The Real Adventure

A NOVEL

By Henry Kitchell Webster

ROSE ALDRICH LEAVES HER HUSBAND AND THE TWINS AND GOES FORTH INTO THE UNKNOWN WORLD TO MAKE A LIVING AND LEARN LIFE'S VALUES

SYNOPSIS.—Rose Stanton, a young woman living in modest circumstances, marries wealthy Rodney Aldrich and for more than a year lives in luxury and laziness. This life disgusts her. She plans to do something useful, but feels that the profession of motherhood is big enough for any woman, and looks forward eagerly to the birth of her baby. She has twins, however, and their care is taken entirely out of her hands by a professional nurse. Intense dissatisfaction with the useless life of luxury returns to Rose. She determines to go out and earn her living; to make good on her own hook. She and her doting husband have some bitter scenes over the wife's "whim." What she goes and does is described in this installment.

CHAPTER XIV—Continued.

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"You won't even give me the poor satisfaction of knowing what you're doing," he said.

"I'd love to," she said, "to be able to write to you, hear from you every day. But I don't believe you want to know. I think it would be too hard for you. Because you'd have to promise not to try to get me back—not to come and rescue me if I got into trouble and things went badly and I didn't know where to turn. Could you promise that, Roddy?"

He gave a groan and buried his face in his hands. Then:

"No," he said furiously. "Of course I couldn't. See you suffering and stand by with my hands in my pockets and watch!" He sprang up and seized her by the arms in a grip that actually left bruises, and fairly shook her in the agony of his entreaty. "Tell me it's a nightmare, Rose," he said. "Tell me it isn't true. Wake me up out of it."

But under the indomitable resolution of her blue eyes he turned away. This was the last appeal of that sort that he made.

"I'll promise," she said presently, "to be sensible—not to take any risks I don't have to take. I'll regard my life, and my health and all, as something I'm keeping in trust for you. I'll take plenty of warm, sensible clothes when I go; lots of shoes and stockings—things like that; and, if you'll let me—I'll borrow a hundred dollars to start myself off with. It isn't a tragedy, Roddy—not that part of it. You wouldn't be afraid for anyone else as big and strong and healthy as I."

Gradually, out of a welter of scenes like that, the thing got itself recognized as something that was to happen. But the parting came at last in a little different way from any they had foreseen.

Rodney came home from his office early one afternoon, with a telegram that summoned him to New York to a conference of counsel in a big public-utility case he had been working on for months. He must leave, if he were going at all, at five o'clock. He ransacked the house, vainly at first, for Rose, and found her at last in the trunk room—dusty, disheveled, sobbing quietly over something she hugged in her arms. But she dried her eyes and came over to him and asked him what it was that had brought him home so early.

He showed her the telegram. "I'll have to leave in an hour," he said, "if I'm to go."

She paled at that, and sat down rather giddily on the trunk. "You must go," she said, "of course. And—Roddy, I guess that'll be the easiest way. I'll get my telegram tonight—pretend to get it—from Portia. And you can give me the hundred dollars, and then, when you come back, I'll be gone."

The thing she had been holding in her hands slipped to the floor. He stooped and picked it up—stared at it with a sort of half-wakened recognition.

"I found it," she explained, "among some old things Portia sent over when she moved. Do you know what it is? It's one of the notebooks that got wet—that first night when we were put off the street car. And—Roddy, look!"

She opened it to an almost blank page, and with a weak little laugh pointed to the thing that was written there: "March 15, 1912!"

"Your birthday, you see, and the day we met each other."

And then, down below, the only note she had made during the whole of that lecture, he read: "Never marry a man with a passion for principles."

"That's the trouble with us, you see," she said. "If you were just an ordinary man without any big passions or anything, it wouldn't matter much if your life got spoiled. But with us, you see, we've got to try for the biggest thing there is. Oh, Roddy, Roddy darling! Hold me tight for just a minute, and then I'll come and help you pack."

CHAPTER XV.

The World Alone.

"Here's the first week's rent then," said Rose, handing the landlady three dollars, "and I think you'd better give me a receipt showing till when it's paid for."

The landlady had tight gray hair and a hard-bitten hatchet face. She had no charms, one would have said, of person, mind or manner. But it was nevertheless true that Rose was renting this room largely on the strength of the landlady. She was so much more humanly possible than any of the others at whose placarded doors Rose had knocked or rung . . .

The landlady went away to write out a receipt. Rose closed the door after her and locked it.

She didn't particularly want to keep anybody out. But in a sense in which it had never been quite true before, this was her room, a room where anyone lacking her specific invitation to enter would be an intruder—a condition which had not obtained either in her mother's house or in Rodney's.

She smiled widely over the absurdity of indulging in a pleasurable feeling of possession in a squalid little cubbyhole like this. The wall paper was stained and faded; there was an iron bed—the mattress on the bed was lumpy. There was a dingy-looking oak bureau with a small mirror; a marble-topped black walnut washstand and a pitcher standing in a bowl on top of it.

As for the hurrying life she looked out upon from her grimy window, the difference between it and that which she had been wont to contemplate through Florence McCrea's exquisitely leaded casements was simply planetary.

And yet, queerly enough, in terms of literal lineal measurement, the distance between the windows themselves was less than a thousand yards. And, such is the enormous social and spiritual distance between North Clark street and The Drive, she was as safely hidden here, as completely out of the orbit of any of her friends, or even of her friends' servants, as she could have been in New York or San Francisco.

Of course, wherever she went, whatever she did, there'd always be the risk that someone who could carry back news to Rodney's friends would recognize her. It was a risk that had to be taken. At the same time she'd protect the secret as well as she could.

There were two people, though, it couldn't be kept from—Portia and her mother. The story given out to Rodney's friends being that Rose was in California with her mother and Portia, left the chance always open for some contretemps which would lead to her mother's discovering the truth in a surprising and shocking way.

But the truth itself, confidently stated, not as a tragic ending, but as the splendid, hopeful beginning of a life of truer happiness for Rose and her husband, needn't be a shock. So this was what Rose had borne down upon her in her letter to Portia.

. . . I have found the big thing couldn't be had without a fight," she wrote. "You shouldn't be surprised, because you've probably found out for yourself that nothing worth having comes very easily. But you're not to worry about me, nor be afraid for me, because I'm going to win. I'm making the fight, somehow, for you as well as for myself. I want you to know that. I think that realizing I was living your life as well as mine, is what has given me the courage to start. . . .

"I've got some plans, but I'm not going to tell you what they are. But I'll write to you every week and tell you what I've done, and I want you to write to Rodney. I want to be sure that you understand this: Rodney isn't to blame for what's happened. We haven't quarreled, and I believe we're farther in love with each other than we've ever been before. I know I am with him. . . . . Break this thing to mother as gently as you like, but tell her everything before you stop. . . . .

This letter written and dispatched, she had worked out the details of her departure with a good deal of care. In her own house, before the servants, she had tried to act just as she would have done had her pretended telegram really come from Portia. Her bag was packed, her trunk was gone, her motor waiting at the door to take her to the station, when the maid Doris brought the twins home from their airing. This wasn't chance, but prearrangement.

"Give them to me," Rose said, "and then you may go up and tell Mrs. Ruston she may have them in a few minutes."

She took them into her bedroom and laid them side by side on her bed. They had thriven finely—justified, so far as that went, Harriet's decision in favor of bottle feeding. Had she died back there in that bed of pain, never come out of the ether at all, they'd still be just like this—plump, placid, methodical. Rose had thought of that a hundred times, but it wasn't what she was thinking of now.

The thing that caught her as she was looking down on them, was a wave of sudden pity. She saw them suddenly as persons with the long road all ahead of them, as a boy and a girl, a youth and a maid, a man and a woman.

She'd never thought of them like that before. The baby she had looked forward to—the baby she hadn't had—had never been thought of that way, either. It was to be something to provide her, Rose, with an occupation; to make an alchemic change in the very substance of her life. The transmutation hadn't taken place. She surmised now, dimly, that she hadn't deserved it should.

"You've never had a mother at all, you poor little mites," she said. "But you're going to have one some day. You're going to be able to come to her with your troubles, because she'll have had troubles herself. She'll help you bear your hurts, because she's had hurts of her own. And she'll be able to teach you to stand the gaff, because she's stood it herself."

For the first time since they were born, she was thinking of their need of her rather than of her need of them, and with that thought came, for the first time, the surge of passionate maternal love that she had waited for so long in vain. There was, suddenly, an intolerable ache in her breast that could only have been satisfied by crushing them up against her breast; kissing their hands—their feet.

Rose stood there quivering, giddy with the force of it. "Oh, you darlings!" she said. "But wait—wait until I deserve it!" And, without touching them at all, she went to the door and opened it. Mrs. Ruston and Doris were both waiting in the hall.

"I must go now," she said, "Good-by. Keep them carefully for me." Her voice was steady, and, though her eyes were bright, there was no trace of tears upon her cheeks. But there was a kind of glory shining in her face that was too much for Doris, who turned away and sobbed loudly. Even Mrs. Ruston's eyes were wet.

"Good-by," said Rose again, and went down composedly enough to her car.

She rode down to the station, shook hands with Otto, the chauffeur, allowed a porter to carry her bag into the waiting room. There she tipped the porter, picked up the bag herself, and walked out the other door; crossed over to Clark street and took a street car. At Chicago avenue she got off, and walked north, keeping her eyes open for placards advertising rooms to let. It was at the end of about half a mile that she found the hatchet-faced landlady, paid her three dollars, and locked her door, as a symbol, perhaps, of the bigger, heavier door that she had locked upon her past life.

Strongest among all the welter of emotions boiling up within her, was a perfectly enormous relief. The thing which, when she had first faced it as the only thoroughfare to the real life she so passionately wanted, had seemed such a veritable nightmare, was an accomplished fact. The week of acute agony she had lived through while she was forcing her sudden resolution upon Rodney had been all but

He Was Counting Aloud the Bars of the Music.

unendurable with the enforced contemplation of the moment of parting which they brought so relentlessly nearer. There had been a terror, too, lest when the moment actually came, she couldn't do it. Well, and now it had come and gone! The surgery of the thing was over.

Rose dusted the mirror with a towel—a reckless act, as she saw for herself, when she discovered she was going to have to use that towel for a week—and took an appraising look at herself. Then she nodded confidently—there was nothing the matter with her looks—and resumed her ulster, her rubbers, and her umbrella, for it was the kind of December day which called for all three. Then, glowingly conscious that she was saving a nickel by so doing, she set off downtown afoot to get a job. She meant to get it that very afternoon. And, partly because she meant to so very definitely, she did.

On the last Sunday before Rose went away she had studied the dramatic section of the morning paper with a good deal of care, and was rewarded by finding among the news notes an item referring to a new musical comedy which was to be produced at the Globe theater immediately after the Christmas holidays. "The Girl Up-Stairs" was the title of it. It was spoken of as one of the regular Globe productions, so it was probable Jimmy Wallace's experience with the production of an earlier number in the series would at least give her something to go by.

Granted that she was going to be a chorus girl for a while, she could hardly find a better place than one of the Globe productions to be a chorus girl in. According to Jimmy, it was a decent enough little place, and yet it possessed the advantage of being, spiritually, as well as actually, west of Clark street. Rodney's friends were less likely to go there, and so have a chance of recognizing her, than to any other theater in the city.

The news item in the paper told her that the production was in rehearsal, and it mentioned the name of the director, John Galbraith, referring to him as one of the three most prominent musical-comedy directors in the country.

When she asked at the box office at the Globe theater where they were rehearsing "The Girl Up-Stairs" today, the nicely manicured young man inside answered automatically, "North End hall."

"I'm afraid," said Rose, smiling a little, "I'll have to ask where North End hall is."

"Not at all," said the young man idiotically, and he told her the address—only a block or two from Rose's room.

CHAPTER XVI.

The First Day.

With her umbrella over her shoulder, Rose set sail northward again through the rain, absurdly cheered. The entrance to the North End hall was a pair of white painted doors opening from the street level upon the foot of a broadish stair which took you up rather suddenly. At the head of the stairway, tilted back in a kitchen chair beneath a single gas jet whose light he was trying to make suffice for the perusal of a green newspaper, sat a man, under orders, no doubt, to keep intruders away. The thing to do was to go by as if, for such as she, watchmen didn't exist. The rhythmic pounding of feet and the frayed chords from a worn-out piano, convinced her she was in the right place.

Her stratagem succeeded. The man glanced up and, though she felt he didn't return to his paper again, he made no attempt to stop her. She walked steadily ahead to another open door at the far end of the room, through which sounds and light came in.

Rose paused for a steadying breath before she went through that farther door, her eyes starry with resolution, her cheeks, just for the moment, a little pale.

The room was hot and not well lighted. In the farther wall of it was a proscenium arch and a raised stage. On the stage, right and left, were two irregular groups of girls, with a few men, awkwardly, Rose thought, disposed among them. All were swaying a little to mark the rhythm of the music industriously pounded out by a sweaty young man at the piano—a swarthy, thick young man in his undershirt. There were a few more people sprawled in different parts of the hall.

It was all a little vague to her at first, because her attention was focused upon a single figure—a compact, rather slender, figure, and tall, Rose thought—of a man in a blue serge suit, who stood at the exact center of the stage and the extreme edge of the footlights. He was counting aloud the bars of the music—not beating time at all, nor yielding to the rhythm in any way; standing, on the contrary, rather tensely still. That was the quality about him, indeed, that riveted Rose's attention and held her, as still as he was, in the doorway—an exhilarating sort of intensity that had communicated itself to the swaying groups on the stage.

You could tell from the way he counted that something was gathering itself up, getting ready to happen. "Three . . . Four . . . Five . . . Six . . . Seven—Now!" he shouted on the eighth bar, and with the word one of the groups transformed itself. One of the men bowed to one of the girls and began waltzing with her; another couple formed, then another.

Rose watched breathlessly, hoping the maneuver wouldn't go wrong—for no reason in the world but that the man there at the footlights was so tautly determined that it shouldn't.

Determination triumphed. The number was concluded to John Galbraith's evident satisfaction. "Very good," he said. "If you'll all do exactly what you did that time from now on, I'll not complain." Without pause he went on: "Everybody on the stage—big girls—all the big girls!" And to the young man at the piano, "We'll do 'Afternoon Tea.'"

There was a momentary pause then, filled with subdued chatter, while the girls and men realigned themselves for the new number.

Rose looked them over. The girls weren't, on an average, extravagantly beautiful, though, with the added charm of make-up allowed for, there were, no doubt, many the audiences would consider so. They were dressed in pretty much anything that would allow perfect freedom to their bodies, especially their arms and legs; bathing suits mostly, or middy blouses and bloomers. Rose noted this with satisfaction. Her old university gymnasium costume would do perfectly. Anything, apparently, would do, because, as her eye adjusted itself to details, she discovered romper suits, pinafores, chemises, overalls—all equally taken for granted.

Galbraith struck his hands together for silence, and scrutinized the now motionless group on the stage.

"We're one shy," he said. "Who's missing?" And then answered his own question: "Grant!" He wheeled around and his eyes searched the hall.

Rose became aware, for the first time, that a mutter of conversation had been going on incessantly since she had come in, in one of the recessed window seats behind her. Now when Galbraith's gaze plunged in that direction, she turned and looked too. A big blonde chorus girl was in there with a man, a girl who, with twenty pounds trained off her, and that sulky look out of her face, would have been a beauty. She had roused herself with a sort of defiant deliberation at the sound of the director's voice, but she still had her back to him and went on talking to the man.

"Grant!" said John Galbraith again, and this time his voice had a cutting edge. "Will you take your place on the stage, or shall I suspend rehearsal until you're ready?"

For answer she turned and began walking slowly across the room. She started walking slowly, but under Galbraith's eye she quickened her pace, involuntarily, it seemed, until it was a ludicrous sort of run. Presently she emerged upon the stage, looking rather artificially unconcerned, and the rehearsal went on again.

But just before he gave the signal to the pianist to go ahead, Galbraith with a nod summoned a young man from the wings and said something to him, whereupon, clearly carrying out his orders, he vaulted down from the stage and came walking toward the doorway where Rose was still standing.

But he didn't come straight to her; he brought up before a woman sitting in a folding chair a little farther along the wall, who drew herself defensively erect when she saw him turn toward her, assumed a look of calculated disdain, tapped a foot—gave, on the whole, an imitation of a duchess being kept waiting.

But the limp young man didn't seem disconcerted, and inquired in so many words what her business was. The duchess said in a harsh, high voice that she wanted to see the director; a very particular friend of his had begged her to do so.

"You'll have to wait till he's through rehearsing," said the young man, and then he came over to Rose.

The vestiges of the smile the duchess had provoked were still visible about her mouth when he came up. "May I wait and see Mr. Galbraith after the rehearsal?" she asked. "If I won't be in the way?"

"Sure," said the young man. "He won't be long now. He's been rehearsing since two." Then, rather explosively, "Have a chair."

He struck Rose as being a little flustered and uncertain somehow.

It was a long hour that Rose sat there in a little folding chair—an hour that, in spite of all her will could do, took some of the crispness out of her courage.

When at last, a little after six o'clock, Galbraith said: "Quarter to eight, everybody," and dismissed them with a nod for a scurry to what were evidently dressing rooms at the other side of the hall, the ship of Rose's hopes had utterly gone to pieces. She had a plank to keep herself afloat on. It was the determination to stay there until he should tell her in so many words that he hadn't any use for her.

The deprecatory young man was talking to him now, about her and the duchess evidently, for he peered out into the hall, then vaulted down from the stage and came toward them.

The duchess got up, and, with a good deal of manner, went over to meet him. Rose didn't hear what the duchess said. But when John Galbraith answered her, his voice easily filled the room; "You tell Mr. Pike, if that's his name, we haven't any vacancies in the chorus at present. If we find we need you, we can let you know."

He said it not unkindly, but he exercised some power of making it evident that as he finished speaking, the duchess, for him, simply ceased to exist. Then, with disconcerting suddenness, he looked straight at Rose and said: "What do you want?"

She'd thought him tall, but he wasn't. He was looking on a perfect level into her eyes.

"I want a job in the chorus," said Rose.

"You heard what I said to that other woman, I suppose?"

"Yes," said Rose, "but . . ."

"But you thought you'd let me say it to you again."

"Yes," she said. And, queerly enough, she felt her courage coming back.

Rose Aldrich's luck in hunting a job in the chorus of a musical comedy and what happens afterward is described with thrilling emphasis in the next installment.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Resistance of the Wind.

Tests on a model of the naval collier Neptune made in the wind tunnel of the Washington navy yard by Naval Constructor William McEntee show that if this vessel were steaming against a 30-mile wind at 14 knots an hour it would require about 770 horsepower to overcome the resistance of the wind. This is about 20 per cent of the power necessary to propel her through the water.

Horticultural Advice

CULTIVATION OF AN ORCHARD

Summer Work Is Necessary if Profit Is to Be Made—Three Methods Given by Expert.

Summer cultivation of the orchard is necessary if a profit is to be made, in the opinion of F. S. Merrill, assistant professor of horticulture in the Kansas States Agricultural college.

"Three methods may be practiced in the cultivation of an orchard," said Professor Merrill. "The first of these is the sod-mulch system. This is practiced on bottom land or land high in fertility. Orchards on fertile land are likely to produce a heavy growth of wood, which prevents the formation of fruit buds. In order to overcome this a grass crop should be sowed in the orchard. The grass crop is mowed when necessary and allowed to remain on the ground.

"The second method, often used, consists of sowing a grass crop in the orchard and harvesting the hay. This system is injurious to the trees and reduces the size and value of the fruit.

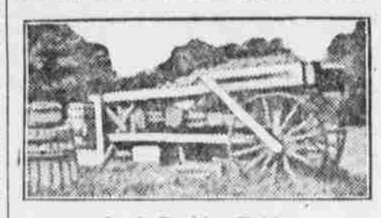
"Where the topography and slope of the land will permit, clean cultivation is advisable. It kills the weeds and conserves the moisture. Orchards cultivated in this manner will produce larger fruit than under other systems of cultivation.

"Clean cultivation will keep down insect pests by destroying their hibernating places and food supply. The buffalo tree-hopper is less injurious in clean cultivated orchards because it removes their food supply."

HANDY APPLE-PACKING TABLE

Portable Device Made of Odd Ends of Lumber and Mounted on Discarded Wheels, Is Useful.

A table for sorting apples to be packed for shipment was made of odd ends of lumber, and mounted on discarded wheels, as shown, making it readily portable, writes M. Glen Kirkpatrick of Des Moines in Popular Mechanics Magazine. The handiest feature of the rig is a chute from the top, on which the apples are sorted, for culls, leaves, etc., which might get into the barrels. The slats of the table extend lengthwise, and the chute opening is across the top. When the chute opening is wanted wider or narrower, the slats around it are moved.



Apple-Packing Table.

CAPTURE OF CODLING MOTHS

Old Practice of Placing Burlap Band Around Tree Trunk Effective in Reducing Numbers.

One of the new-fangled contraptions for the orchard is a trap to catch the codling moth. Most of the codling larvae after leaving the apples spin a silken case or web under the rough bark on the trunk and there change to the moth stage. The old practice of placing a burlap band around the trunk to entice the worms has been effective in reducing their number, but is rarely used as it requires a great deal of attention. The new trap consists of a strip of burlap wound around the trunk in the usual way, but over this is tacked a strip of 12-mesh screen, six or eight inches wide, which encircles the tree trunk over the burlap band. The upper and lower edges of the screen are turned under and carefully tacked to the bark, which has been scraped smooth.

SAWDUST USED FOR A MULCH

Has Proved of Benefit to Berry and Small Fruit Plot in Home Garden, Especially Potatoes.

Sawdust used as a mulch for the berry and small fruit plot in the home garden has proved of much benefit, especially for potatoes. After preparing the ground in the usual way, plant the potatoes in drills or rows two feet apart and 18 inches in the row. Cover loosely with two inches of soil, then mulch with sawdust 4 to 6 inches deep.

KEEP RABBITS FROM TREES

Veneer Protectors May Be Had at Small Cost From Almost Any Nursery—Paper Is Good.

Protect those trees from rabbits. Veneer tree protectors may be had at a small cost from almost any nursery. Stiff paper properly wrapped around base of tree is commonly used. Corn stalks are sometimes tied about trees with binding twine.