

The Big-Town Round Up

by **William MacLeod Raine**
Illustrations by **Irwin Myers**

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CHAPTER XX, Continued.

"Lindsay had no business here in New York. He was disturbing Bee's peace of mind. I wanted to get rid of him and send him home."

"So you paid a crook scoundrel who hated him to murder his reputation?"

"That's not what I call it," defended the clubman.

"It doesn't matter what you call it. The fact stands."

"I told him explicitly—again and again—that there was to be no violence. I intended only to show him up. I had a right to do it."

Whitford got up and walked up and down the room. He felt like laying hands on this well-dressed scamp and throwing him out of the office. He tasted something of his daughter's sense of degradation at ever having been connected with a man of so little character. The experience was a bitterly humiliating one to him. For Bee was, in his opinion, the cleanest, truest little thoroughbred under heaven. The only questionable thing he had ever known her to do was to engage herself to this man.

Colin came to a halt in front of the other.

"We've got to protect you, no matter how little you deserve it. I can't

did not like. It occurred to Whitford that Clarendon, now stripped of self-respect by the knowledge of the regard in which they held him, was in a position to strike back hard if he cared to do so. The right to vote the proxies of the small stockholders of the Bird Cage company had been made out in his name at the request of the president of the corporation.

The case against Durand was pigeon-holed by the district attorney without much regret. All through the underworld where his influence had been strong, it was known that Jerry had begged off. He was discredited among his following and was politically a down-and-outer. But he knew too much to permit him to be dragged into court safely. With his back to the wall he might tell of many shifty transactions implicating prominent people. There were strong influences which did not want him pressed too hard. The charge remained on the docket, but it was set back from term to term and never brought to trial.

Colin Whitford found his attention pretty fully absorbed by his own affairs. Bromfield had opened a fight against him for control of the Bird Cage company. The mine had been developed by the Coloradoan from an unlikely prospect into a well-paying concern. It was the big business venture of his life and he took a strong personal interest in running it. Now, because of Bromfield's intention to use for his own advantage the proxies made out in his name, he was likely to lose control. With Bromfield in charge the property might be wrecked before he could be ousted.

"Dad's worrying," Beatrice told Lindsay. "He's afraid he'll lose control of the mine. There's a fight on against him."

"What for? I thought yore father was a mighty competent operator. Don't the stockholders know when they're well off?"

She looked at him enigmatically. "Some one he trusted has turned out a traitor. That happens occasionally in business, you know."

It was from Colin himself that Clay learned the name of the traitor. "It's that fellow Bromfield," he explained. "He's the secretary and second largest stockholder in the company. The annual election is to be tomorrow afternoon. He's got me where the wool's short. I was fool enough to ask the smaller stockholders to make out their proxies in his name. At that time he was hand in glove with us. Now I'm up against it. He's going to name the board of directors and have himself made president."

Clay ventured on this line. The name of Bromfield had not been mentioned to him before in the last twenty-four hours by either Beatrice or her father. "Surely Bromfield wouldn't want to offend you."

"That's exactly what he would want to do."

"But—"

"He's got his reasons."

"When is the election?"

"At three o'clock."

"Where?"

"At the company offices."

"Perhaps if I talked with Bromfield—"

Whitford laughed shortly. "I'd talk an arm off him if it would do any good. But it won't. He's out for revenge."

Clay's eyes alighted swiftly on the older man. They asked gravely a question and found an answer that set his heart singing. Beatrice had broken her engagement with Bromfield.

It was a little after eleven o'clock next morning when the cattleman walked into an apartment house for bachelors, took the elevator, and rang the bell at Bromfield's door.

Clarendon, fresh from the hands of his valet, said he was glad to see Lindsay, but did not look it. He offered his guest a choice of liquors and selected for himself a dry martini. Cigars and cigarettes were within reach on a tabouret.

Clay discovered that one difficulty he had expected to meet did not complicate the problem. The valet had left to select the goods for some custom-made shirts. Bromfield explained apologetically, apropos of the lack of service. He would not return till late in the afternoon.

"I've come to see about that Bird Cage business, Mr. Bromfield," his visitor explained. "I've been miffin' it over in my mind, and I thought I'd put the proposition up to you the way it looks to me."

Bromfield's eyebrows lifted. His face asked with supercilious politeness what the devil business it was of Lindsay's.

"Mr. Whitford has put in twenty years of his life building up the Bird Cage into a good property. It's a one-man mine. He made it out of a hole in the ground, developed it, expanded it, gave it a market value. He's

always protected the stockholders and played the game square with them. Don't it look like he ought to stay in control of it?"

"Did he send you here to tell me that?"

"No, he didn't. But he's gettin' along in years, Bromfield. It don't look hardly right to me for you to step in and throw him out. What do you think about it, yourself?"

The clubman flushed with anger. "I think that it's d—d impertinent of you



"I Think It's D—d Impertinent of You to Come Here Meddling in My Business."

to come here meddling in my business. I might have expected it. You've always been an impertinent meddler."

"Mebbeso," agreed Clay serenely, showing no surprise at this explosion. "But I'm here. And I put a question. Shall I ask it again?"

"No need. I'm going to take what the law allows me—what I and my friends have bought and paid for in the open market. The more it hurts Whitford the better I'll be pleased," answered Bromfield, his manner of cynical indifference swept away by gathering rage. The interference of this "bouncer" filled him with a passion of impotent hate.

"Is that quite correct? Did you buy control in the market? In point of fact, aren't you holdin' a bunch of proxies because Whitford wrote and asked the stockholders to sign them for you to vote? What you intend doing is a moral fraud, no matter what its legal aspect is. You'd be swindling the very stockholders you claim to represent, as well as abusing the confidence of Whitford."

"What you think isn't of the least importance to me, Mr. Lindsay. If you're here merely to offer me your advice, I suppose I shall now have regretfully to say good-day." The New Yorker rose, a thin lip smile scarcely veiling his anger at this intruder who had brought his hopes to nothing.

"I reckon I'll not hurry off, Mr. Bromfield," Clay replied easily. "You might think I was mad at you. I'll stick around awhile and talk this over."

"Unfortunately I have an engagement," retorted the other icily.

"When?"

"I really think, Mr. Lindsay, that is my business."

"I'm makin' it mine," said Clay curtly.

Bromfield stared. "I beg your pardon?"

"I said it was mine too. You see I bought a couple shares of Bird Cage stock yesterday. I'd hate to see Whitford ousted from control. I've got confidence in him."

"It's your privilege to vote that stock this afternoon. At least it would be if it had been transferred to you on the books. I'll vote my stock according to my own views."

"I wonder," murmured Clay aloud.

"What's that?" snapped Bromfield.

"I was just figurin' on what would happen if you got sick and couldn't attend that annual meeting this afternoon," drawled the westerner. "I reckon mebbeso some of the stockholders you've got lined up would break away and join Whitford."

The New Yorker felt a vague alarm. What idea did this fellow have in the back of his head. Did he intend to do bodily violence to him? Without any delay Bromfield reached for the telephone.

The large brown hand of the westerner closed over his.

"I'm talkin' to you, Mr. Bromfield. It's not polite for you to start phoning, not even to the police, whilst we're still engaged in conversation."

"Don't you try to interfere with me," said the man who paid the telephone bill. "I'll not submit to such an indignity."

"I'm not the only one that interferes. You fixed up quite an entertainment for me the other night, didn't you? Wouldn't you kinda call that interferin' some? I sure ought to comb yore hair for it."

Bromfield made a hasty decision to get out. He started for the door. Clay traveled in that direction too. They arrived simultaneously. Clarendon backed away. The Arizonaan locked the door and pocketed the key.

His host grew weakly violent. From Whitford he had heard a story about two men in a locked room that did not reassure him now. One of the men had been this cattleman. The other—well, he had suffered. "Let me

out! I'll not stand this! You can't bully me!" he cried shrilly.

"Don't pull yore picket-pin, Bromfield," advised Lindsay. "I've elected myself boss of the rodeo. What I say goes. You'll save yoreself a heap of worry if you make up yore mind to that right away."

"What do you want? What are you trying to do? I'm not a barroom brawler like Durand. I don't intend to fight with you."

"You've certainly relieved my mind," murmured Clay lazily. "What's yore own notion of what I ought to do to you, Bromfield? You invited me out as a friend and led me into a trap after you had fixed it up. Wouldn't a first-class thrashin' with a hawsswhip be about right?"

Bromfield turned pale. "I've got a weak heart," he faltered.

"I'll say you have," agreed Clay. "It's pumpin' water in place of blood right now, I'll bet. Did you ever have a real honest-to-G—d lickin' when you was a boy?"

The New Yorker knew he was helpless before this clear-eyed, supple athlete who walked like a god from Olympus. One can't lap up half a dozen highballs a day for an indefinite number of years without getting flabby, nor can he spend himself in feeble dissipation and have reserves of strength to call upon when needed. The tongue went dry in his mouth. He began to swallow his Adam's apple.

"Let's look at this thing from all sides," went on Clay cheerfully. "If we decide by a majority of the voting stock—and I'm carryin' enough proxies so that I've got control—that you'd ought to have a whalfin', why, o' course, there's nothin' to it but get to business and make a thorough job."

"Maybe I didn't do right about Mad-dock's."

"No mebbe about that. You acted like a yellow hound."

"I'm sorry. I apologize."

"I don't reckon I can use apologies, I might make a bargain with you."

"I'll be glad to make any reasonable bargain."

"How'd this do? I'll vote my stock and proxies in the Bromfield Punishment company, Limited, against the whalfin', and you vote yore stock and proxies in the Bird Cage company to return the present board and directorate."

"That's coercion."

"Well, so it is."

"The law—"

"Did you go hire a lawyer for an opinion before you paid Durand to do me up?"

"You've got no right to hold me a prisoner here to help Whitford."

"All right, I won't. I'll finish my business with you and when I'm through, you can go to the annual meetin'—if you feel up to travellin' that far."

TO BE CONTINUED

Beeler, Crosby & Baskins, Atty.
NOTICE TO CREDITORS

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

The State of Nebraska, ss: Creditors of said estate will take notice that the time limited for presentation and filing of claims against said Estate is January 10, 1923, and for settlement of said Estate is September 7, 1923; that I will sit at the county court room in said County on October 10th, 1922, at 10 o'clock a. m. and on January 10th, 1923 at 10 o'clock a. m., to receive, examine, hear, allow, or adjudge all claims and objections duly filed. Dated September 7th, 1922.
WM. H. C. WOODHURST,
Seal County Judge.

Halligan, Beatty & Halligan, Atty.
NOTICE OF FINAL REPORT

Estate No. 1854 of Mary Facka, 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 and for declaration of heirship and distribution of proceeds which have been set for hearing before said court on October 30, 1922, at 10 o'clock a. m. when you may appear and contest the same.
Dated September 9th, 1922.
WM. H. C. WOODHURST,
Seal County Judge.

Geo. N. Gibbs, Attorney.
NOTICE OF PETITION

Estate of Bridget Jones, deceased, in the County Court of Lincoln County, Nebraska.

The State of Nebraska: to all persons interested in said estate take notice that Owen Jones did on the 19th day of August, 1922 file a petition in said action setting forth that Nicholas McCabe, executor of said estate did on the 8th day of August, 1922 die, and said petition prays for the appointment of Owen Jones, and that letters of administration with will annexed be granted to him, which has been set for hearing herein on the 22nd day of September, 1922 at 10 o'clock a. m.
Dated this 25th day of August, 1922.
T. S. BLANKENBURG
Acting County Judge.

William E. Shumah, Attorney
NOTICE OF HEARING

In the County Court of Lincoln County, Nebraska.

In the Matter of the Estate of Frederick Werneke, 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 Werneke, deceased.

T. S. BLANKENBURG,
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"Of Course, I'm Not Good Enough. I Know That. No Man's Good Enough for a Good Woman."

have Bee's name dragged into all the papers of the country. The case against Durand will have to be dropped. He's lost his power anyhow and he'll never get it back.

"Then it doesn't matter much whether he's tried or not."

That phase of the subject Whitford did not pursue. He began to feel in his vest pocket for something.

"Of course you understand that we're through with you, Bromfield. Neither Beatrice nor I care to have anything more to do with you."

"I don't see why," protested Bromfield. "As a man of the world—"

"If you don't see the reason I'm not able to explain it to you. Whitford's fingers found what they were looking for. He fished a ring from his pocket and put it on the desk. "Beatrice asked me to give you this."

"I don't think that's fair. If she wants to throw me over she ought to tell me her reasons herself."

"She's telling them through me. I don't want to be more explicit unless you force me."

"Of course I'm not good enough. I know that. No man's good enough for a good woman. But I'm as good as other fellows. We don't claim to be angels. New York doesn't sprout wings."

"I'm not going to argue this with you. And I'm not going to tell you what I think of you beyond saying that we're through with you. Man, don't you see I don't want to have any more talk about it? The engagement was a mistake in the first place. Bee never loved you. Even if you'd been what we thought you, it wouldn't have done. She's lucky to have found out in time."

"Is this a business rupture, too, Mr. Whitford?"

"Just as you say about that, Bromfield. As an investor in the Bird Cage you're entitled to the same consideration that any other stockholder is. Since you're the second largest owner you've a right to recognition on the board of directors. I'm not mixing my private affairs with business."

Bromfield rose, pulled on the glove he had removed, nodded good-bye without offering to shake hands, and sauntered out of the office. There was a look on his face the winning man