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## The Making of 'Val' Pierce

By CONRAD RICHTER.

I. Valentine Pierce, Jr., braked his white roadster to a jerking stop at the oil-spattered curb. Lighting a cigarette, he went unhurriedly up the chiseled steps into the brick and mortar offices of the Valentine Pierce Table Co. He smiled to the blond arbiter of the switchboard, nodded to thin Kirke, his father's secretary, and continued casually into the private room beyond.

"Morning, Chancellor," he greeted with easy deference. "Beggs said you left a subpoena while I was still in donkey heaven."

The heavy figure at the bare desk turned in his silent swivel chair and regarded the youth from a pair of sober eyes.

"Val, I gave you the courtesy of a month out of college to ask your dad for a job. Your time limit's expired. Angus tells me he wants to break a new man in the yard. Knowing me, he's willing to take a chance on my son without putting him through the humiliation of finding out what he can't do and doesn't know. You're hired."

He extended a chunky hand. "Good luck, and go to it."

Valentine Pierce, Junior, assumed an expression of regret.

"Well, well! Awfully decent of you, Chancellor, to think of me. If I hadn't made other plans—"

His father's jaw crunched massively down on his narrow spread-eagle collar. The son recognized the ominous symptom and grew slightly sobered.

"Listen, Chancellor. We don't want to have any common argument about this. Let's talk it over decently. You've got a million and a half laid by—"

"Not laid by—working," informed his father testily.

"My mistake," admitted the son. "The main thing is you've got the million and a half. You could retire tomorrow, not that I cherish any illusions of your doing it. I comprehend perfectly that you were brought up horny-handed, and the calouses on your hands would get lonesome without anything to do."

"What?"

"Just a minute! I don't criticize you one particle, Chancellor. Every man to his own pleasure. I say, Horny-handed work is yours. Go to it. But mine isn't. Eight hours a day in your respected office yard don't inspire me with a splinter of excitement. If I needed the money I flatter myself I could work up enthusiasm by keeping my mind concentrated on the salary envelope. But I don't need the money. Mother doesn't need it. Why plunge into an orgy of work, and sacrifice my tender hopes and ambitions and desires, my fond pleasures and—"

"What the devil are they?" burst out his father.

"I don't know yet," retorted the youth modestly. "But they don't possibly include a yearning for time-clock labor. I might say they are inclined toward the honest, unassuming life of a rich man's son without the pretension that he had to work for a living. You don't see Stan Weimer skinning hides in his father's tannery, or Mart Larue wearing an eye-shade in his governor's office. I don't mind coming down here and talking over mutual business matters for a couple of hours a day. But I'll be hanged, Chancellor, if I can swallow the old fogey humbug of working as though my mother was a washer-woman."

His father said nothing. He did not need to. His collar was creaking eloquently under its added weight of law and swelling neck.

"Fortunately," continued the son, threatening subtly, "Aunt Carolina blessed me with a hundred and seventy-one shares of this respected corporation. Your distinguished friend, Judge White, tells me they're mine two weeks from Friday."

"Your veneered, wormy-chested cronies and lady friends with knotty reputations are doubtless awaiting the day with keen anticipation," remarked Valentine Pierce, Senior, heavily.

"I wouldn't possibly be so unchivalrous, Chancellor—"

"I have no compunction in the matter," assured his father grimly. "I had your daily society looked up as a strictly business measure. I had the pleasure of finding that you've been letting a couple hundred feet of mahogany maple hang around you, supposedly to drink your health, but as a matter of fact to spend your good money."

He rose and started smoldering across the floor. "Thank God, your dad came up out of black swamp muck that grows pin-oak knotty and corgum cross-grained and white oak tougher than—"

"Please, Chancellor," implored the son. "I remember the details perfectly; how you loaded your first car of bark for a meek dollar; when and how

you cut your foot with the cruel ax and crawled a mile—"

"Shut up!" abruptly bellowed his father, whirling on him with the ponderous rapidity of a grizzly. "This show's over. I order you to report to Angus at once. Get me, son?"

"Perfectly," nodded the youth. "Have a cigarette?"

For a moment he fancied a suppressed parental beam in his father's eyes. Afterwards he decided he had been mistaken, for when he looked again the eyes were contracted like bullets. "Sorry, Chancellor," he said regretfully. "Give my love to Angus," and took his departure.

Friday afternoon Lou Baron called up from downtown. Lou was a breezy classmate, perpetually borrowing gas for his father's ancient car, a ready diner at more fortunate friends' expense. An erstwhile member of the college dance and w/g club, he trailed an accumulation of dramatic mimics and aspired to be a movie star.

To-day he announced that fortune had befallen him, and for the moment he had money itching to be dispensed. Would Val bring Rose of the Bon Ton, and join him and a fairy of his own at the Black Horse on the Lancaster pike Tuesday night? Val accepted at once. A dinner by Lou promised rosily.

His assumption was not predestined to disillusionment. The evening's dinner and dancing succeeded hilariously, despite the current laws of prohibition. Lou had brought some mysterious elixir in a bottle, which he poured into each served drink to give it a pre-prohibition flavor. He was especially generous with Val's glasses and by 10.30 the latter had become too flushed and unsteady to continue on the floor.

About 11 a lone arrival sat down at an adjoining table and began gazing offensively at Rose. Val saw red at once, but managed to keep within restraint by having the girl exchange chairs with him, which turned her back to the noxious table.

The stranger smiled in derisive amusement, and had his waiter change him to a table that permitted renewed views of the girl's face. Here he continued to stare impudently, his big, handsome bulk lounging easily in his chair. Twice he laughed insolently at Val's palpable fury; and the latter's passion was at white heat when Rose returned a glance and the stranger came sauntering over to ask brazenly for a dance.

"Lord, what a bouncer!" spluttered Lou.

"I'll break his fresh neck!" declared Val, half pushing back his chair. "Not you, fists, Val!" warned Lou. "He's too husky. Here's something better." Under the cover of the table Val felt the touch of an object hard and cold. His fingers convulsed about it hotly.

"Won't your jealous friends let you dance?" jeered the stranger to Rose. The girl turned her head, half haughtily, half coyly. The man laughed again, a short, incendiary laugh. Then he glanced contemptuously at the youth and, gently squeezing the girl's shoulder, bent his head to whisper in her ear.

"Hanged if I'd stand that?" incited Lou. "Give him blazes, Val! I'll stand by—" The final word or words were blotted out by the sharp report of a thirty-two calibre revolver. Val, standing passionately above his cane, staggered, reel and drop. He continued to stare stupidly as the room grew into an uproar. Rose screamed and rushed away as from a madman. Lou, rushed away as from a madman. Lou, rushed away as from a madman. Lou, rushed away as from a madman.

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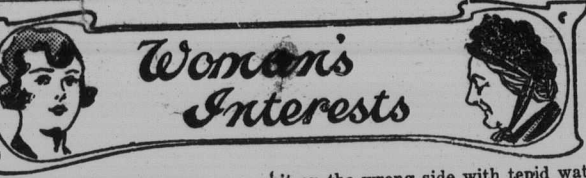
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Pickles and Preserves.  
Chili Sauce—½ peck ripe tomatoes, 1 red pepper finely chopped, 1 onion finely chopped, 2 cupsful vinegar, 3 tablespoonsful sugar, 1 tablespoonful salt, 2 teaspoonsful cloves, 4 teaspoonsful cinnamon, 4 teaspoonsful allspice. Peel the tomatoes and slice thin. Put in a granite kettle with the other ingredients and bring gradually to the boiling point. Cook slowly two hours. Seal in sterilized jars.

Tomato Catsup—½ bushel ripe tomatoes, 3 bay leaves, 1 lemon, 1 teaspoonful black pepper, 2 teaspoonsful mustard, 1 teaspoonful white pepper, 3 onions, 1 teaspoonful red pepper, 1 scant cupful salt, ½ pint vinegar. Wash the tomatoes thoroughly and cut in pieces, cook with the bay leaves, lemon, white pepper and onions about two hours. Strain through a colander to remove the skins. Mix the remainder of the spices and stir into the strained portion, add the salt and the vinegar, stir until well mixed, return to the large kettle and cook slowly till the mixture thickens and is cooked down about one-half. Put in small sterilized bottles, seal and keep in a cool, dark place.

Pickled Pears—½ peck small pears, 2 pounds brown sugar, 1 pint vinegar, 1 ounce stick cinnamon, ½ tablespoonful whole cloves. Boil sugar, vinegar and spices together for fifteen or twenty minutes. Peel the pears but do not remove the stems. Put into the syrup and cook slowly until soft. Seal in glass jars.

Spanish Pickles—1 peck green tomatoes, 4 medium sized onions, 1 cupful salt, ½ ounce cloves, ½ ounce allspice berries, ½ ounce peppercorns, ½ ounce brown mustard seed, 2 cupsful brown sugar, 4 green peppers, cider vinegar. Wash the tomatoes and remove all stem ends. Slice these crosswise. Peel onions and slice thin crosswise. Sprinkle alternate layers of tomatoes and onions with salt and let stand from ten to twelve hours. Drain, put in a granite kettle, add other ingredients and enough vinegar to cover. Heat gradually and boil slowly about half an hour.

Bordeaux Sauce—1 quart chopped green tomatoes, 3 onions cut fine, 2 quarts sliced cabbage, 1 red pepper, 1 quart vinegar, ½ teaspoonful allspice, ¾ tablespoonful mustard seed, 1 cupful brown sugar, 2 tablespoonsful salt. Chop tomatoes, onions and cabbage to uniform fineness. Mix together and add all the other ingredients. Boil one-half hour then seal in small jars. This is a good relish for cold meats.

Orange Marmalade—1 dozen oranges, 4 tablespoonsful lemon juice, 4 cupsful water, 8 cupsful sugar, 1 teaspoonful salt. Drop the oranges into boiling water for a few minutes, then remove the rind from the pulp and peel off all the white bitter portion. The boiling water aids greatly in loosening the pulp. Put the skins in cold water enough to cover, add the salt and boil until the skins are tender, then drain. Remove all the white portion and cut the yellow into shreds, using scissors. Add the pulp cut into small pieces, all the juice, sugar and water. Boil slowly for two hours until thick. Turn into sterilized jars and seal.

Grape Conserve—3 pints grapes, 3 pints granulated sugar, 1 pint water, 2 oranges, ½ pound raisins, ½ pound walnuts. Wash the grapes, then press the pulp from the skin of the grape. Put the pulp into a porcelain kettle, heat through, press through a colander to remove the seeds. Cook the pulp, skins, sugar, orange juice, water and raisins together one-half hour, add the chopped nuts, cook a minute or two longer. Seal in jars.

Improving Old Floors.  
The floors in our tenant house were not good. We could not afford to lay new ones, and yet I sympathized with the desire of our tenants to make their house as attractive as possible. In the sitting room I helped the tenant's wife to apply a coat of linseed oil to the floor, which was of pine, very old, and disfigured by wide cracks. We then filled the cracks with a ready-to-use crack and crevice filler and stained the floor oak, completing the job with a coat of floor finish.

It was an exceedingly good-looking floor in contrast with the original. In the bedroom we stretched strips of old sheeting tightly over the floor, gave it two coats of brown paint, and covered the centre of the room with a rug made out of an old ingrain carpet.

I have found that it is best in fixing up old floors not to use bright stains or paints which call attention to the defects, and I like light colors which do not show every speck of dust. A floor which harmonizes with the woodwork and rug, and which carries out the decorative principle that the floor should have the deepest tones in the room, and yet which does not show the dust easily, is an ideal one. The rugs I choose are not expensive. They are quiet in color and design, and harmonize well with the walls and draperies.

For Black Silk.  
If you have a black silk dress which has lost some of its lustre, do not think of throwing it away, but sponge

Color of the Hair.  
The color of the hair is decided by the color of the pigment which feeds its roots. The pigment is formed from the coloring matter in the blood, says an English newspaper. There are only two kinds of pigment; a reddish-yellow, and a sepia brown. Thus all the various shades of brown, red, fair and dark hair are derived from these two colors, according to which type of pigment predominates. Black hair shows the presence of a large quantity of the sepia brown pigment, while the reddish-yellow coloring shows itself to be strongest in hair that is bright red. Obviously, neither of those pigments can produce green or blue; that is why we are never blessed with a thatch of emerald or ultra-marine. The color of the hair is definitely racial; there has been but slight alteration during thousands of years with those races which have not intermarried with other peoples. But for the Norman invasion we should still be a fair or red-headed nation. As it is, dark brown is our chief color, as a result of the admixture of the red and flaxen of the Saxons, Celts and so on with the dark-haired Norman. The number of dark brown haired persons in a thousand is 595, light brown 250, flaxen 81, black 52, and red 22.

Dusters From Old Stockings.  
Very few housewives realize what splendid dusters they can make from their old stockings. And the method is so easy that it would seem ridiculous not to make them, once you know how. All that is necessary is to cut off the feet and cut open the stockings. Then sew two or three together, the long way, until they make a duster and large as is required. Of course it will look better if stockings of the same color are used, but different pairs may be combined, and the result is a soft, easily used duster with a hundred charms and no initial cost.

A Simple Jelly Test.  
To determine how much sugar should be used with each kind of juice, put a spoonful of juice in a glass and add to it one spoonful of 95 per cent. grain alcohol, mixed by shaking the glass, noting how the pectin—the glass, noting how the pectin—the substance in fruits which makes them jelly—is precipitated. If the pectin is precipitated as one lump, a cup of sugar may be used for each cup of juice; if in several lumps, the proportion of sugar must be reduced to approximately three-fourths the amount of the juice. If the pectin is not in lumps but is merely precipitated, the sugar should be one-half or less of the amount of the juice. If the juice shows no precipitation under this test, it is unsuitable for jelly making, and must be combined with apples or other juices rich in pectin. The housewife will do well before making the test to taste the juice, as fruits not as acid as good tart apples probably will not make good jelly unless mixed with other fruits which are acid.

Gratitude.  
"A three-cent stamp, please—and, by the way, haven't I seen you before?" "Yes, madam: I had the good fortune to save your life last week." "To be sure—to be sure—two three-cent stamps, please."

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