



54-40 OR FIGHT BY EMERSON HOUGH

AUTHOR OF THE MISSISSIPPI BUBBLE
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FLAX IS PROFITABLE

Wonderful Paying Proposition in Western Canadian Prairies.

So much is heard of the wheat, oats and barley grown in the prairie lands of western Canada, and so much has been told of the wealth to be made out of the raising of cattle on the succulent and rich grasses of those fertile plains, that a most important product has been almost lost sight of, Flax. Recent press reports advise us that on one of the last boats to clear from Fort William (at the head of Lake Superior) for Buffalo, there were 241,000 bushels of flax valued at \$583,220, and on another boat leaving the same day there were 283,000 bushels valued at \$720,000. There has been a big demand for Canadian flax this season, and the lake movement has been very heavy. Flax is always a sure crop, and gives to the farmer who is anxious for quick return after getting on his land, the chance he is looking for. There is opportunity for thousands yet, on the free homesteads of 160 acres, and many of these are available within short distance of the lines of railway that are already built or under construction, either on the main line or branches. Besides these free grant lands there is an opportunity to purchase from railway and land companies at reasonable prices.

The display of western Canada's grains in the straw as well as threshed grains and grasses recently made at St. Louis was an excellent demonstration of what the country can do. It proved splendid as an illustration of the resources of that vast prairie country, which during the past year has again proven its ability to produce excellent yields of wheat, oats and barley—and flax. Not only this, but the splendid herds of cattle are a source of large revenue. There is a fund of information to be had by reading the Canadian government literature, copies of which may be had free by applying to your nearest Canadian government agent.

A Poultry Problem.

"Which is correct," ask the summer boarder who wished to air his knowledge, "to speak of a sitting hen or a setting hen?"

"I don't know," replied the farmer's wife, "and what's more, I don't care. But there's one thing I would like to know: when a hen cackles, has she been laying, or is she lying?"

And it sometimes happens that a man likes to have his wife get so mad she won't speak to him—then she will not ask him for money.

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W. L. DOUGLAS, 285 Spring St., Brockton, Mass.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Dr. Ward nodded. "Very possibly. It has seemed to Mr. Calhoun very likely that we may hear something of

great importance regarding the far northwest. A missed cog now may cost this country 1,000 miles of territory, 100 years of history."

In spite of myself, I began to feel the stimulus of a thought like this. It was my salvation as a man. I began to set aside myself and my own troubles.

"You are therefore," he concluded, "to go to Montreal, and find your own way into that meeting of the directors of the Hudson Bay Company. There is a bare chance that in this intrigue Mexico will have an emissary on the ground as well. There is reason to suspect her hostility to all our plans of extension, southwest and northwest. Naturally, it is the card of Mexico to bring on war, or accept it if we urge; but only in case she has England as her ally. England will get her pay by taking Texas, and what is more, by taking California, which Mexico does not value. She owes England large sums now. That would leave England owner of the Pacific coast; for, once she gets California, she will fight us then for all of Oregon. It is your duty to learn all of these matters—who is there, what is done; and to do this without making known your own identity."

CHAPTER XIII.

On Secret Service.

If the world was lost through women, she alone can save it—Louis de Beaufort.

In the days of which I write, our civilization was, as I may say, so embryonic, that it is difficult for us now to realize the conditions which then obtained.

We had several broken railway systems north and south, but there were not then more than 5,000 miles of railway built in America. All things considered, I felt lucky when we reached New York less than 24 hours out from Washington.

Up the Hudson I took the crack steamer Swallow, the same which just one year later was sunk while trying to beat her own record of nine hours and two minutes from New York to Albany. She required 11 hours on our trip. Under conditions then obtaining, it took me a day and a half more to reach Lake Ontario. Here, happily, I picked up a frail steam craft, owned by an adventurous soul who was not unwilling to risk his life and that of others on the uncertain and ice-filled waters of Ontario. With him I negotiated to carry me with others down the St. Lawrence. One day after another with broken machinery, lack of fuel, running ice and what not, required five days more of my time ere I reached Montreal.

As I moved about from day to day, making such acquaintance as I could, I found in the air a feeling of excitement and expectation. The hotels, bad as they were, were packed. The public places were noisy, the private houses crowded. Gradually the town became half-military and half-savage. Persons of importance arrived by steamers up the river, on whose expense lay boats which might be bound for England—or for some of England's colonies. The government—not yet removed to Ottawa, later capital of Ontario—was then housed in the old Chateau Ramezay, built so long before for the French governor, Vaudreuil.

Here, I had reason to believe, was now established no less a personage than Sir George Simpson, governor of the Hudson Bay Company. Rumor had it at the time that Lord Aberdeen of England himself was at Montreal. That was not true, but I established without doubt that his brother really was there, as well as Lieut. William Peel of the navy, son of Sir Robert Peel, England's prime minister.

I was not a week in Montreal before I learned that my master's guess, or his information, had been correct. The race was on for Oregon!

All these things, I say, I saw go on about me. Yet in truth as to the inner workings of this I could gain but little actual information. I saw England's ships, but it was not for me to know whether they were to turn Cape Hope or the Horn. I saw Canada's voyageurs, but they might be only on their annual journey, and might go no farther than their accustomed posts in the west. In French town and English town, among common soldiers, voyageurs, innkeepers and merchants, I wandered for more than one day and felt myself still helpless.

That is to say, such was the case until there came to my aid that greatest of all allies, Chance.

SYNOPSIS.

"There lacks one thing—the bride." "What do you mean?" He put out his arm across the door. "I regret that I must bar my door to you. But you must take my word, as coming from my daughter, that you are not to come here to-night."

I looked at him, my eyes staring wide. I could not believe what he said. "Why," I began; "how utterly monstrous!" A step sounded in the hall behind him, and he turned back. We were joined by the tall clerical figure of Rev. Dr. Halford, who had, it seemed, been at least one to keep his appointment as made. He raised his hand as if to silence me, and held out to me a certain object. It was the slipper of the Baroness Helena von Ritz—white, delicate, dainty, beribboned.

"Miss Elizabeth does not pretend to understand why your gift should take this form; but as the slipper evidently has been worn by some one, she suggests you may perhaps be in error in sending it at all." He spoke in even, icy tones.

"Let me into this house!" I demanded. "I must see her!" There were two tall figures now, who stood side by side in the wide front door.

"But don't you see, there has been a mistake, a horrible mistake?" I demanded. "I must see her!"

Dr. Halford, in his grave and quiet way, assisted himself to snuff. "Sir," he said, "knowing both families, I agreed to this haste and unceremoniousness, much against my will. Had there been no objection upon either

So, briefly, I told him what little I knew of the events of the last hour. I told him of the shame and humiliation of it all. He pondered for a minute and asked me at length if I believed Miss Elizabeth suspected anything of my errand of the night before.

"How could she?" I answered. "So far as I can recollect, I never mentioned the name of the Baroness von Ritz."

Then, all at once, I did recollect! I did remember that I had mentioned the name of the baroness that very morning to Elizabeth, when the baroness passed us in the east room!

Dr. Ward was keen enough to see the sudden confusion on my face, but he made no comment beyond saying that he doubted not time would clear it all up; that he had known many such affairs.

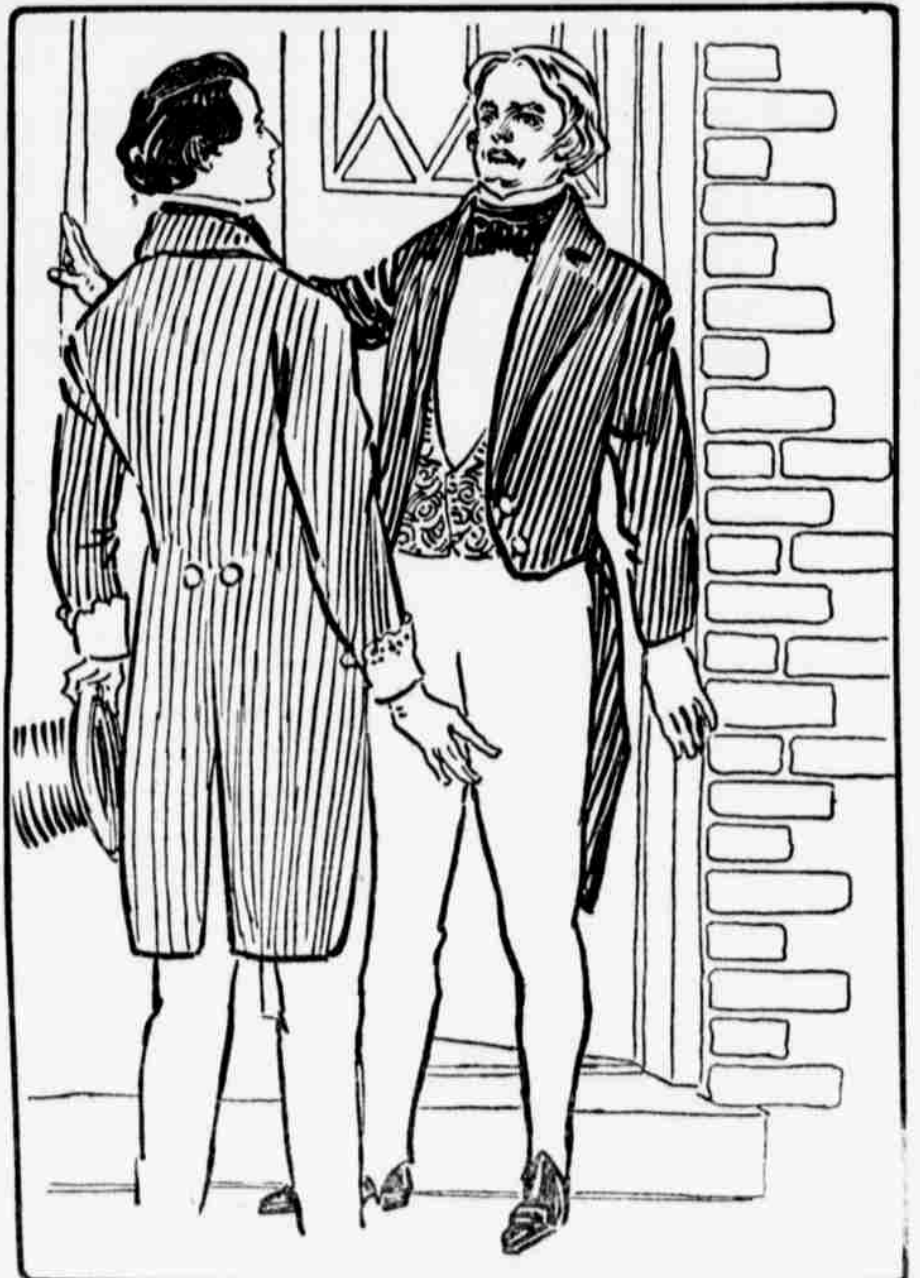
"But mind you one thing," he added; "keep those two women apart."

"Then why do you do this doddering old idiot, you and John Calhoun, with life outworn and the blood dried in your veins, send me, since you doubt me so much, on an errand of this kind. You see what it has done for me. I am done with John Calhoun. He may get some other fool for his service."

"Where do you propose going, then, friend?"

"West," I answered. "West to the Rockies—"

Dr. Ward calmly produced a tortoise shell snuff-box from his left-hand waistcoat pocket, and deliberately took snuff. "You are going to do nothing of the kind," said he calmly.



"There Lacks One Thing, a Bride."

side, I would have undertaken to go forward with the wedding ceremony. But never in my life have I, and never shall I, join two in wedlock when either is not in that state of mind and soul consonant with that holy hour."

All at once I felt a holy revulsion. There came over me the reaction, an icy calm.

"Gentlemen," said I slowly, "what you tell me is absolutely impossible and absurd. But if Miss Elizabeth really doubts me on evidence such as this, I would be the last man in the world to ask her hand. I have no time to argue now. Good-by!"

They looked at me with grave faces, but made no reply. I descended the steps, the dainty, beribboned slipper still in my hand, got into my carriage and started back to the city.

CHAPTER XII.

The Marathon.

As if two gods should play some heavenly match, and on this wager lay two earthly women—Shakespeare.

An automaton, scarcely thinking, I gained the platform of the station. There was a sound of hissing steam, a rolling cloud of sulphurous smoke, a shouting of railway captains, a creaking of the wheels. Without volition of my own, I was on my northward journey. Presently I looked around and found seated at my side the man whom I then recollected I was to meet—Dr. Samuel Ward.

"What's wrong, Nicholas?" he asked. "Trouble of any kind?"

"You are going to keep your promise to John Calhoun and to me. Believe me, the business in hand is vital."

"I care nothing for that," I answered bitterly.

"But you are the agent of your country. You are called to do your country's urgent work. All life is only trouble vanquished. I ask you now to be a man; I not only expect it, but demand it of you!"

His words carried weight in spite of myself. I began to listen. I took from his hand the package, looked at it, examined it. Finally, as he sat silently regarding me, I broke the seal.

"Now, Nicholas Trist," resumed Dr. Ward presently, "there is to be at Montreal at the date named in these papers a meeting of the directors of the Hudson Bay Company of England. There will be big men there—the biggest their country can produce; leaders of the Hudson Bay Company, many public men even of England. It is rumored that a brother of Lord Aberdeen of the British ministry will attend. Do you begin to understand?"

Al, did I not? Here, then, was further weaving of those complex plots which at that time hedged in all our history as a republic. Now I guessed the virtue of our knowing somewhat of England's secret plans, as she surely did of ours. I began to feel behind me the impulse of John Calhoun's swift energy.

"It is Oregon!" I exclaimed at last. Dr. Ward nodded. "Very possibly. It has seemed to Mr. Calhoun very likely that we may hear something of

Who Giveth This Woman?

Woman is a miracle of divine contradictions—Jules Michelet.

On my return to my quarters at Brown's hotel I looked at the top of my bureau. It was empty. My friend Dandridge had proved faithful. The slipper of the baroness was gone! So now, hurriedly, I began my toilet for that occasion which to any gentleman should be the one most exacting, the most important of his life's events.

Elizabeth deserved better than this unseemly haste. Her sweetness and dignity, her adherence to the forms of life, her acquaintance with the elegancies, the dignities and conventions of the best of our society, bespoke for her ceremony more suited to her class and mine.

I told none about my quarters anything of my plans, but arranged for my portmanteau to be sent to the railway station for that evening's train north. I hurried to the Bond's jewelry place and secured a ring—two sizes, indeed; for, in our haste, betrothal and wedding ring needed their first use at the same day and hour. I found a waiting carriage which served my purpose, and into it I flung, urging the driver to carry me at top speed into Elmhurst road.

As we swung down the road I leaned forward, studying with interest the dust cloud of an approaching carriage. As it came near I called to my driver. The two vehicles paused almost wheel to wheel. It was my friend Jack Dandridge who sprawled on the rear seat of the carriage! That is to say, the fleshy portion of Jack Dandridge. His mind, his memory, and all else, were gone.

I sprang into his carriage and caught him roughly by the arm. I felt in all his pockets, looked on the carriage floor, on the seat, and pulled up the dust rug. At last I found the license.

"Did you see the baroness?" I asked, then.

At this he beamed upon me with a wide smile.

"Did I?" said he, with gravity pulling down his long buff waistcoat. "Did I? Mos' admirable woman in all the world! Of course, Miss Elizabeth Churchill also mos' admirable woman in the world," he added politely, "but I didn't see her."

The sudden sweat broke out upon my forehead. "Tell me, what have you done with the slipper?"

He shook his head sadly. "Mistaken, my friend! I gave no 'admirable slipper in the world,' just ask you said, just as baroness said, to Miss Elizabeth Churchill—mos' admirable woman in the world!"

"Did you see her?" I gasped. "Did you see her father—any of her family?"

"God bless me, no!" rejoined this young statesman. "Feelings delicacy prevented. Wasn't in fit condition to approach family mansion. Always mos' delicate. Sent packz in by servant, from gate—turned round—drove off—found you."

My only answer was to spring from his carriage into my own and to order my driver to go on at a run. At last I reached the driveway of Elmhurst, my carriage wheels cutting the gravel as we galloped up to the front door. My approach was noted. Even as I hurried up the steps the tall form of none other than Mr. Daniel Churchill appeared to greet me. I extended my hand. He did not notice it. I began to speak. He bade me pause.

"To what may I attribute this visit, Mr. Trist?" he asked me, with dignity.

"Since you ask me, and seem not to know," I replied, "I may say that I am here to marry your daughter, Miss Elizabeth! I presume that the minister of the gospel is already here?"

"The minister is here," he answered.