

# TALK

By GEORGE AGNEW CHAMBERLAIN

## PART I

### MORAL EMBLEMS.

Please don't skip this description of Robert Hervey Randolph—six feet straight up and down, broad of shoulder and narrow of hip, sandy-haired, blue-eyed, nose slightly up-ended and wearing a saddle of faint freckles, clean shaven, well groomed, very correctly dressed, and twenty-six years old. Let it be added that his eyes were placed just far enough apart to stamp him forever honest; he had an open and most prepossessing countenance.

At the moment of the start of this rapid yarn, he was standing in the Van Tellers' library, looking down in pained and flushed surprise at Miss Madge Van T., who was sitting in a huge leather chair half facing the fire in the open grate, one leg very much under her, the other waving a satin-and-silk combination of foot and ankle in distracting accompaniment to her disturbing speech.

"Bobby," said Miss Van T., "you are darned good-looking; you're strong, straight, and a gentleman; there are times when you are wholly adorable, but, nevertheless, I'm not going to the show with you tonight, or to the opera tomorrow, or anywhere more. There, there, don't worry; you don't say anything in your heart of gold beyond the aid of a vocal organ. It says everything that is in your heart of gold before your brain has time to translate it into words."

"Look here, Madge," said the pained Mr. Randolph, "are you making fun of my face or of my brain or of both?"

"My dear," said Miss Van T. with a grave, "I'm not making fun of you in any way whatsoever. I'm merely telling you how lovable you are, so that you will understand how serious I am when I say that I've decided not to love you any more."

"But how can you help it?" stammered Mr. Randolph, his tongue for once saying the same thing as his face at the same time.

"Miss Van T.'s breast fluttered as though rising against its mistress to the defense of this indisputable young man, and she was obliged to avert her eyes from his and draw a long breath," before she answered.

"I can, because I will," she said, her face paling. "Oh, Bobby, can't you wake up? Look round you and come to earth! You are a young man and you are a young man yet you've never seen New York. You walk round and poke in wherever your fancy leads you, just like a kid in his own back yard. Everything is apparently so familiar that you just don't see it."

"I guess you're right," said Bobby thoughtfully. "It never occurred to me to look at New York any more often than to pick up my ash-barrel next door, but—your own—Look here, Madge, why should I try to see New York, and why should you be talking to me about it? I'm too young to play the role of peyounant and smack my lips over it. Listen to this, Bobby: the New York is a fever, and I've caught it. I want a rainy-day car, a calling-card, and a young man to go with me to the city. I want to see the heart of every woman that looks at them; I want my jewels to run to size and quality, and I want a yacht just for the purpose of sailing about, because I hate to ride in the smelly cabs."

Bobby's eyes had grown rounder and wider as she talked.

"Do you think you could get along for a hundred thousand a year?" he asked very softly. It was quite a new note with him in Miss Van T.'s experience, but her thoughts were too busy elsewhere to note it.

"I don't know," she said slowly. "I've been going into the subject rather thoroughly, and a hundred thousand would be running it on a pretty close margin. By the way, just what is your allowance under that crazy will?"

"Ten thousand," said Bobby.

"Well, said Miss Van T., "there you are! Just enough to keep you in debt, and you want to marry me on it! It wouldn't be quite so out of the question if you knew you were going to have it forever, but you don't. It may be cut off and you'll be left with nothing."

"Any day," said Bobby promptly. "I can't believe, after all these years, but it may."

"Well, there you are," Miss Van T. repeated. "You are a young man, and you are a young man yet you've never seen New York. You walk round and poke in wherever your fancy leads you, just like a kid in his own back yard. Everything is apparently so familiar that you just don't see it."

"I can almost believe you," said Bobby, a cold wonder dawning in his eyes. "And the other way," he continued, "the private door for the private secretary. That's a road of burned bridges. Every man, decent or indecent, feels a queer sinking of the heart when he hears of a woman taking to the water. He looked at her shrewdly. "And yet you may do it," he said, half to himself. "If you are one of the hungry women, God help you, for they all walk blindfolded."

"They don't walk," said Madge, flushing, and her eyes gleaming strangely. "That's just the point: they rush, whirl, and—"

"And crash!" finished Bobby.

"That's the very word," said Madge. "If you'll only keep on the way you've started, I'd love to talk to you all night."

"No chance of that," said Bobby, straight-lipped. "I'm through, and I'm going." He turned toward the door.

"Not without kissing me good-by, Bobby!" cried Madge.

He looked over his shoulder with a polite but impersonal smile. "I'm not much on kissing strange women," he said lightly. "It would take me years to learn to kiss you again."

He left the room and the house. The night was chill but not actually cold—one of those nights of late November that brace the blood of New Yorkers for the plunge into the endurance

race of the season and still leave a touch of languor in the air to appeal to the softest senses. It was a night for adventure, for challenging glances and daring advances. Fever was in it, but could not reach the immune Mr. Robert Hervey Randolph.

With his top button pushed back on his head, the ends of his muffled flying loose, his overcoat half unbuttoned, he swung up the deserted lower reaches of the Avenue, punctuating his thoughts with the hollow rap of his stick on the pavement. It might be supposed that he was thinking and musing over the sudden demise of the Miss Van Tellers, but he had thought he had known for many years, but such was not the case.

Mr. Randolph was not built on mourning-lines; at the moment under review, he was thinking about himself and the strange fate that had made him a foster-child of fortune. He proceeded to look back ten years. Just a decade ago he had had his one meeting with the young lady whose sudden appearance had brought him an unstable affluence. It had taken place on this very avenue and less than forty short blocks away. He had remarked to the young lady, whose name he had not remembered, that he had brought into sudden conjunction a lovely Persian cat, a lovely wire-haired terrier, a lovely child, and himself. The cat had dashed from a pond from behind the house, the terrier had leaped from the nose of a taxi-cab, the dog had flown in yapping pursuit and, in the act, yanked his young mistress off her pins. He, Mr. Randolph, had seized on the dog, became the center and circumference of an animated pinwheel.

Her unshaken determination to hold to the leash, whatever happened, brought to Bobby, a young man of twenty-three, three times round her ankles and those of Mr. Randolph, bringing them both down kerplunk and facing each other. "My, what a bump!" she had cried, in startled tones, and then thrown back her curly head and laughed.

It was so that he remembered her—a child of ten or eleven summers and no winters, merry as a sunny day, dark-haired, dark-eyed, pink-cheeked, pampered but unspoiled. She had risen and taken his hand, told him her name, thanked him, ordered a hurried course, and was hurried. For sole inheritance, little Gene Thornton found herself possessed of one Maggie O'Rourke, a nurse of long standing, of earnest and faithful face, and a monitor, rather than a mother, in a pitifully thin chest.

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"The other," said Miss Van T. dropping her eyes, "was Beacher Tremont. He wasn't quite so nice, but he offered more. He said he was looking for a private secretary, who could name her own price."

"During the next five years—at your own price," repeated Bobby, his mind to the kernel of each proposition. "Madge, do you know what you're saying? Do you know the horrible things you infer?"

"Bobby," she said, "don't get theatrical. I tell you New York is a fever. I've caught it, and I'm not a bit sorry. The choice between being a Van Teller and being a fast woman is easy. The semi-decay of New York. If they play for high enough stakes, have a world of their own that is worth moving in. Money is marshaled about it to the tune of a million dollars, and the most bewitching and abbreviated bits of dresses that ever revealed a completely adorable person. Tell me that."

"Madge," said Bobby, at once frightened and earnest, "you only half know what you're talking about. There is such a world as you speak of—it's the world of insatiably hungry women. It's brilliant and fascinating for a while, but it breathes a poisonous air, and all its roads lead down. Every woman that goes into it with her eyes open has an idea that, with her beauty and her brains, she can lead a life of ease and get away with it. She won't look over her shoulder and read the record of an endless losing run on the black."

Miss Van T. smiled.

"I'm already beginning on my reward," she said. "You've never talked so well before in your life."

"It's more than talk," said Bobby, flushing angrily. "And the ways of the world are such that you have imagined. You read happy stories to the public taste of midwives, show-room girls, and dress-models, and perhaps you think they mirror the life. Why, Madge, the tams that those girls fling indifferently at virtue and at vice are so vile that they couldn't be repeated even among half-decent men."

Madge raised her eyebrows.

"Yet you know them," she commented coolly.

Mr. Randolph shrugged his shoulders.

"Yes," he said; "I know them. I've bumped into them, just as one bumps into everything in this town sooner or later. I've even stopped a girl's mouth with my hand and been bitten for it."

"Really?" said Madge, quite interested. "That was nice of you. But, Bobby, this is my frank night. Let me tell you that vice words don't affect a woman half as much as you men imagine. If she likes the speaker, the words are nothing; and if she hates, why, she just welcomes them as a little more fuel. In themselves, they don't matter; they just pass over."

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## MARINE NEWS

### PORT OF ST. JOHN

Wednesday, Aug. 25.  
Arrived Tuesday  
Coastwise—Str. Valinda, 56, Lewis, Bridgetown, N. S.; str. Ruby L. 51, Baker, Margareville, N. S.; str. Keith Cann, 177, McKinnon, Westport, N. S.; str. Granville, 61, Collins, Annapolis Royal, N. S.; str. Viola Pearl, 23, Woodlin, Wilson's Beach.

Cleared Tuesday  
Sch. Hazel Leah, 19, Stuart, Eastport, Me.

Coastwise—Str. Valinda, 58, Lewis, Bridgetown, N. S.; str. Ruby L. 51, Baker, Margareville, N. S.; str. Keith Cann, 177, McKinnon, Westport, N. S.; str. Granville, 61, Collins, Annapolis Royal, N. S.; str. Viola Pearl, 23, Woodlin, Wilson's Beach; str. Grand Maean, 179, Hersey, Wilson's Beach.

CANADIAN PORTS  
Quebec, Aug. 2—Arvd. steam barge Imperoyal, Montreal.

BRITISH PORTS  
Liverpool, Aug. 1—Arvd. 20, stmr Kaiserin August Victoria, New York, 21st.

21st, Canadian Ranger, Montreal.  
Hong Kong, Aug. 19—Arvd. stmr S. Dollard, Vancouver, B.C.; str. Gibraltair, Aug. 21—Arvd. stmr Frankly, Montreal.

London, Aug. 2—Arvd. stmr Monte zuma, Montreal.  
Sydney, N. S. W., Aug. 20—Sld. str. Nisagara, Vancouver.

FOREIGN PORTS  
Rotterdam, Aug. 21—Arvd. stmr Nieuw Amsterdam, New York.

New York, Aug. 23—Arvd. strms P. sars, Genoa; St. Paul, Southampton; Lafayette, Havre; United States, Co.

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Large quantity of Cedar, suitable for fence poles or kindling. No reasonable offer refused. Write Box C. D., C-o Standard Office.

### FOR SALE

Farm for sale—Three and a half miles from Annapolis Station; 450 acres; 100 acres cleared. Estimated \$25,000 heavy lumber, soft wood. About 100 acres hard wood. Farm well watered. Good locality. House in good repair, with pump in kitchen. Two barns, with or without crop, stock and machinery. Ideal place for summer home. Good fishing and hunting. Reason for selling, illness. Immediate possession. Correspondence, Alex. McAnesary, Annapolis, R. R. No. 1.

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Farm for sale—Three and a half miles from Annapolis Station; 450 acres; 100 acres cleared. Estimated \$25,000 heavy lumber, soft wood. About 100 acres hard wood. Farm well watered. Good locality. House in good repair, with pump in kitchen. Two barns, with or without crop, stock and machinery. Ideal place for summer home. Good fishing and hunting. Reason for selling, illness. Immediate possession. Correspondence, Alex. McAnesary, Annapolis, R. R. No. 1.

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