, like the wise and obedient wife she is, put her glorious raiment and contented herself with reading the newspaper accounts of the great event.

SYNOPSIS.

Senator John Calhoun is invited to become secretary of state in Tyler's cabinet. He declines that if he accepts Texas and Oregon must be added to the Union. He sends his secretary, Nicholas Trist, to ask the Baroness von Ritz, spy of the British ambassador, Pakenham, to call at his apartments. While searching for the baroness' home, a carriage drives up and Nicholas is invited to enter. The occupant is the baroness, and she asks Nicholas to assist in evading pursuers. Nicholas notes that the baroness has lost a slipper. She gives him the remaining slipper as a pledge that she will tell Calhoun what he wants to know regarding England's intentions toward Mexico. As security Nicholas gives her a trinket he intended for his sweetheart, Elizabeth Churchill. Tyler tells Pakenham that joint occupation of Oregon with England, must cease, that the west has raised the cry of "Fifty-four Forty, or Fight." Calhoun becomes secretary of state. He orders Nicholas to Montreal on state business, and the latter plans to be married that night. The baroness says she will try to prevent the marriage. A drunken congressman whom Nicholas asks to assist in the wedding arrangements, sends the baroness a slipper to Elizabeth, by mistake, and the wedding is declared off. Nicholas finds the baroness in Montreal, she having succeeded, where he failed, in discovering England's intentions regarding Oregon. She tells him that the slipper he had in his possession contained a note from the attaché of Texas to the British ambassador, saying that if the United States did not annex Texas within 30 days, she would lose both Texas and Oregon. Nicholas meets a naturalist, Von Rittenhofen, who gives him information about Oregon. The baroness and a British warship disappear from Montreal simultaneously. Calhoun engages Von Rittenhofen to make maps of the western country.

CHAPTER XX.—Continued.

"I will tell you, Nicholas," said he at last, wheeling swiftly upon me. "Start next week! An army of settlers waits now for a leader along the Missouri. Organize them; lead them out! Give them enthusiasm! Tell them what Oregon is! You may serve alike our party and our nation. You cannot measure the consequences of prompt action sometimes, done by a man who is resolved upon the right. A thousand things may hinge upon it."

While you have been busy, I have not been idle," he continued. "I have here another little paper which I have roughly drafted." He handed me the document as he spoke.

"A treaty—with Texas!" I exclaimed.

"The first draft, yes. We have signed the memorandum. We await only one other signature."

"Of Van Zandt!"

"Yes. Now comes Mr. Nicholas Trist, with word of a certain woman to the effect that Mr. Van Zandt is playing with England."

"And that woman also is playing with England?"

Calhoun smiled enigmatically.

"But she has gone," said I, "who knows where? She, too, may have sailed for Oregon, for all we know."

He looked at me as though with a flash of inspiration. "That may be," said he; "it may very well be! That would cost us our hold over Pakenham. Neither would we have any chance left with her."

"How do you mean, Mr. Calhoun?" said I. "I do not understand you."

"Nicholas," said Mr. Calhoun, "that lady was much impressed with you." He regarded me calmly, contemplatively, appraisingly.

"I do not understand you," I reiterated.

"I am glad that you do not and did not. In that case, all would have been over at once. You would never have seen her a second time. Your constancy was our salvation, and perhaps your own! In due time you will see many things more plainly. Meantime, be sure England will be careful. She will make no overt movement. I should say, until she has heard from Oregon; which will not be before my lady baroness shall have returned and reported to Pakenham here. All of which means more time for us."

I began to see something of the structure of bold enterprise which this man deliberately was planning; but no comment offered itself; so that presently he went on, as though in soliloquy.

"The Hudson Bay Company have received England splendidly enough. Mr. McLaughlin, good man that he is, is not suited the Hudson Bay Company. His removal means less courtesy to our settlers in Oregon. Granted, he is a tactful leader than himself, but still he will be friction with our high-strung frontiersmen in that country. No man can tell when the thing will come to an issue. For my own part, I would agree with Polk that we ought to have that country to fifty-four forty. What we ought to do and what we can do are two separate matters. We would force the issue now and we would lose for 100 years. We would advance firmly and hold what we gain, in perhaps less than 100 years we may win all of that country, as I just said to Mr. Polk, the River Saskatchewan—I know here! In my own soul, I believe we may set a limit to the growth of an idea of an honest government for a people. And this continent is for that honest government!"

He paused in his walk and looked at me. "But now, as I have said at least time for Texas. We must have Texas as we need another."

I stared at him. "You come now to me with proof that my lady baroness traffics with Mexico as well as England," he resumed. "That is to say, Yturrio meets my lady baroness. What is the inference? At least, jealousy on the part of Yturrio's wife, whether or not she cares for him! Now, jealousy between the sexes is a deadly weapon if well handled. Repugnant as it is, we must handle it."

I experienced no great enthusiasm at the trend of events, and Mr. Calhoun smiled at me cynically as he went on. "I see you don't care for this sort of commission. At least, this is no midnight interview. You shall call in broad daylight on the Senora Yturrio. If you and my daughter will take my coach and four tomorrow, I think she will gladly receive your cards. Perhaps also she will consent to take the air of Washington with you. In that case, she might drop in here for an ice. In such case, to conclude, I may perhaps be favored with an interview with that lady. I must have Van Zandt's signature to this treaty which you see here!"

"But these are Mexicans, and Van Zandt is leader of the Texans, their most bitter enemies!"

"Precisely. All the less reason why Senora Yturrio should be suspected."

"I am not sure that I grasp all this, Mr. Calhoun."

"Perhaps not. You presently will know more. What seems to me plain is that, since we seem to lose a valuable ally in the Baroness von Ritz, we must make some offset to that loss. If England has one woman on the Columbia, we must have another on the Rio Grande!"

CHAPTER XXI.

Politics Under Cover.

To a woman, the romances she makes are more amusing than those she reads.

—Theophile Gautier.

It seemed quite correct for the daughter of our secretary of state to call to inquire for the health of the fair Senora Yturrio, and to present the compliments of Mme. Calhoun, at that time not in the city of Washington. Matters went so smoothly that I felt justified in suggesting a little drive, and Senora Yturrio had no hesitation in accepting. Quite naturally, our stately progress finally brought us close to the residence of Miss Calhoun. That lady suggested that, since the day was warm, it might be well to descend and see if we might not find a sherry; all of which also seemed quite to the wish of the lady from Mexico. The ease and warmth of Mr. Calhoun's greeting to her were such that she soon was well at home and chatting very amiably. She spoke English with but little hesitancy.

Lucrecia Yturrio, at that time not ill known in Washington's foreign colony, was beautiful, in a sensuous, ripe way. Her hair was dark, heavily coiled, and packed in masses above an oval forehead. Her brows were straight, dark and delicate; her teeth white and strong; her lips red and full; her chin well curved and deep. A round arm and taper hand controlled a most artificial fan.

Mr. Calhoun expressed great surprise and gratification that mere chance had enabled him to meet the

wife of a gentleman so distinguished in the diplomatic service as Senor Yturrio.

"We are especially glad always to hear of our friends from the southwest," said he, at last, with a slight addition of formality in tone and attitude.

At these words I saw my lady's eyes flicker. "It is fate, señor," said she, again casting down her eyes, and spreading out her hands as in resignation, "fate which left Texas and Mexico not always one."

"That may be," said Mr. Calhoun. "Perhaps fate, also, that those of kin should cling together."

"How can a mere woman?" My lady shrugged her very graceful and beautiful shoulders—somewhat mature shoulders now, but still beautiful.

"Dear senora," said Mr. Calhoun, "there are so many things a woman may not know. For instance, how could she know if her husband should perchance leave the legation to which he was attached and pay a visit to another nation?"

Again the slight flickering of her eyes, but again her hands were outspread in protest.

"How indeed, señor?"

"What if my young aide here, Mr. Trist, should tell you that he has seen your husband some hundreds of miles away and in conference with a lady supposed to be somewhat friendly toward—"

"Ah, you mean that baroness—!" So soon had the shaft gone home! Her woman's jealousy had offered a point unexpectedly weak. Calhoun bowed, without a smile upon his face.

"Mr. Pakenham, the British minister, is disposed to be friendly to this same lady. Your husband and a certain officer of the British navy called upon this same lady last week in Montreal—informally. It is sometimes unfortunate that plans are divulged. To me it seemed only wise and fit that you should not let any of these little personal matters make for us greater complications in these perilous times. I think you understand me, perhaps, Senora Yturrio?"

She gurgled low in her throat at this, any sort of sound, meaning to remain ambiguous. But Calhoun was merciless.

"It is not within dignity, senora, for me to make trouble between a lady and her husband. But we must have friends with us under our flag, or know that they are not our friends. You are welcome in my house. Your husband is welcome in the house of our republic. There are certain duties, even thus."

Only now and again she turned upon him the light of her splendid eyes, searching him.

"If I should recall again, gently, my dear senora, the fact that your husband was with that particular woman—"

"If I should say that Mexico has been found under the flag of England, while supposed to be under our flag—if I should add that one of the representatives of the Mexican legation had been discovered in handing over to England certain secrets of this country and of the Republic of Texas—why, then, what answer, think you, senora, Mexico, would make to me?"

"But Senor Calhoun does not mean—does not dare to say—"

"I do dare it; I do mean it! I can tell you all that Mexico plans, and all that Texas plans. All the secrets are out; and since we know them, we pur pose immediate annexation of the Republic of Texas! Though it means war, Texas shall be ours! This has been forced upon us by the perfidy of other nations."

"You seek war, Senor Secretary! My people say that your armies are in Texas now, or will be."

"They are but very slightly in advance of the truth, senora," said Calhoun grimly. "For me, I do not believe in war when war can be averted. But suppose it could be averted? Suppose the Senora Yturrio herself could avert it? Suppose the senora could remain here still, in this city which she so much admires? A lady of so distinguished beauty and charm is valuable in our society here."

He bowed to her with stately grace. If there was mockery in his tone, she could not catch it; nor did her searching eyes read his meaning.

"See," he resumed, "alone, I am helpless in this situation. If my government is offended, I cannot stop the course of events. I am not the senate; I am simply an officer in our administration—a very humble officer of his excellency our president, Mr. Tyler."

My lady broke out in a peal of low rippling laughter, her white teeth gleaming. It was, after all, somewhat difficult to trifle with one who had been trained in intrigue all her life.

Calhoun laughed now in his own quiet way. "We shall do better if we deal entirely frankly, senora," said he. "Let us then waste no time. Frankly, then, it would seem that, now the Baroness von Ritz is off the scene, the Senora Yturrio would have all the better title and opportunity in the affections—well, let us say, her own husband!"

She bent toward him now, her lips open in a slow smile, all her subtle and dangerous beauty unmasking its batteries. The impression she conveyed was that of warmth and of spotted shadows such as play upon the leopard's back, such as mark the wing of the butterfly, the petal of some flower born in a land of heat and passion. But Calhoun regarded her calmly, his finger tips together, and spoke as deliberately as though communing with himself. "It is but one thing, one very little thing."

"And what is that, señor?" she asked at length.

"The signature of Senor Van Zandt, attaché for Texas, on this memorandum of treaty between the United States and Texas."

Bowing, he presented to her the document to which he had earlier directed my own attention. "We are all well advised that Senor Van Zandt is trafficking this very hour with England as against us," he explained. "We ask the gracious assistance of Senora Yturrio. In return we promise her—silence!"

"I can not—it is impossible!" she exclaimed, as she glanced at the pages. "It is our ruin—!"

"No, senora," said Calhoun sternly; "it means annexation of Texas to the United States. But that is not your ruin. It is your salvation. Your country will may doubt England, even England bearing gifts!"

"I have no control over Senor Van Zandt—he is the enemy of my country," she began.

Calhoun now fixed upon her the full cold blue blaze of his singularly penetrating eyes. "No, senora," he said sternly; "but you have access to my friend Mr. Polk, and Mr. Polk is the friend of Mr. Jackson, and they two are friends of Mr. Van Zandt; and Texas supposes that these two, although they do not represent precisely my own beliefs in politics, are for the annexation of Texas, not to England, but to America. There is good chance Mr. Polk may be president. If you do not use your personal influence with him, he may conspire politics and not you, and so declare war against Mexico. That war would cost you Texas, and much more as well. Now, to avert that war, do you not think that perhaps you can ask Mr. Polk to say to Mr. Van Zandt that his signature on this little treaty would end all such questions simply, immediately, and to the best benefit of Mexico, Texas and the United States? Treason? Why, senora, 'twould be preventing treason!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Johnny on the Spot. Peddler (selling preparation for removing stains from clothing)—I have got here—

Servant (who responds to the ring)—Excuse me, please, but we are in great trouble here today. The gentleman of the house has been blown up in an explosion.

Peddler—Ha! Hurt much?

Servant—Blown to atoms. Only a grease spot left of him.

Peddler—Ah! Only a grease spot, you say? Well, here's a bottle of my champion eradicator, which will remove that grease spot in two minutes.—Tit-Bits.

Statehood Advocates Invade Capital



WASHINGTON was invaded recently by an army of leading politicians and business men from Arizona and New Mexico, who came to urge congress to take favorable action on statehood for these territories.

It had been supposed this action could be taken by the president and statehood accomplished by proclamation, in case congress should adjourn without acting. But the statehood boomers found that Attorney General Wickersham held differently. He says the enabling act contains an alternative clause making approval by joint resolution necessary.

To the constitution submitted by New Mexico the principal objection offered came from those who wanted a state-wide prohibition article incorporated. The objection raised against the Arizona constitution has been that it contains a sweeping recall provision applying to the judiciary as every other elective office.

Under the Arizona constitution the people can recall the judges of any court and the provision is said to afford

question as to what shall constitute a working day for the railway mail clerks. The burden of the complaint has been that a large majority of the men on road duty were not, prior to the issuing of the "take up the slack" order, making the hours now required.

Official notice has now been given to the clerks that on the lines where their work is heavy continuously for six days each week, the standard of the service hours shall be considered as six hours. It is announced also that credit for overtime will be given to clerks who do terminal work at either end of their runs, or extra work that requires them to remain on duty beyond the standard number of hours. With this arrangement the clerks generally have expressed themselves as quite satisfied. There are 14,483 railway postal clerks assigned to road duty. The total average of time on duty on trains and at terminals is now six hours and thirty-two minutes.

The postoffice department insists that it has had no desire to put additional burdens on the men.

Railway Mail Clerks Make a Protest



THE men employed in the railway mail service have successfully appealed to congress to correct what they call the "intolerable conditions" brought about by the attempt of the department to "take up the slack" in the service. This "take up the slack" order was issued about six months ago. The object of the order was to obtain greater uniformity in the average hours of work in a day by the railway mail clerks. According to representations made both to congress and to the postmaster-general the order has caused great demoralization in the service. In some sections of the country the railway mail clerks have threatened to quit in a body unless relief was afforded.

The controversy has hung on the

Hobson Again Predicts War With Japs



CONGRESSMAN RICHARD HOBSON of Alabama, in a recent red-hot speech in the house of representatives, said that war with Japan was bound to come, and he believed that it would come within ten months. He was utterly unprepared, he said. Japan is prepared. In fact, she is practically bankrupt because of her war chest. He detailed all of the various causes as to why Japan will make war on us. Once the war is on, he said, the European nations will try to stop it and our moneyed men will cry for peace, but the nation in its pride will persist and the struggle will last for years and will become one simply of endurance. He argues for an increased navy as protection.

Japan and the United States will go to war in the near future. The conflict will begin in less than ten months. The war will last five years, perhaps ten. The Panama canal will be destroyed, and in the end this nation will carry the war to Japan and conquer that kingdom. These are a few of the predictions made by Representative Hobson, who used to be an officer in the navy.

"We will be struck," he declared, "and when we are—gentlemen may differ with me as to the time, but I firmly believe it can be counted in months on the fingers of my two hands—we will find ourselves practically powerless. The nations of the world will call on us to give up the war and not continue to disturb the peace of the world, just as we did with Russia in her war with Japan. Our own financiers will demand that we end an apparently hopeless struggle."

"But we will not give up. We will fight on, angered and humiliated, until it becomes a mere question of resources."



"And What is That, Senor?" She Asked at Length.