



54-40 OR FIGHT

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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 Triest, 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 driven 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. 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' 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 orders Nicholas to head a party of settlers bound for Oregon. Calhoun excites the jealousy of Senora Yturro and thereby secures the signature of the Texas attaché to a treaty of annexation. Nicholas starts for Oregon. He wins the race over the British party. A British warship arrives with the baroness as a passenger. She tells Nicholas that she placed a note in the slipper which caused the breaking off of his marriage, and that she intends to return to Washington to repair the damage she has done. Nicholas decides to follow her.

CHAPTER XXX.—Continued.

The captain stood at the head of the front team, his hand resting on the yoke as he leaned against the bowed neck of one of the oxen. The men and women were thin almost as the beasts which dragged the wagons. These latter stood with lolling tongues even though early in the day, for water hereabout was scarce and bitter to the taste. So, at first almost in silence, we made the salutations of the desert. So, presently, we exchanged the news of east and west.

There is to-day no news of the quality which we then communicated. They knew nothing of Oregon. I knew nothing of the east. A national election had been held, regarding which I knew not even the names of the candidates of either party, not to mention results. All I could do was to guess and to point to the inscription on the white top of the foremost wagon: "Fifty-Four Forty or Fight!"

"Is Polk elected?" I asked the captain of the train.

He nodded. "He shore is," said he. "We're comin' out to take Oregon. What's the news?"

My own grim news was that Oregon was ours and must be ours. I shook hands with a hundred men on that, our hands clasped in stern and silent grip. Then, after a time, I urged other questions foremost in my own mind. Had they seen a small party east-bound?

"Yes, I had answer. They had passed this light outfit east of Bridger's post. There was one chance in a hundred they might get over the South pass that fall, for they were traveling light and fast, with good animals, and old Joe Meek was sure he would make it through. The women? Well, one was a preacher's wife, another an old Gypsy, and another the most beautiful woman ever seen on the trail or anywhere else.

Then they began to question me regarding Oregon. How was the land? Would it raise wheat and corn and hogs? How was the weather? Was there much game? Would it take much labor to clear a farm?

Of course it came to politics. Yes, Texas had been annexed, somehow, not by regular vote of the senate. There was some hitch about that. My leader reckoned there was no regular treaty. It had just been done by joint resolution of the house—done by Tyler and Calhoun, just in time to take the feather out of old Polk's cap! The treaty of annexation—why, yes, it was ratified by congress, and everything signed up March 3, just one day before Polk's inaugural! Polk was on the warpath, according to my gaunt leader. There was going to be war as sure as shooting, unless we got all of Oregon.

"Do you see that writin' on my wagon top?" asked the captain. "Fifty-Four Forty or Fight. That's us!"

And so they went on to tell us how this cry was spreading, south and west, and over the north as well; although the Whigs did not dare cry it quite so loudly.

And so at last we parted, each the better for the information gained, each to resume what would to-day seem practically an endless journey. Our farewells were as careless, as confident, as had been our greetings. Thousands of miles of unsettled country lay east and west of us, and all around us, our empire, not then won. I made the journey across the South pass, the snow being now beaten down on the trails more than usual by the west-bound animals and vehicles. Of all these now coming on, none would get farther west than Fort Hall that



"Fifty-Four Forty or Fight! That's Us!"

year. Our own party, although over the Rockies, had yet the plains to cross. I was glad enough when we staggered into old Fort Laramie in the midst of a blinding snowstorm. Winter had caught us fair and full. I had lost the race!

Here, then, I must winter. Yet I learned that Joe Meek had outfitted at Laramie almost a month earlier, with new animals; had bought a little grain, and, under escort of a cavalry troop which had come west with the wagon train, had started east in time, perhaps, to make it through to the Missouri. In a race of 1,000 miles, the baroness had already beaten me almost by a month! Further word was, of course, now unobtainable, for no trains or wagons would come west so late, and there were then no stages carrying mail across the great plains. There was nothing for me to do except to wait and eat out my heart at old Fort Laramie, in the society of Indians and trappers, half-breeds and traders. The winter seemed years in length, so gladly I make its story brief.

It was now the spring of 1846, and I was in my second year away from Washington. Glad enough I was when in the first sunshine of spring I started east, taking my chances of getting over the plains. At last, to make the long journey also brief, I did reach Fort Leavenworth, by this time a five months' loser in the transcontinental race.

As to the baroness, she had long since left Fort Leavenworth for the east. I followed still with what speed I could employ. I could not reach Washington now until long after the first buds would be out and the creepers growing green on the gallery of Mr. Calhoun's residence. Yes, green also on all the lattices of Elmhurst mansion. What had happened there for me?

CHAPTER XXXI.

The Payment.
What man seeks in love is woman; what woman seeks in man is love.—Housaye.

When I reached Washington it was indeed spring, warm, sweet spring. In the wide avenue the straggling trees were doing their best to dignify the city, and flowers were blooming everywhere. Wonderful enough did all this seem to me after thousands of miles of rude scenery of bare valleys and rocky hills, wild landscapes, seen often through cold and blinding storms amid peaks and gorges, or on the drear, forbidding plains.

Used more, of late, to these wilder scenes, I felt awkward and still half savage. I did not at once seek out my own friends. My first wish was to get in touch with Mr. Calhoun, for I knew that so I would most quickly arrive at the heart of events.

He was away when I called at his residence on Georgetown Heights, but at last I heard the wheels of his old omnibus, and presently he entered with his usual companion, Dr. Samuel Ward. When they saw me there, then indeed I received a greeting which repaid me for many things!

This over, we all three broke out in laughter at my uncouth appearance. I was clad still in such clothing as I could pick up in western towns as I hurried on from the Missouri eastward; and I had as yet found no time for barbers.

"We have had no word from you, Nicholas," said Mr. Calhoun presently, "since that from Laramie, in the fall of eighteen forty-four. This is in the spring of eighteen forty-six! Meantime, we might all have been dead and buried and none of us the wiser. What a country! 'Tis more enormous than the mind of any of us can grasp."

"You should travel across it to learn that," I grinned.

"Many things have happened since you left. You know that I am back in the senate once more?"

I nodded. "And about Texas?" I began.

"Texas is ours," said he, smiling grimly. "You have heard how? It was a hard fight enough—a bitter, selfish, sectional fight among politicians. But there is going to be war. Our troops crossed the Sabine more than a year ago. They will cross the Rio Grande before this year is done. The Mexican minister has asked for his passports. The administration has ordered Gen. Taylor to advance. Mr. Polk is carrying out annexation with a vengeance. Seeing a chance for more territory, now that Texas is safe from England, he plans war on helpless and deserted Mexico! We may hear of a battle now at any time. But the war with Mexico may yet mean war with England. That, of course, endangers our chance to gain all or any of that great Oregon country. Tell me, what have you learned?"

I hurried on now with my own news, briefly as I might. I told them of the ships of England's navy waiting in Oregon waters; of the growing suspicion of the Hudson bay people; of the changes in the management at Fort Vancouver; of the change also from a conciliatory policy to one of half hostility. I told them of our wagon trains going west, and of the strength of our frontiersmen; but offset this, justly as I might, by giving facts also regarding the opposition these might meet.

"Precisely," said Calhoun, walking up and down, his head bent. "England is preparing for war! How much are we prepared? It would cost us the revenues of a quarter of a century to go to war with her to-day. It would cost us 50,000 lives. We would need an army of 250,000 men. Where is all that to come from? Can we transport our army there in time? But had all this bluster ceased, then we could have deferred this war with Mexico; could have bought with coin what now will cost us blood; and we could also have bought Oregon without the cost of either coin or blood. Delay was what we needed! All of Oregon should have been ours!"

"But, surely, this is not all news to you?" I began. "Have you not seen the Baroness von Ritz? Has she not made her report?"

"The baroness!" queried Calhoun. "That stormy petrel—that advance

agent of events! Did she indeed sail with the British ships from Montreal? Did you find her there—in Oregon?"

"Yes, and lost her there! She started east last summer, and beat me fairly in the race. Has she not made known her presence here? She told me she was going to Washington."

He shook his head in surprise. "Trouble now, I fear! Pakenham has back his best ally, our worst antagonist."

"That certainly is strange," said I. "She had five months the start of me, and in that time there is no telling what she has done or undone. Surely, she is somewhere here, in Washington! She held Texas in her shoes. I tell you she holds Oregon in her gloves to-day!"

I started up, my story half untold. "Where are you going?" asked Mr. Calhoun of me. Dr. Ward looked at me, smiling. "He does not inquire of a certain young lady—"

"I am going to find the Baroness von Ritz!" said I. I flushed red under my tan. I doubt not; but I would not ask a word regarding Elizabeth.

Dr. Ward came and laid a hand on my shoulder. "Republics forget," said he, "but men from South Carolina do not. Neither do girls from Maryland. Do you think so?"

"That is what I am going to find out."

"How, then? Are you going to Elm-hurst as you look now?"

"No. I shall find out many things by first finding the Baroness von Ritz." And before they could make further protests I was out and away.

I hurried now to a certain side street, of which I have made mention, and knocked confidently at a door I knew. The neighborhood was asleep in the warm sun. I knocked a second time, and began to doubt, but at last heard slow footsteps.

There appeared at the crack of the door the wrinkled visage of the old serving woman, Threlka. I knew that she would be there in precisely this way, because there was every reason in the world why it should not have been. She paused, scanning me closely, then quickly opened the door and allowed me to step inside, vanishing as was her wont. I heard another step in the half-hidden hallway beyond, but this was not the step which I awaited; it was that of a man, slow, feeble, hesitating. I started forward as a face appeared at the parted curtains. A glad cry welcomed me in turn. A tall, bent form approached me, and an arm was thrown about my shoulder. It was my willom friend, our ancient scientist, Van Rittenhofen! I did not pause to ask how he happened to be there. It was quite natural, since it was wholly impossible. I made no wonder at the Chinese dog Chow, or the little Indian maid, who both came, stared, and silently vanished. Seeing these, I knew that their strange protector must also have won through safe.

"Ach Gott! Gesegnet Gott! I see you again, my friend!" Thus the old doctor.

"But tell me," I interrupted, "where is the mistress of this house, the Baroness von Ritz?"

He looked at me in his mild way. "You mean my daughter Helena?"

Now at last I smiled. His daughter! This at least was too incredible. He turned and reached behind him to a little table. He held up before my eyes my little blanket clasp of shell. Then I knew that this last and most impossible thing also was true, and that in some way these two had found each other! But why? What could he now mean?

"Listen now," he began, "and I shall tell you. I was in the street one day. When I walk alone, I do not much notice. But now, as I walk, before my eyes on the street, I see what? This—this, the Tah Gook! At first, I see nothing but it. Then I look up. Before me is a woman, young and beautiful. Ach! what should I do but take her in my arms!"

"It was she; it was—"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Fine Growth of Potatoes.
A remarkable potato has attracted some attention at Annbank, in Ayrshire, Scotland. Among some rose bushes which Mr. Morran, the station master, got from France, one potato plant appeared, which he allowed to come to maturity. When it was dug in the autumn of last year it was found that there were at the root 43 potatoes which weighed fully 14 pounds. The potato is of fine quality, with shallow eyes and a beautiful skin.

As He Understood It.
Jason Juby (telling of his trip to New York)—An' another interestin' sight was them there curb brokers doin' business.

Hiram Whiffle—Seems to me I once heard tell uv them fellers—what do they do?

Jason Juby—Why, they buy all the seats in the stock exchange and then sell 'em again to suckers at a dollar or two higher price.—Illustrated Sunday Magazine.

WASHINGTON GOSSIP

Illinois Is Ahead in Absenteeism



WASHINGTON.—Illinois still holds the national championship for long distance statesmanship in congress. The complete congressional record for the last session just issued establishes the state's claim to this distinction beyond any doubt.

No other delegation even approaches the mark set by Illinois in the number of congressmen absent at all times, the number of roll calls missed by each and the total number of days each was away during the session.

While none of the Illinois representatives achieved the distinction of representing his district without once appearing at the capital, there were several who outdid all former feats and approached remarkably close to this goal. Unfortunately they were handicapped by the provision of the law for the payment of mileage.

A member may draw his salary of

\$7,500 a year, his \$1,500 allowance for clerk hire, and \$125 for stationery without coming to Washington, but it is necessary for him to appear at least once in order to receive his traveling allowance of 20 cents a mile.

It is doubtful if an absolutely perfect record of nonattendance ever will be made even by one of the Illinois champions, unless this irksome requirement of the mileage provision should be modified. The generous allowance makes it a real object for a congressman to come to Washington at least once each session.

Unsophisticated persons may suppose representatives who attend a session of congress only a few days of the entire period refrain, as a matter of propriety, from drawing their entire salary, or perhaps return it to the treasury.

For the information of such he it stated the cashier in the office of the sergeant at arms was asked if any member of the house had not drawn his salary for the last congress or had refunded it for any reason.

"Members of the house refund salary!" exclaimed the official. "Never knew it to happen, and I've been here sixteen years."

President Loves Innocent Jest



"LIFE is a jest, and all things show it: I thought so once, and now I know it."

sang the poet Gay; and although the president appreciates the necessity of upholding the dignity of the chief executive, still, like Oliver Cromwell, he "loves an innocent jest."

He was to attend a fashionable bazaar held at the New Willard for sweet charity's sake, and started out accompanied by Capt. Butt and two secret service guards, Messrs. Sloan and Wheeler writes Joe Mitchell Chaple in the National.

The party was cordially welcomed by the reception committee, and were about to be permitted to enter the hall when the president whimsically decided to pay his way in like the other patrons of the charity. Walking up to a desk where the tickets were on sale, he inquired: "How much are the tickets?"

"Two dollars," replied the young lady in charge sweetly.

Plunging into his spacious trousers' pocket, the presidential right hand brought forth two one dollar bills, which he passed to the ticket seller, and nodding to his trio of companions, he entered the hall.

"Lend me two dollars, Jack," whispered Captain Butt to Wheeler, "let my money at home."

"So did I," mourned Wheeler. (The party were attired in dress suits.)

"Never mind, I'll take care of you both," hastily offered Jimmie Sloan, with becoming magnanimity. The others breathed a sigh of relief as he approached the desk. "Three tickets, please," he announced calmly, producing a crisp five-dollar bill.

"Another dollar, please," gently remarked the young lady at the booth.

"Another dollar! H—how m—much did you say those tickets were?" demanded James.

"Two dollars each."

Jimmie was blushing a rosy red when Wheeler came to the rescue. A passing bell-boy was taken by the collar and a few of the morning's tips were removed from his inside pocket. Then four silver quarters were placed triumphantly upon the table, and the three passed inside.

As Breeding Ground for Alaska



AN odd plan is on foot to make the Colorado mountains a sort of proving ground for agriculture in Alaska. Of course, there are a good many kinds of agriculture in Alaska that do not need proving. They are already an established success, both scientifically and commercially. Hundreds of tons of potatoes, oats and cabbage are grown and sold in the territory each year and there are a dozen other successful crops.

But Alaskan nights are too cool to mature string beans and corn, for instance, and the question is whether hardy, cold-restraint varieties could not be produced by selective breeding that would give Alaskans all the fresh luxuries from their garden that the states have.

There are farms in the Colorado mountains near Denver that have an elevation of nearly 10,000 feet and the conditions at this altitude in Colorado are almost identical with condi-

tions at 1,000 feet elevation near the arctic circle. That is the days are warm and sunny, but the nights are almost cold even in summer, while the severe winters are apt to kill all but the hardest perennials.

A bill was recently introduced into congress for the establishment of just such work in Colorado and also for experiments that would breed drought-resistant vegetables for the desert.

The methods employed in this experimental work are exceedingly interesting. If for instance, it was decided to find a wheat that would mature in a very cold climate like that in the hill country north of the arctic circle, this is how it would be done: First, the hardest seed of all the hardest varieties would be obtainable from Russia, Scandinavia, Canada and Alaska. Then it would be planted in a place where it would be unlikely to mature. There might be just one stalk that, from some mysterious strain of breeding or force of circumstance, would stand unharmed by the autumn frosts. Its seed would be treasured and the next year each grain would be carefully planted and guarded so that the strain should be increased, and still further and severer tests made on it until it was so hardened that a full annual crop was assured.

Lack of Horses Alarms Officers



ARMY officers and department of agriculture experts are uneasy over the lack of proper horses in the country for use of the cavalry and artillery in case of war.

A comprehensive report on the subject has been published by the bureau of animal industry of the war department. It appears that there is much trouble in finding suitable horses for the army in time of peace, to say nothing of the demands that would be made in case of war of any magnitude.

In this country now are about 23,000,000 horses. It would seem that out of this number there would be an ample number for the equipment of the cavalry and for artillery and other army uses in case of war, but in an article on breeding horses for the United States army, prepared by Capt. Casper H. Conrad of the Third

ally and published by the department of agriculture, doubt is expressed on the subject. The army type is said to be scarce and hard to obtain.

Capt. Conrad recommends legislation by the states generally to prevent the breeding of unsound horses.

In 1908 the government established the system of remount depots for the army. Under this system the government buys the horse young, at three to four years old, and after breaking them issues them to the troops. This system has been found preferable to purchasing the animals when matured. But what the army officers want, and also the department of agriculture, is a system of government supervision of the breeding of horses for the army.

Chief George M. Rommel of the animal husbandry division of the bureau of animal industry, has devised a plan whereby from 2,000 to 2,500 well-bred animals would be available for the army every year. This would about supply the demands in time of peace.

It is proposed to divide the country into four districts and to rear Morgans, thoroughbreds, standardbreds and saddlers. In time the best type would be discovered.