

# THE REAL ADVENTURE

By HENRY KITCHELL WEBSTER

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## RODNEY ALDRICH HAD NEVER REALLY THOUGHT MUCH OF GETTING MARRIED UNTIL HIS SISTER "PUT THE BUG IN HIS EAR"—THEN HE THOUGHT FIRST OF PRETTY ROSE STANTON

**SYNOPSIS.**—Rose Stanton, student at the University of Chicago, is put off a street car in the rain after an argument with the conductor. She is accosted by a nice young man who offers to file a complaint with the company and who escorts her to another car line. An hour later this man, Rodney Aldrich, appeared soaked with rain at the home of his very wealthy married sister, Mrs. Martin Whitney, to attend a birthday dinner in his honor. Mrs. Whitney had schemed to make a marriage match between him and Hermione Woodruff, a divorcee, but the plan fails at the dinner.

### CHAPTER II—Continued.

She came up to him and at arm's length, touched him with cautious finger-tips. "And do, please, there's a dear boy," she pleaded, "hurry as fast as you can, and then come down and be as nice as you can"—she hesitated—"especially to Hermione Woodruff. She thinks you're a wonder and I don't want her to be disappointed."

"The widdy?" he asked. "Sure I'll be nice to her."

She looked after him rather dubiously as he disappeared in the direction of her husband's bathroom. There was a sort of hilarious contentment about him which filled her with misgivings. Well, they were justified!

According to Violet Williamson's account, given confidentially in the drawing-room afterward, it was really Hermione's fault. "She just wouldn't let Rodney alone—would keep talking about crimes and Lombroso and psychiatric laboratories—I'll bet she'd got hold of a paper of his somewhere and read it. Anyway, at last she said, 'I believe Doctor Randolph would agree with me.' He was talking to me then, but maybe that isn't why she did it. Well, and Rodney straightened up and said, 'Is that Randolph, the alienist?' You see he hadn't caught his name when they were introduced. And that's how it started. Hermione was game—I'll admit that. She listened and kept looking interested, and every now and then said something. Sometimes they'd take the trouble to smile and say 'Yes, indeed!'—politely, you know, but other times they wouldn't pay any attention at all, just roll along over her and smash her flat—like what's his name—Juggermatt."

"You don't need to tell me that," said Frederica. "All I didn't know was how it started. Didn't I sit there and watch for a mortal hour, not able to do a thing? I tried to signal to Martin, but of course he wasn't opposite to me, and . . ."

"He did all he could, really," Violet assured her. "I told him to go to the rescue, and he did, bravely. But what with Hermione being so miffy about getting frozen out, and Martin himself being so interested in what they were shouting at each other—because it was frightfully interesting, you know, if you don't have to pretend you understood it—why, there wasn't much he could do."

In the light of this disaster, she was rather glad the men lingered in the dining-room as long as they did—glad that Hermione had ordered her car for ten and took the odd girl with her. She made no effort to resist the departure of the others, with reasonable promptitude, in their train. When, after the front door had closed for the last time, Martin released a long yawn, she told him to run along to bed; she wanted to talk to Rodney, who was to spend the night while his own clothes were drying out in the laundry.

"Good night, oh chap!" said Martin in accents of lively commiseration. "I'm glad I'm not in for what you are." Rodney found a pipe, sat down astride a splindling little chair, settled his elbows comfortably on the back of it, and then asked his sister what Martin had meant—what was he in for?

Frederica, curled up in a corner of the sofa, looked at him at first with a wry pucker between her eyebrows, then with a smile, and finally answered his question. "Nothing," she said. "I mean, I was going to scold you, but I'm not."

Then, "Oh, I was furious with you an hour ago," she went on. "I'd made such a really beautiful plan for you, had then I sat and watched you in that thoroughgoing way of yours kicking it all to bits. The plan was, of course, to marry you off to Hermione Woodruff."

He turned this over in his deliberate way, during the process of blowing two or three smoke rings, began gradually to grin, and said at last: "That was some plan, little sister. How do you think of things like that? You ought to write romances for the gazettes."

"I don't know," she objected. "If reasonableness counted for anything in things like that, it was a pretty good plan. It would have to be some-

body like Hermione. You can't get on at all with young girls."

"I don't know," said Rodney. "Whether Mrs. Woodruff knows what she wants or not, but I do. She wants a run for her money. And she'll want a nice, tame trick husband to manage things for her and be Johnny-on-the-spot whenever she wants him. And if the man happened to be me . . ."

Frederica stretched her slim arms outward. Thoughtful-faced, she made no comment, unless there was one in the deliberate way in which she turned her rings, one at a time, so that the brilliant masses of gems were inside, and then clashed her hands over them.

He had got up and was ranging comfortably up and down the room. "I know I look more or less like a nut to the people who've always known us. But I give you my word, Freddy, that most of them look like nuts to me. Why a man should load himself up with three houses and a yacht, a stable of motorcars, and heavens knows what besides, is a thing I can't figure out on any basis except of defective intelligence. I suppose they're equally puzzled about me when I refuse a profitable piece of law work they've offered me, because I don't consider it interesting. All the same, I get what I want, and I'm pretty dubious sometimes whether they do. I want space—comfortable elbow room, so that if I happen to get an idea by the tail, I can swing it round my head without knocking over the lamp."

"It's a luxury, though, Rod, that kind of spaciousness, and you aren't very rich. If you married a girl without anything . . ."

He broke in on her with that big laugh of his. "You've kept your sense of humor pretty well, sis, considering you've been married all these years to a man as rich as Martin; but don't spring remarks like that, or I'll think you've lost it. If a man can't keep an open space around him, even after he's married on an income, outside of what he earns, of ten or twelve thousand dollars a year, the trouble isn't with his income. It's with the content of his own skull."

She gave a little shiver and snuggled closer into a big down pillow. "You will marry somebody, though, won't you, Roddy? I try not to nag at you and I won't make any more



The Plan Was, of Course, to Marry You Off to Hermione Woodruff.

silly plans, but I can't help worrying about you, living alone in that awful big old house. Anybody but you would die of despondency."

"Oh," he said, "that's what I meant to talk to you about! I sold it today—fifty thousand dollars—immediate possession. Man wants to build a printing establishment there. You come down sometime next week and pick out all the things you think you and Harriet would like, and I'll auction off the rest."

She shivered again and, to her

disgust, found that her eyes were blurring up with tears. She was a little bit slack and edgy today anyhow.

What he had just referred to in a dozen brisk words, was the final disappearance of the home they had all grown up in. Their father, one of Chicago's great men during the twenty odd years from the Fire to the Fair, had built it when the neighborhood included nearly all the other big men of that robust period, and had always been proud of it. Of course for years the neighborhood had been impossible. Her mother had clung to it after her husband's death, but Rodney had simply stayed on, since her death, waiting for an offer for it that suited him. His curt announcement that the long-looked-for change had come, brought up quick, unwelcome tears. She squeezed them away with her palms.

"Is that," she asked, "why you've been looking so sort of—gay, all the evening—as if you were licking the lust of the canary's feathers off your whiskers?"

"Perhaps so," he said. "It's been a pretty good day, take it all round." She got up from the couch, shook herself down into her clothes a little, and came over to him. "All right, since it's been a good day, let's go to bed." She put her hands upon his shoulders. "You're rather dreadful," she said, "but you're a dear. You don't bite my head off when I urge you to get married, though I know you want to. But you will some day—I don't mean bite my head off—won't you, Rod?"

"When I see any prospect of being as lucky as Martin—find a girl who won't mind when I turn up for dinner looking like a drowned tramp, or kick her plans to bits, after she's tipped me off as to what she wants me to do . . ."

Frederica took her hands off, stepped back, and looked at him. There was an ironical sort of smile on her lips. "You're such an innocent, Roddy dear. Don't think the girl you marry will ever treat you like that."

"But look here!" he exclaimed. "How in thunder am I going to know about the girl I get engaged to, before it's too late?"

"You won't," she said. "You haven't a chance in the world."

"Hm!" he grunted, obviously struck with this idea. "You're giving the prospect of marriage new attractions. You're making the thing out—an adventure."

She nodded rather soberly. "Oh, I'm not afraid for you," she said. "Men like adventures—you more than most. But women don't. They like to dream about them, but they want to turn over to the last chapter and see how it's going to end. It's the girl I'm worried about. . . . Oh, come along! We're talking nonsense. I'll go up with you and see that they're giving you pajamas and a tooth-brush."

She had accomplished this purpose, kissed him good-night, and turned to leave the room, when her eye fell upon a heap of damp, warped, pasteboard-bound notebooks, which she remembered having observed in his side pockets when he first came in. She went over and poked them up, peered at the paper label that had half peeled off the topmost cover, and read what was written on it.

"Who," she asked with considerable emphasis, "is Rosalind Stanton?"

"Oh," said Rodney, very casually, behind the worst imitation of a yawn she had ever seen, "oh, she got put off the car when I did."

"That sounds rather exciting," said Frederica behind an imitation yawn of her own—but a better one. "Going to tell me about it?"

"Nothing much to tell," said Rodney. "There was a row about a fare, as I said. And then, we both got put off. So, naturally, I walked with her over to the elevated. And then I forgot to give her her notebooks and came away with them."

"What sort of looking girl?" asked Frederica. "Is she pretty?"

"Why, I don't know," said Rodney judicially. "Really, you know, I hardly got a fair look at her."

Frederica made a funny-sounding laugh and wished him an abrupt "good night."

She was a great old girl, Frederica—pretty wise about lots of things, but Rodney was inclined to think she was mistaken in saying women didn't like adventures.

"You're a liar, you know," remarked his conscience, "telling Frederica you hadn't a good look at her. And how about those notebooks—about forgetting to give them to her?"

### CHAPTER III.

#### The Second Encounter.

Portia Stanton was late for lunch; so, after stripping off her jacket and gloves, rolling up her veil, and scowling at herself in an oblong mahogany-framed mirror in the hall, she walked into the dining-room with her hat on. Seeing her mother sitting at the lunch-table, she asked, "Where's Rose?"

"She'll be down, presently, I think," her mother said. "Does your hat

mean you're going back to the shop this afternoon?"

Portia nodded, pulled back her chair abruptly, and sat down.

"I thought that on Saturday . . ." her mother began.

"Oh, I know," said Portia, "but that girl I've got isn't much good."

You'd have known them for mother and daughter anywhere, and you'd have had trouble finding any point of resemblance in either of them to the Amazonian young thing who had so nearly thrown a street-car conductor into the street the night before.

The mother's hair was very soft and white, and the care with which it was arranged indicated a certain harmless vanity in it. There was something a little conscious, too, about her dress. If you took it in connection with a certain resolute amiability about her smile, you would be entirely prepared to hear her tell Portia that she was to talk on "Modern Tendencies" before the Florian club this afternoon.

A very real person, nevertheless—you couldn't doubt that. The marks of passionately held beliefs and eagerly given sacrifices were etched with undeniable authenticity in her face.

Once you got beyond a catalogue of features, Portia presented rather a striking contrast to this. Her hair was done with a severity that was fairly hostile. Her clothes were brusquely worn. Her smile, if not ill-natured—it wasn't that—was distinctly ironic. A very competent, good-looking young woman, just now drooping a little over the cold lunch.

"So Rose didn't come down this morning at all. Nothing particular the matter with her, is there?" asked Portia.

There was enough real concern in her voice to save the question from sounding satirical, but her mother's manner was a little apologetic when she answered it.

"No, I think not," she said. "But she was in such a state when she came home last night—literally wet through to the skin, and blue with cold. So I thought it wouldn't do any harm. . . ."

"Of course not," said Portia. "Rose is all right. She won't spoil badly."

"I'm a little bit worried about the loss of the poor child's notebooks," said her mother.

"I don't believe Rose is worrying her head off about them," said Portia. The flush in her mother's cheeks deepened a little, but it was no longer apologetic. "I don't think you're quite fair to Rose, about her studies," she said. "If she doesn't seem always to appreciate her privilege in getting a college education as seriously as she should, you should remember her youth. She's only twenty."

"I'm sorry, mother," Portia interrupted contritely. "I didn't mean any harm anyway. Didn't she say the man's name was Rodney Aldrich?"

"I think so," her mother agreed. "Something like that."

"It's rather funny," said Portia. "It's hardly likely to have been the real Rodney Aldrich. Yet it's not a common name."

"The real Rodney Aldrich?" questioned her mother. But, without waiting for her daughter's elucidation of the phrase, she added, "Oh, there's Rose!"

The girl came up behind Portia and enveloped her in a big, lazy hug. "Back to work another Saturday afternoon, Angel?" she asked commiseratingly. "Aren't you ever going to stop and have any fun?" Then she slumped into a chair, heaved a yawning sigh, and rubbed her eyes.

"Tired, dear?" asked her mother. She said it under her breath in the hope that Portia wouldn't hear.

"No," said Rose. "Just sleepy!" She yawned again, turned to Portia, and, somewhat to their surprise, said: "Yes, what do you mean—the real Rodney Aldrich? He looked real enough to me. And his arm felt real—the one he was going to punch the conductor with."

"I didn't mean he was imaginary," Portia explained. "I only meant I didn't believe it was the Rodney Aldrich—who's so awfully prominent; either somebody else who happened to have the same name, or somebody who just—said that was his name."

"What's the matter with the prominent one?" Rose wanted to know. "Why couldn't it have been he?"

Portia admitted that it could, so far as that went, but insisted on an inherent improbability. A millionaire, the brother of Mrs. Martin Whitney, wasn't likely to be found riding in street cars.

"Millionaires have legs," said Rose. "I bet they can walk around like anybody else. However, I don't care who he is, if he'll send back my books."

Portia went back presently to the shop, and it wasn't long after that that her mother came downstairs clad for the street, with her "Modern Tendencies" under her arm in a leather portfolio. Her valeticry, given with more confidence now that Portia was out of the house, was a strong recom-

mendation that Rose stay quietly within doors and keep warm.

"I was going to, anyway," she said. "Home and fireside for mine today."

The house was deserted except for Inga in the kitchen, engaged in the principal sporting event of her domestic routine—the weekly baking. Rose hadn't meant to go to sleep, but the detective story she tried to read was so flagrantly stupid that presently she tossed the book aside and began dreaming one of her own in which the heroine got put off a street-car in the opening chapter.

The telephone bell aroused her once or twice, far enough to observe that Inga was attending to it, so when the front-door bell rang she left that to Inga, too—didn't even sit up and swing her legs off the couch and get herself awake, until she heard the girl say casually:

"Her ban right in the sitting-room!"

So it fell out that Rodney Aldrich had, for his second vivid picture of her—the first had been, you will remember, when she had seized the conductor by both wrists, and had said in a blaze of beautiful wrath: "Don't dare touch me like that!"—a splendid



A Splendid, Lazy, Toused Creature.

lazy, toused creature, in a chaotic glory of chestnut hair, an unlaced middie-blouse, a plaid skirt twisted around her knees, and a pair of ridiculous red bedroom slippers, with red pompons on the toes. The creature was stretching herself with the grace of a big cat that had just been roused from a nap on the hearthrug.

If his first picture of her had been brief, his second one was practically a snapshot, because at sight of him she flashed to her feet.

So, for a moment, they confronted each other about equally aghast flushed up to the hair, and simultaneously and incoherently begged each other's pardon—neither could have said for what, the goddess out of the machine being Inga, the maid-of-all-work. But suddenly, at a twinkle she caught in his eye, her own big eyes narrowed and her big mouth widened into a smile, which broke presently into her deep-throated laugh, whereupon he laughed too and they shook hands and she asked him to sit down.

"It's too ridiculous," she said. "Since last night, when I got to thinking how I must have looked, wrestling with that conductor, I've been telling myself that if I ever saw you again, I'd try to act like a lady. But it's no use, is it?"

He said that he, too, had hoped to make a better impression the second time than the first. That was what he brought the books back for.

"I'm awfully sorry mother's not at home—mother and my sister Portia. They'd both like to thank you for—looking after me last night. Because really you did, you know."

"There never was anything less altruistic in the world," he assured her. "I dropped off of that car solely in pursuit of a selfish aim. I'd enjoy meeting your mother and sister very much, but what I came for was to get acquainted with you."

She flushed and smiled. "Why, I'm nobody much to get acquainted with," she said. "Mother's the interesting one—mother and Portia. Mother's quite a person. She's Naomi Rutledge Stanton, you know."

"I know I ought to know," Rodney said, and her quick appreciative smile over his candor rewarded him for not having pretended.

The "bee in his bonnet" worked rapidly on Rodney and his acquaintance with Rose developed with much speed—as described in the next installment.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

**Promoting Thrift in Colombia.**  
The Colombian congress has adopted a measure providing for the appointment by the minister of public instruction of a commission to investigate methods for promoting saving throughout the country. This commission will work out a general plan of organization of public and school savings banks, retirement funds, and societies for mutual aid and co-operative buying.

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Lady—Don't want it, I told you.  
Pedler—It softens the skin and makes the complexion clear and beautiful—  
Lady—How much is it?—Indianapolis Star.

## A Poet's Beginning.

Richard Le Gallienne was talking rather bitterly in a New York cafe about the decline of poetry.  
A shabby young man slunk out, and Mr. Le Gallienne said:  
"There goes Quiller. I knew he'd be a poet. He was found, you know, in a basket on a doorstep."  
"But," said a photoplay writer, bewildered—"but what's that got—"  
"It was a waste basket he was found in," Mr. Le Gallienne explained.

## Lying Scoundrel.

"What did Blank say about me?"  
"That you owed him ten dollars."  
"Why, the lying scoundrel! Well, he can just whistle for his money now—I won't pay it till I get good and ready."

When the other fellow tells you a falsehood and you catch him at it, he thinks he is clumsy and you think you are clever.

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