

The Big-Town Round Up

by William MacLeod Raine
Illustrations by Irwin Myers

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CHAPTER XIV. Continued

"I'll ask Mr. Bromfield to give you fifty dollars again," she laughed nervously. That word "again" stuck in his consciousness. "You've known me all along," he charged. "Of course I've known you—knew you when you stood on the steps after you had tied the janitor." "I knew you, too?" "Why didn't you say so?" "Did you expect me to make that grandstand play on the 'parade' a claim on your kindness? I didn't do a thing for you that day any man wouldn't have done. I happened to be the lucky fellow that got the chance. That's all. Come to that, it was up to you to do the recognizing if any was done. It had worked out that you didn't know me, but once or twice from things you said I almost thought you did."

"I meant to tell you some time, but—well, I wanted to see how long you could keep from telling me. Now you've done it again." "I'd like to ride with you the rest of your life," he said unexpectedly. They trembled on the edge of self-revelation. It was the girl who rescued them from the expression of their emotions.

"I'll speak to Clara about it. Maybe he'll take you on as a groom," she said with surface lightness. As soon as they reached home Beatrice led the way into the library. Bromfield was sitting there with her father. They were talking over plans for the annual election of officers of the Bird Cage Mining company. Whitford was the largest stockholder and Bromfield owned the next biggest block. They controlled it between them.

"Dad, Rob Roy bolted and Mr. Lindsay stopped him before I was thrown." Whitford rose, the color ebbling from his cheeks. "I've always told you that brute was dangerous. I'll offer him for sale today." "And I've discovered that we know the man who saved me from the wild steer in Arizona. It was Mr. Lindsay." "Lindsay!" Whitford turned to him. "Is that right?"

"It's correct." Colin Whitford, much moved, put a hand on the younger man's shoulder. "Son, you know what I'd like to tell you. I reckon I can't say it right." "We'll consider it said, Mr. Whitford," answered Clay with his quick, boyish smile. "No use in spillin' a lot of dictionary words."

"Why didn't you tell us?" "It was nothing to brag about." Bromfield came to time with a thin words of thanks. "We're all greatly in your debt, Mr. Lindsay." As the days passed the malicious jealousy of the New York clubman deepened to a steady hatred. A fellow of ill-controlled temper, his thin-skinned vanity writhed at the condition which confronted him. He was engaged to a girl who preferred another and better man, one against whom he had an unalterable grudge. He recognized in the westerner an enger energy, a clean-cut resilience, and an abounding vitality he would have given a great deal to possess. His own early manhood had been frittered away in futile dissipations and he resented bitterly the contrast between himself and Lindsay that must continually be present in the mind of the girl who had promised to marry him. He had many adventurous things to offer her—such advantages as modern civilization has made desirable to hothouse women—but he could not give the clean, splendid youth she craved. It was the price he had paid for many sybaritic pleasures he had been too soft to deny himself.

With only a little more than two weeks of freedom before her, Beatrice made the most of her days. For the first time in her life she became a creature of moods. The dominant ones were rebellion, recklessness and repentance. While Bromfield waited and fumed she rode and tramped with Clay. It was not fair to her affianced lover. She knew that. But there were times when she wanted to shriek as dressmakers and costumers fussed over her and wore out her jangled nerves with multitudinous details. The same hysteria welled up in her occasionally at the luncheons and dinners that were being given in honor of her approaching marriage.

It was not logical, of course. She was moving toward the destiny she had chosen for herself. But there was an instinct in her, savage and primitive, to hurt Bromfield because she herself was suffering. In the privacy of her room she passed hours of tearful regret for these bursts of fierce insurrection.

Ten days before the wedding Beatrice wounded his vanity flagrantly.

Clarendon was giving an informal tea for her at his rooms. Half an hour before the time set, Beatrice got him on the wire and explained that her car was stalled with engine trouble two miles from Yonkers.

"I'm awfully sorry, Clara," she pleaded. "We ought not to have come so far. Please tell our friends I've been delayed, and—I won't do it again." Bromfield hung up the receiver in a cold fury. He restrained himself for the moment, made the necessary explanation, and went through with the tea somehow. But as soon as his guests were gone he gave himself up to his anger. He began planning a revenge on the man who no doubt was laughing in his sleeve at him. He wanted the fellow exposed, discredited and humiliated.

But how? Walking up and down his room like a caged panther, Bromfield remembered that Lindsay had other enemies in New York, powerful ones, who would be eager to co-operate with him in bringing about the man's downfall. Was it possible for him to work with them under cover? If so, in what way?

Clarendon Bromfield was not a criminal, but a conventional member of society. It was not in his mind or in his character to plot the murder or mayhem of his rival. What he wanted was a public disgrace, one that would blare his name out to the newspapers as a lawbreaker. He wanted to sicken Beatrice and her father of their strange infatuation for Lindsay.

A plan began to unfold itself for him. It was one which called for expert assistance. He called up Jerry Durand, got him on the telephone, and made an appointment to meet him secretly.

CHAPTER XV

"No Violence."

The ex-pugilist sat back in the chair chewing an unlighted cigar, his fishy eyes fixed on Bromfield. Scars still decorated the colorless face, souvenirs of a battle in which he had been hested by a man he hated. Durand had a capacity for silence. He waited now for this exquisite from the upper world to tell his business.

Clarendon discovered that he had an unexpected repugnance to doing this. A fastidious sense of the obligations of class served him for a soul and the thing he was about to do could not be justified even in his loose code of ethics. He examined the ferule of his Malacca cane nervously. "I've come to you, Mr. Durand, about—about a fellow called Lindsay." The bulbous eyes of the other narrowed. He distrusted on principle all kid gloves. Those he had met were mostly ambitious reformers. Furthermore, any stranger who mentioned the name of the Arizonan became instantly an object of suspicion.

"What about him?" "I understand that you and he are not on friendly terms. I've gathered that from what's been told me. Am I correct?" Durand thrust out his salient chin. "Say! Who the h—l are you? What's eatin' you? Whatta you want?" "I'd rather not tell my name."

"Nothin' doin'. No name, no business. That goes." "Very well. My name is Bromfield. This fellow Lindsay—gets in my way. I want to—eliminate him." "Are you askin' me to croak him?" "Good G—d, no! I don't want him hurt—physically," cried Bromfield, alarmed.

"Whatta you want, then?" The tight-lipped mouth and the harsh voice called for a showdown. "I want him discredited—disgraced." "Why?"

"Some friends of mine are infatuated by him. I want to unmask him in a public way so as to disgust them with him." "I'm hep. It's a girl." "We'll not discuss that," said the clubman with a touch of hauteur. "As to the price, if you can arrange the thing as I want it done, I'll not haggle over terms."

The ex-pugilist listened sourly to Bromfield's proposition. He watched narrowly this fashionably dressed visitor. His suspicions still stirred, but not so actively. He was inclined to believe in the sincerity of the fellow's hatred of the westerner. Jealousy over a girl could easily account for it. Jerry did not intend to involve himself until he had made sure.

"Whatta you want me to do? Come clean." "Could we get him into a gambling-house, arrange some disgraceful mixup with a woman, get the place raided by the police, and have the whole thing come out in the papers?" Jerry's slitted eyes went off into space. The thing could be arranged.

The trouble in getting Lindsay was to draw him into a trap he could not break through. If Bromfield could deliver his enemy into his hands, Durand thought he would be a fool not to make the most of the chance. As for this soft-fingered swell's stipulation against physical injury, that could be ignored if the opportunity offered.

"Can you bring this Lindsay to a gambling-dump? Will he come with you?" demanded the gang politician. "I think so. I'm not sure. But if I do that, can you fix the rest?" "It'll cost money." "How much will you need?" "A couple thousand to start with. More before I've finished. I've got to salve the cops."

Bromfield had prepared for this contingency. He counted out a thousand dollars in bills of large denominations. "I'll cut that figure in two. Understand. He's not to be hurt. I won't have any rough work." "Leave that to me." "And you've got to arrange it so that when the house is raided I escape without being known."

"I'll do that, too. Leave your address and I'll send a man up later to wise you as to the scheme when I get one fixed up." On a sheet torn from his memorandum book Bromfield wrote the name of the club which he most frequented. "Don't forget the newspapers. I want them to get the story," said the clubman, rising. "I'll see they cover the raid."

Bromfield, massaging a glove onto his long fingers, added another word of caution. "Don't slip up on this thing. Lindsay's a long way from being a soft mark."

"Don't I know it?" snapped Durand viciously. "There'll be no slip-up this time if you do your part. We'll get him, and we'll get him right." "Without any violence, of course." "Oh, of course."

Was there a covert but derisive jeer concealed in that smooth assent? Bromfield did not know, but he took away with him an unease that disturbed his sleep that night.

Before the clubman was out of the hotel, Jerry was snapping instructions at one of his satellites.

"Trail that fellow. Find where he goes, who he is, what girl he's mashed on, all about him. See if he's hooked up with Lindsay. And how? Hop to it! Did you get a slant at him as he went out?"

"Sure I did. He's my meat." The trailer vanished. Jerry stood at the window, still sullenly chewing his unlighted cigar, and watched his late visitor and the trailer lose themselves in the hurrying crowds.

"White-livered sump. No violence. Mr. Durand. Hmp! Different here." An evil grin broke through on the thin-lipped, cruel face.

When Bromfield suggested to Clay



"Say! Who the H—l Are You? What's Eat'g You? Whatta You Want?"

with a touch of stiffness that he would be glad to show him a side of New York night life probably still unfamiliar to him, the clubman felt a surprise he carefully concealed. He guessed that this was a belated attempt on the part of Miss Whitford's fiancé to overcome the palpable dislike he had for her friend. If so, the impulse that inspired the offer was a creditable one. Lindsay had no desire to take in any of the plague spots of the city with Bromfield. Something about the society man set his back up to use his own phrase. But because this was true he did not intend to be outdone in generosity by a successful rival. Promptly and heartily he accepted the invitation. If he had known that a note and a card from Jerry Durand lay in the vest pocket of his cynical host while he was holding out the olive branch, it is probable the Arizonan would have said, "No, thank you, kind sir."

The note mentioned no names. It said, "Wednesday, at Maddock's, 11 p. m. Show this card."

And to Maddock's, on Wednesday, at an hour something earlier than 11, the New Yorker led his guest then to a call at one or two clubs.

Even from the outside the place had a dilapidated look that surprised Lindsay. The bell was of that brand you keep pulling till you discover it is out of order. Decayed gentility marked the neighborhood, though the blank front of the houses looked impeccably respectable.

As a feeble camouflage of its real reason for being, Maddock's called itself the "Omni-club." But when

Clay found how particular the door-keeper was as to those who entered he guessed at once it was a gambling house.

From behind a grating the man peered at them doubtfully. Bromfield showed a card, and after some hesitation on the part of his inquisitor, passed the examination. Toward Clay the doorkeeper jerked his head inquiringly.

"He's all right," the clubman vouched.

Again there was a suspicious and lengthy scrutiny. The door opened far enough to let them slide into a scantily furnished hall. On the landing was another guard, a heavy, brutal-looking fellow who was no doubt the "chucker-out." He, too, looked them over closely, but after a glance at the card drew aside to let them pass.

Through a door near the head of the stairs they moved into a large room, evidently made from several smaller ones with the partitions torn down and the ceilings pillared at intervals.

Clay had read about the magnificence of Casfield's in the old days and he was surprised that one so fastidious as Bromfield should patronize a place so dingy and so rough as this. At the end of one room was a marble mantelpiece above which there was a defaced, gilt-frame mirror. The chandeliers, the chairs, the wallpaper, all suggested the same note of one-time opulence worn to shabbiness.

A game of Klondike was going. There were two roulette wheels, a faro table, and one circle of poker players.

The cold eyes of a sleek, slippery man sliding cards out of a faro-box looked at the westerner curiously. Among the suckers who came to this den of thieves to be robbed were none of Clay's stamp. Lindsay watched the white, dexterous hands of the dealer with an honest distaste. All along the border from Juarez to Calexico he had seen just such soft, skilled fingers fleecing those who toiled. He knew the bloodless, impassive face of the



All Told, There Were Not a Dozen Respectable-Looking People in the Room.

professional gambler as well as he knew the anxious, reckless ones of his victims. His knowledge had told him little good of this breed of parasites who preyed upon a credulous public.

The traffic of this room was crooked business by day as well as by night. A partition ran across the rear of the back parlor which showed no opening but two small holes with narrow shelves at the bottom. Back of that was the paraphernalia of the pool-room, another device to separate customers from their money by playing the "ponies."

As Clay looked around it struck him that the personnel of this gambling-den's patrons was a singularly depressing one. All told, there were not a dozen respectable-looking people in the room. Most of those present were derelicts of life, the failures of a great city washed up by the tide. Some were pallid, haggard wretches clinging to the vestiges of a prosperity that had once been theirs. Others were hard-faced ruffians from the underworld. Not a few bore the marks of the drug victim. All of those playing had a manner of furtive suspicion. They knew that if they risked their money the house would rob them. Yet they played.

Bromfield bought a small stack of chips at the roulette table. "Won't you take a whirl at the wheel?" he asked Lindsay. "Thanks, no, I believe not," his guest answered.

The westerner was a bit disgusted at his host's lack of discrimination. "Does he think I'm a soft mark too?" He wondered "If this is what he calls

TO BE CONTINUED

NOTICE OF HEARING

In the County Court of Lincoln County, Nebraska.

In the Matter of the Estate of Frederick Wernecke, Deceased.

To the Heirs and All Persons Interested in said Estate.

You are hereby notified that on August 23, 1922, Frieda Scherz as executrix of said estate, filed in said Court her final account and application for the assignment of the title to the real estate belonging to said estate, consisting of the Southwest Quarter (SW 1/4) of Section Ten (10) in Township Thirteen (13) North of Range Thirty-one (31) West (W) 6

p. m. Lincoln County, Nebraska, and for the distribution of the personal property belonging to said estate, and that said final account and application will be heard before this Court in the County Courtroom in the Courthouse in the city of North Platte, County of Lincoln, State of Nebraska on the 18th day of September, 1922 at 10 o'clock a. m. and you are hereby notified to appear at said time and place and show cause, if any there be why said final account should not be allowed, the title to said real estate assigned and the personal property of said estate distributed as provided by law and by the terms of the Last Will and Testament of the said Frederick Wernecke, deceased.

T. S. BLANKENBURG, (SEAL) Acting County Judge

NOTICE OF HEARING

In the County Court of Lincoln County, Nebraska.

In the matter of the Estate of Rose M. Knox, Deceased.

To the Heirs and all persons interested in said Estate:

Notice is hereby given that a petition for the appointment of Vivien M. Bonham as administratrix of the estate of Rose M. Knox, deceased, has been filed in this Court and that the said petition will be heard before the County Court of Lincoln County, Nebraska in the Courthouse in the City of North Platte in said County on September 11 at 10 o'clock a. m. at which time any person interested, may appear and show cause, if any there be, why the prayer of said petition should not be granted.

Dated at North Platte, Nebraska, August 16, 1922.

WM. H. C. WOODHURST, (SEAL) County Judge

EXTENSION ROAD NO. 107.

To whom it may concern:

The special commissioners appointed to locate a public road as follows:

Commencing at a point on the section line between sections 9 and 16, where Public Road No. 11 intersects said section line, running thence west on the section line between sections 9 and 16 and 8 and 17 to the intersection with Road No. 77 all in township 14 range 39, said road to be 65 feet wide, has reported in favor of the establishment of the same, all objections thereto, or claims for damages by reason of the establishment of the above described road must be filed in the office of the County Clerk of Lincoln county Nebraska, on or before 12 o'clock noon of the 9th day of October, 1922 or said Road will be allowed without reference thereto.

Witness my hand and official seal this 27th day of July, 1922.

A. S. ALLEN (SEAL) County Clerk

Boeler Crosby & Baskins, attys NOTICE OF FINAL REPORT

Estate No. 1868 of Jane James, deceased in the County Court of Lincoln County Nebraska.

The State of Nebraska, to all persons interested in said Estate, take notice that the Administrator with the will annexed has filed a final account and report of his administration and a petition for final settlement and discharge as such Administrator with the will annexed which have been set for hearing before said court on September 1, 1922, at 10 o'clock a. m. when you may appear and contest the same.

Dated August 7, 1922. WM. H. C. WOODHURST, County Judge.

William Stuart, attorney NOTICE OF FINAL REPORT

Estate of Alfred Peterson, deceased in the County Court of Lincoln County, Nebraska.

The State of Nebraska, to all persons interested in said Estate take notice that the Administrator has filed a final account and report of his administration and a petition for final settlement and discharge as such Administrator, which have been set for hearing before said court on Aug. 29, 1922, at 10 o'clock a. m. when you may appear and contest the same.

Dated Aug. 7, 1922. WM. H. C. WOODHURST, County Judge.

Halligan, Beatty & Halligan, Attys. NOTICE OF PETITION

Estate No. 1902 of Marta Koester, deceased in the County Court of Lincoln County, Nebraska.

The State of Nebraska, to all persons interested in said Estate take notice that a petition has been filed for the probate of the last will and testament of said deceased and for the appointment of Herman C. Koester as administrator with will annexed of said estate, which has been set for hearing herein on September 1, 1922 at 10 o'clock a. m.

Dated August 4, 1922. Wm. H. C. Woodhurst (SEAL) County Judge

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