



54-40 OR FIGHT BY EMERSON HOUGH

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY MAGNUS G. KETNER
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SYNOPSIS.
John Calhoun becomes secretary of state in Tyler's cabinet with the fixed determination to acquire both Texas and Oregon. Nicholas Ritz, his secretary, is sent with a message to the Baroness von Ritz, spy and reputed mistress of the British minister, Pakenham. Ritz encounters the baroness and assists her in escaping from Pakenham. She agrees to see Calhoun, and as a pledge that she will tell him what she wants to know regarding the intentions of England toward Mexico, she gives him a slipper, the note of which has been lost. Ritz is ordered to Montreal on state business, and arranges to be married to Elizabeth Churchill before departing. The baroness says she will try to prevent the marriage. A drunken congressman, who is assisting Ritz in his wedding arrangements, blunderingly sends the baroness a slipper to Elizabeth instead of the owner, and the marriage is dissolved. Nicholas finds the baroness in Montreal, she having succeeded where he failed, in discovering England's intentions regarding Oregon. She tells him the slipper he had contained a note from the Texas attaché to Pakenham, saying that if the United States did not annex Texas within 20 days she would lose both Texas and Oregon. Calhoun orders Ritz to head a party bound for Oregon. Calhoun excites the jealousy of Seneca Yarrick, and thereby secures the signature of the Texas attaché to a treaty of annexation. Nicholas arrives in Oregon. Later the baroness arrives on a British warship. She tells Nicholas that a note she placed in her slipper caused the breaking off of his marriage, and that she intends to return to Washington to repair the wrong. Nicholas follows her. He learns on the way that Pakenham has been elected and Texas annexed, and that there is to be war with Mexico. The baroness tells Ritz that in return for a compromise of the Oregon boundary on the forty-fourth degree, she has sold herself to Pakenham. Ritz breaks Pakenham's key to the baroness's apartments.

CHAPTER XXXIV.—Continued.

Pale and calm, she reappeared at the parted draperies. I lifted the butts of my two derringers into view at my side pockets, and at a glance from her, hurriedly stepped into the opposite room. After a time I heard her open the door in response to a second knock.

I could not see her from my station, but the very silence gave me a picture of her standing, pale, forbidding, rebuking the first rude exclamation of his ardor.

"Come now, is he gone? Is the place safe at last?" he demanded.

"Enter, my lord," she said, simply.

"This is the hour you said," he began; and she answered:

"My lord, it is the hour."

"But come, what is the matter, then? You act solemn, as though this were a funeral, and not—just a kiss," I heard him add.

He must have advanced toward her. Continually I was upon the point of stepping out from my concealment, but as continually she left that not quite possible by some word or look or gesture of her own with him.

"Oh, hang it!" I heard him grumble, at length; "how can one tell what a woman'll do? Damn it, Helen!"

"Madam, you mean?"

"Well, then, madam, why all this haughty-toihty? Haven't I stood fouts and indignities enough from you? Didn't you make a show of me before that ass, Tyler, when I was at the very point of my greatest coup? You denied knowledge that I knew you had. But did I discard you for that? I have found you since then playing with Mexico, Texas, United States all at once? Have I punished you for that? No; I have only shown you the more regard."

"My lord, you punish me most when you most show me your regard."

"Well, God bless my soul, listen at that! Listen at that—here, now, when I've—madam, you shock me, you relieve me. I—could I have a glass of wine?"

I heard her ring for Threlka, heard her fasten the door behind her as she left, heard him gulp over his glass. For myself, although I did not yet disclose myself, I felt no doubt that I should kill Pakenham in these rooms. I even pondered whether I should shoot him through the temple and cut off his consciousness, or through the chest and so let him know why he died.

After a time he seemed to look about the room, his eye falling upon the littered floor.

"My key!" he exclaimed; "broken? Who did that? I can't use it now!"

"You will not need to use it, my lord."

"But I bought it, yesterday! Had I given you all of the Oregon country it would not have been worth £20,000. What I'll have to-night—what I'll take—will be worth twice that. But I bought that key, and what I buy I keep."

I heard a struggle, but she repulsed him once more in some way. Still my time had not come. He seemed now to stoop, grunting, to pick up something from the floor.

"How now? My memorandum of treaty, and torn in two! Oh, I see—I see," he murmured. "You wish to give it back to me—to be wholly free! It means only that you wish to love me for myself, for what I am! You ninny!"

"heathen—these Americans? Come, do that, and I leave this place with you, and quit diplomacy for good. We'll travel the world, we'll go the world over, you and I. I'll quit my estates, my family for you. Come, now, why do you delay?"

"Still you misunderstand, my lord." "Tell me then what you do mean."

"Our old bargain over this is broken, my lord. We must make another."

His anger rose. "What? You want more? You're trying to lead me on with your damned courtesan tricks!"

I heard her voice rise high and shrill, even as I started forward.

"Monsieur," she cried, "back with you!"

Pakenham, angered as he was, seemed half to hear my footsteps, seemed half to know the swinging of the draperies, even as I stepped back in obedience to her gesture. Her wit was as quick as ever.

"My lord," she said, "pray close yonder window. The draft is bad, and, moreover, we should have secrecy." He obeyed her, and she led him still further from the thought of investigating his surroundings.

"Now, my lord," she said, "take back what you have just said."

"Under penalty?" he sneered.

"Of your life, yes."

"So!" he grunted admiringly; "well, now, I like lire in a woman, even a deceiving light-of-love like you!"

"Monsieur!" her voice cried again; and once more it restrained me in my hiding.

"You devil!" he resumed, sneering now in all his ugliness of wine and

rage of disappointment. "What were you? Mistress of the prince of France! Toy of a score of nobles! Slave of that infamous rake, your husband! Much you've got in your life to make you uppish now with me!"

"My lord," she said evenly, "retract that. If you do not, you shall not leave this place alive."

In some way she mastered him, even in his ugly mood.

"Well, well," he growled, "I admit we don't get on very well in our little love affair; but I swear you drive me out of my mind. I'll never find another woman in the world like you. It's Sir Richard Pakenham asks you to begin a new future with himself."

"We begin no future, my lord."

"What do you mean? Have you lied to me? Do you mean to break your word—your promise?"

"It is within the hour that I have learned what the truth is."

"God damn my soul!" I heard his curse, growling.

"Yes, my lord," she answered, "God will damn your soul in so far as it is that of a brute and not that of a gentleman or a statesman."

I heard him drop into a chair. "This from one of your sort!" he half whimpered.

"Stop, now!" she cried. "Not one word more of that! I say within the hour I have learned what is the truth. I am Helena von Ritz, thief on the cross, and at last clean!"

"God A'mighty, madam! How

plious!" he sneered. "Something's behind all this. I know your record. What woman of the court of Austria or France comes out with morals? We used you here because you had none. And now, when it comes to the settlement between you and me, you talk like a nun. As though a trifle from virtue such as yours would be missed!"

"Ah, my God!" I heard her murmur. Then again she called to me, as he thought to himself; so that all was as it had been, for the time.

A silence fell before she went on.

"Sir Richard," she said at length, "we do not meet again. I await now your full apology for these things you have said. Such secrets as I have learned of England's, you know will remain safe with me. Also your own secret will be safe. Retract, then, what you have said, of my personal life!"

"Oh, well, then," he grumbled, "I admit I've had a bit of wine to-day. I don't mean much of anything by it. But here now, I have come, and by your own invitation—your own agreement. Being here, I find this treaty regarding Oregon torn in two and you gone nun all a-sudden."

"Yes, my lord, it is torn in two. The consideration moving to it was not mine to give—myself! Did you lay a hand on me now, I should die. If you kissed me, I should kill you and myself! As you say, I took yonder price, the devil's shilling. Did I go on, I would be enlisting for the dam-

tration at the time the bloomer movement first started 40 years or more ago. What has become of the other bloomers, no one knows, but this particular bloomerette blooms on in her quaint old costume, and doesn't condescend to notice skittish rivals who prance up Broadway wearing duds that are feeble variations of her original dress.

"God! Woman! What are you?" he exclaimed. "Clean? By God, yes, as a lily! I wish I were half as white myself."

"Sir Richard, did you ever love a woman?"

"One other, beside yourself, long ago."

"May not we two ask that other miracle of yourself?"

"How do you mean? You have beaten me already."

"Why, then, this! If I could keep my promise, I would. If I could give you myself, I would. Failing that, I may give you gratitude. Sir Richard, I would give you gratitude, did you restore this treaty as it was, for that new consideration. Come, now, these savages here are the same savages who once took that little island for you yonder. Twice they have defeated you. Do you wish a third war? You say England wishes slavery abolished. As you know, Texas is wholly lost to England. The armies of America have swept Texas from your reach forever, even at this hour. But if you give a new state in the north to these same savages, you go so far against oppression, against slavery—you do that much for the doctrine of England and her altruism in the world. Sir Richard, never did I believe in hard bargains and never did any great soul believe in such. I own to you that when I asked you here this afternoon I intended to wheedle from you all of Oregon to 54 degrees, 40 minutes. I find in you done some such miracle as in myself. Neither of us is so bad as the world has thought, as we ourselves have thought. Do, then, that other miracle for me. Let us compose our quarrel, and so part friends."

"How do you mean, madam?"

"Let us divide our dispute and stand on this treaty as you wrote it yesterday. Sir Richard, you are minister with extraordinary powers. Your government ratifies your acts without question. Your signature is binding—and there it is, writ already on the scroll. See, there are wafers there on the table before you. Take them. Patch together this treaty for me. That will be your miracle, Sir Richard, and 'twill be the mending of our quarrel. Sir, I offered you my body and you would not take it. I offer you my hand. Will you have that, my lord? I ask this of a gentleman of England."

It was not my right to hear the sounds of a man's shame and humiliation; or of his rising resolve, of his reformed manhood; but I did hear it all. I think that he took her hand and kissed it. Presently I heard some sort of shuffling and crinkling of paper on the table. I heard him sigh, as though he stood and looked at his work. His heavy footfalls crossed the room as though he sought hat and stick. Her lighter feet, as I heard, followed him, as though she held out both her hands to him. There was a pause, and yet another; and so, with a growling half sob, at last he passed out of the door; and he closed it softly after him.

When I entered, she was standing, her arms spread out across the door, her face pale, her eyes large and dark, her attire still disarrayed. On the table, as I saw, lay a parchment mended with wafers.

Slowly she came and put her two arms across my shoulders. "Monsieur!" she said, "Monsieur!"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Large Equipment Needed.
Little Robert, aged five, had often watched his mother, who was a milliner, sew the linings in hats. He was walking along the boardwalk in Atlantic City with his grandma one day.

"Just think, every one of those clouds has a silver lining, Bertie," said grandma.

"Gracious, but God must have a big needle," was Bertie's reply.



"What Do You Mean? Have You Lied to Me? Do You Mean to Break Your Word—Your Promise?"

you know my past. Tell me, do you see me now? Ungird me, Sir Richard! Look at me! Covet me! Take me!"

Apparently he half rose, shuffled toward her and stopped with a stifled sound, half a sob, half a growl.

I dared not picture to myself what he must have seen as she stood fronting him, her hands, as I imagined, at her bosom, tearing back her robes.

Again I heard her voice go on, challenging him. "Strip me now, Sir Richard, if you can! Take now what you bought, if you find it here. You cannot? You do not? Ah, then tell me that miracle has been done! She who was Helena von Ritz, as you know her, or as you thought you knew her, is not here!"

Now fell long silence. I could hear the breathing of them both, where I stood in the farther corner of my room. I had dropped both the derringers back in my pockets now, because I knew there would be no need for them. Her voice was softer as she went on.

"Tell me, Sir Richard, has not that miracle been done?" she demanded. "Might not in great stress that thief upon the cross have been a woman? Tell me, Sir Richard, am I not clean?"

He flung his body into a seat, his arm across the table. I heard his groan.

"God! Woman! What are you?" he exclaimed. "Clean? By God, yes, as a lily! I wish I were half as white myself."

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SAUERKRAUT LONGEVITY AID
Rev. Flynn of California Makes Some Peppery Remarks on Diet and Fat—Two Meals Enough.

Cincinnati.—"Any man who is so fat that he cannot see his feet while walking, ought to be arrested," said the Rev. Earl Flynn of Berkeley, Cal., to a Y. M. C. A. audience the other day. "Two meals a day are enough for the average person to eat and remain in a healthy condition. The person who eats three meals a day needs 12 hours sleep to refresh himself."

Mr. Flynn, who is 75 years old, continued:

"The food which collects the longevity germ is sauerkraut. The man or woman who keeps on a diet of this kind, ought to live a century or more. Sauerkraut is very nutritious and should be on the table of everybody."

Continuing his health talk, Mr. Flynn wound up with saying: "To be healthy every minister must sweat twice a week. A good many ministers only sweat once a month, when they draw their salaries."

PIONEER OF HAREM SKIRT

Woman Fell in With Bloomer Craze Forty Years Ago, and Has Kept It Up.

Jersey City.—Talking of your Broadway beauties in their freakish harem skirts, why not give a little attention to this old lady, who has worn 'em for ever since the early bloomer movement long before those Broadway freaks were born and wears 'em with entire satisfaction to herself at least to this very day. She is Miss Fowler of Vineland N. J. She donned the costume she is seen wearing in the illus-



Forty Years in Bloomers.

tration at the time the bloomer movement first started 40 years or more ago. What has become of the other bloomers, no one knows, but this particular bloomerette blooms on in her quaint old costume, and doesn't condescend to notice skittish rivals who prance up Broadway wearing duds that are feeble variations of her original dress.

CATTLE GUARD IS EFFECTIVE

Novel Device Prevents Cow From Wandering on Rails and Meeting Injury.

Chicago.—The old story about some one asking George Stephenson, the inventor of the locomotive, what would happen to a train if a cow wandered on the line, to which the latter replied he would "be very sorry for the cow," seems to have found a sympathetic echo in the western states in the form of a novel cattle guard on railways, the practical utility of which is demonstrated in the illustration. The device claims to effectually prevent cattle straying up the railway line and thus meeting with injury or death from oncoming trains. As the cow walks along the track she meets



Novel Cattle Guard.

a tilting platform between the rails which tips up as she steps upon it. The cow, imagining her progress to be barred and not endowed by nature with a superabundance of intelligence—a fact which the wily inventor must have borne in mind—instead of walking round the obstruction proceeds to compliment the exceeding ingenuity and foresight of its originator by walking off the line altogether.

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Rev. Flynn of California Makes Some Peppery Remarks on Diet and Fat—Two Meals Enough.

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Household Remedy

Taken in the Spring for Years.

Ralph Rust, Willis, Mich., writes "Hood's Sarsaparilla has been a household remedy in our home as long as I can remember. I have taken it in the spring for several years. It has no equal for cleansing the blood and expelling the humors that accumulate during the winter. Being a farmer and exposed to bad weather, my system is often affected, and I often take Hood's Sarsaparilla with good results. Hood's Sarsaparilla is Peculiar to Itself. There is no "just as good." Get it today in usual liquid form or chocolate tablets called Sarsatabs.

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Some women are like some old hens—set in their ways.

The satisfying quality in Lewis' Single Binders found in no other 5c cigar.

There is nothing so easy but that it becomes difficult when you do it with reluctance.—Terence.

The Ignorance of Casey. Casey—Phwat kind av a horse is a cob?

Mulligan—It's wan that's been raised intirely on corn, ya ignoramus.

Labrador's Future. According to statements made the other day by Dr. Grenfell of Labrador, the Cinderella of British possessions has a brilliant future before it. Dr. Grenfell, who has lived twenty years in that snowy country, says that in days to come it will carry a population as easily as Norway does today. It, he says, a better country than Iceland, and to be greatly preferred to Lapland, Finland, Siberia and Northern Alaska.

Absent-Minded Bridegroom. John Adams has always been absent minded, says the Kansas City Journal. Yesterday he went with Ida Lee, of Kansas City, Mo., to Kansas City, Kan., to be married by Paul Huff, acting probate judge. When Judge Huff asked him if he would "take this woman to be your lawfully wedded wife," he was looking out of the window and didn't answer.

"If you've any doubts about it we will stop right here," the bride said defiantly.

Adams protested that he had not hesitated at all, but had merely been thinking about something else. The ceremony as completed without further hitch.

DAME NATURE HINTS

When Nature gives her signal that something is wrong it is generally with the food; the old Dame is always faithful and one should act at once.

To put off the change is to risk that which may be irreparable. An Arizona man says:

"For years I could not safely eat any breakfast. I tried all kinds of breakfast foods, but they were all soft, starchy messes, which gave me distressing headaches. I drank strong coffee, too, which appeared to benefit me at the time, but added to the headaches afterwards. Toast and coffee were no better, for I found the toast very constipating."

"A friend persuaded me to quit coffee and the starchy breakfast foods, and use Postum and Grape-Nuts instead. I shall never regret taking his advice."

"The change they have worked in me is wonderful. I now have no more of the distressing sensations in my stomach after eating, and I never have any headaches. I have gained 13 pounds in weight and feel better in every way. Grape-Nuts make a delicious as well as a nutritious dish, and I find that Postum is easily digested and never produces dyspepsia symptoms."

Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

Get the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs. "There's a Reason."

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.