



THE CASH
BY GEORGE RANDOLPH CHESTER

Henry Breed, master of millions, who reduces the price of bread, dominates the railways and corners the cash of the country; Phillip Kelvin, annihilator of the Stock Exchange and breaker of trusts; Elsie White, daughter of the people, who loves Kelvin; Lillian Breed, heiress and tigress, who would be an empress; Sumner Rollins, railroad king and champion of liberty; Dr. Zephan, who believes all Americans are crazy; George Blagg, wireless expert and anarchist—these are the leading characters in a remarkable romance that excites the imagination, provokes thought and claims the interest from start to finish.

Breed waved his hand. "Much larger," said he. "This is only an incident. I wish you would tell me just what reforms you propose instituting, Mr. Rollins."

"First of all," said Rollins earnestly, "I would secure for every through line 120 pound open hearth steel rails, made in new mills from larger ingots, with the same of impurity cast entirely aside and the composition kneaded into a proper consistency by an entirely new system of rolls. There are other things that need to be done—the establishment of perfect block systems, of automatic brakes and other accident preventing devices and the abolition of grade crossings—but the main matter of public safety rests in perfect rails. Ten years ago I tried to fight this proposition, and I nearly succeeded. The Tallahassee Iron and Coal company offered to make open hearth rails to my specifications. The United Steel corporation found that to control the stock of the Tallahassee Iron and Coal company was much cheaper and more profitable than to spend the needed millions in re-equipping their plant."

"Your first step, then, I suppose, would be to begin a fight on the United Steel corporation," observed Breed.

"That, in a nutshell, is our problem," declared Rollins.

"Your problem is already solved, Mr. Rollins," said Kelvin, with a smile. "Mr. Breed's control of the railroads has left the United Steel corporation high and dry. Moreover, we have secured entire control of the Ingotco iron range, and, no matter what the United Steel corporation does, we shall set up our own rolling mills and make rails by our own process from our own ore."

"But the program will be left entirely to your own discretion," interrupted Breed.

"You shall have a contract for one year, renewable for ten years if your preliminary steps meet with my approval."

"Allow me to understand," said Rollins.

"In that year, I am to be absolutely without interference in any way."

"With two exceptions," replied Breed.

"I want a private rebate on all shipments of bread or cereal stuffs. Next, here is a list of names. These men are not to be employed in any capacity nor benefited in any way."

Rollins looked over the list and smiled. "There isn't a man here whom I would lift a finger to save. There is not a man in that list but has had an interest in car company, a locomotive, a brake company, a coal company, a railway company or some other manufacturing concern which furnished supplies to his own railroad at enormous prices. There is to be no graft in the new construction."

"Certainly not," agreed Breed.

"These roads must be conducted for legitimate profit and public safety. If there is any graft I want it myself, and I am content to take dividends for mine. For one year you are the absolute dictator of the largest empire in the world—the combined railroads of the United States."

From his desk he took a contract, confined to one sheet of paper, which he handed to Rollins.

That gentleman took the paper, read it over and caught his breath. "It is a generous salary," he admitted, "more generous than I should have dared to ask for."

"But! I am saving money on it," declared Breed. "It's only a portion of a thousand fancy salaries that I expect you to stop at once."

Rollins nodded his head in comprehension. "I will take great pleasure in stopping a few of them."

Kevin conducted Rollins to a room, next to his own, that had been fitted with a commodious desk and all that should go with it. Rollins sat upon the desk and looked about him smilingly.

"Looks fairly complete, doesn't it? Did you have a hand in this?"

"No," said Kelvin, puzzled and pleased as well. "It has been arranged for a long time, I think. Mr. Breed has probably been planning to make Forest Lakes the capital of New York city."

"Perhaps the capital of the United States," retorted Rollins, smiling in

INTRIGUE



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Blagg's eyes snapped. "Deeds" he declared. "Let inequality and oppression go on for but a short time more and there will be such a revolt from the darker depths of this country as not even 'Frag' has ever known. There exists even now a close organization of the underdogs who are ready at a word to rise and undo the wrongs to which justice has grown blind."

"You seem to know a lot about it," commented Rollins.

Blagg calmed down his excitement with an effort. "I keep fairly well posted," said he. "Among other things I know that there is a branch of that organization which needs just such men as you."

"I am, rather busy as it is," returned Rollins dryly and walked over to his own office. "Have you prepared the data I asked you to get ready, Nelson?" inquired Rollins.

"Yes, sir," replied Nelson. He walked across to a filing cabinet, brought from it a drawer, which he set upon Rollins' desk, and lifted up the spring. Rollins leaned through the indexed flaps, beneath which, very carefully arranged, were displayed the mileage distances by various routes between all important points in the United States. With the percentage of grade resistance figured in units, these, compounded with the mileage, showing the ultimate hauling resistance. It had been a tremendous task. It was neatly and perfectly accomplished, yet Nelson showed neither elation nor diffidence.

"This is splendidly done," observed Rollins after a long interval of careful inspection.

"Thank you," said Nelson quietly.

Rollins glanced up at him with puzzled curiosity. "That will do just now," said he, with a slight frown, and Jens walked composedly into his own room, a fathomless enigma to Rollins.

CHAPTER VII

IN the meantime Dr. Zephan, crossing the library, paused before the door at the far side of the open door, and at a moment of frowning hesitation resolutely thrust open the door and entered. To his surprise Henry Breed was not there.

In the corner of the room, on the same side as the safe, a door stood open, and Zephan, with an angry determination to see everything here, approached that closet. He put his hand upon the rear wall at the deeper side, and it yielded to his touch, swinging backward into a narrow space from which came a damp odor and a faint gleam of light.

"So," said Dr. Zephan aloud, and immediately he squeezed back into the narrow space and descended the two flights of narrow stairs to the big vault, the existence of which he had never even suspected. In the center of the vault, with the light from a cluster of electric bulbs gleaming down upon his bald head, with one of the many iron drawers upon his knees and with an old, well thumbed Bible on the bench at his side, sat Henry Breed. In his hands was a package of the paper money with which the drawer was filled, and he was gazing, rapt at the opposite side of the vault. He turned without surprise toward the familiar figure of Dr. Zephan and chuckled as he patted the drawer.

"This is the first row of all that side to be filled," said he, "I began at the lower corner. All the other rows are empty, but they'll fill up—they'll fill up," and he nodded his head in satisfaction. "Those other sides were filled by the bread business, but this is railroad dividends in cash, solid cash!"

Dr. Zephan was looking about him in amazement. "There must be millions here!" he gasped.

"Millions," chuckled Breed, his wrinkled old face breaking into a leathery smile; "there's over a billion and a half! How did you come here?" he cried. "You were told that that little room upstairs was my strictly private study—that I wished no one to come into it."

"Bravely," agreed Zephan dryly.

"But now that I have found the way I am coming whenever you do or I am not going to stay at Forest Lakes."

"Don't go away, doctor!" pleaded Breed in sudden fright. "Don't leave me. When you arrived I was a nervous wreck, but since you came I have been able to do a lot of work—good work, splendid work!"

"That's because you at first did what I told you. But of late you've grown careless. You give me the slip every morning now, and I can't find you. When you should be out in the fresh air you are down here in this unhealthy atmosphere with unhealthy thoughts, counting money—not the money that you have, but the money you expect to make. I hadn't the slightest idea that you were a mere miser!"

"A miser, doctor?" Breed smilingly expostulated, "is a man who hoards his money for his own sake. He never uses it for pleasure or comfort; he never even puts it to work. But this money of mine by the mere fact of its being here is a tremendous dynamo, by the mighty current of which I can sway almost the entire social and economic universe—to its own good, to its own good," he hastily added.

"With it, when duly increased, I can right great wrongs, change unjust laws, destroy and build anew entire civilizations, shatter and recreate governments! Think, doctor! Handled with my experience and the genius of young Kelvin, this money has already bankrupted nearly every enemy I had in the world, destroyed the iniquity of the New York Stock Exchange and given me absolute control of every mile of railroad in the United States. No miser's money could have done that."

"Incidentally," observed Zephan, "several hundred thousand people were thrown out of work, a thousand or so starved to death, a few hundred committed suicide and other hundreds deserted their families."

"For their iniquities the Lord shall bring suffering upon his people," solemnly declared Breed, and reached down a nervous hand for his Bible.

Zephan looked at him sternly. "I want you to come out of this place at once and stay out," he ordered.

"No, no!" objected Breed nervously. "No, I must come in every day, doctor—just a little while."

"Yes, I suppose you must," admitted Zephan. "I'll give you thirty minutes every day, but some one must be with you."

"My granddaughter usually comes with me," explained Breed. "She is the only one besides myself who knows the combination to these locks, and only we four—Lillian and Kelvin and you and I—know of its existence. You must guard this secret well, Zephan."

"No danger of my telling it," scorned the doctor. "I don't want to ruin any human soul with the knowledge that all this money is here, guarded only by iron bolts and your handful of armed guards. There's a curse on the stuff. More than enough to live on has never done any one any good. Look at yourself!"

"What is the matter with me?" asked Breed quickly.

"Oh, nothing," said Zephan quietly, "only you are losing your mind, that is all. If you don't keep away from this silent brooding you'll be a jibbering idiot in less than a year. Unless you obey me implicitly I shall leave you. I had a notion to do so this morning, but Mr. Rollins came and I changed my mind."

"Rollins?" exclaimed Breed. "Is he here? Good! I must see him at once. You'll do nothing of the sort," asserted Zephan, closing the door after him.

"Not see Rollins? Nonsense!" exclaimed Breed as he threw the bolt and touched the button to turn out the light. "This is important, I must see Rollins."

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"Important or not, you are coming out with me for a half hour's walk before you see any one."

"Then you may go!" declared Breed, turning on him with sudden scowl. Like most worthy, it was wasted. You two young men have done wonderful work, but it has only just begun."

"Precisely my errand," said Rollins, with a rather weak smile. "The work is only just begun, and at the outset I have found so much opposition that I ran down here for moral support."

"You've come to the right place," laughed Kelvin. "At Forest Lakes we are dealing almost exclusively in moral support."

"Backed by the dead weight of more cash than was ever in one man's control since time began," chuckled Breed.

"What are your difficulties, Mr. Rollins?"

"Well," said Rollins, "I have practically put the United Steel corporation out of business as a monopoly. Here is a communication I had from MacDougal. If ever a big man made a white in a letter MacDougal is the man, and here is this white. And with huge contempt he tossed down a three page missive which Kelvin read, with a smile, went on Rollins, "is open hearth steel and the control of transportation. I have put them in direct competition with my own plants, and they are underbidding us. I intend to let them have some large contracts at a price we cannot touch. Now I begin to have dreams."

"I don't see any difficulty in that," laughed Kelvin. "A man doesn't dream many dreams in the face of failures. It's success that brings dreams. I have dreams of my own. I have one little thing about these dreams of mine."

"I know you have," interposed Rollins. "Somebody has been doing a great deal of thinking around here. At first I thought it was Mr. Breed, but now I know that he hires his thinking."

Breed himself was the first to acknowledge by a chuckle the truth of this remark.

"I used to have to do it myself when I was poor," he admitted, "but that is not the way to success. You can't get rich the way any more than you can get rich by performing all your own manual labor. My success is built on an unusual ability to discover men who can think for me. But you two go ahead and exchange your dreams; I am interested."

"I have no objection to telling mine," said Kelvin. "I want to do a little trust building."

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"I used to have to do it myself when I was poor," he admitted, "but that is not the way to success. You can't get rich the way any more than you can get rich by performing all your own manual labor. My success is built on an unusual ability to discover men who can think for me. But you two go ahead and exchange your dreams; I am interested."

"I have no objection to telling mine," said Kelvin. "I want to do a little trust building."

"I've tried it, and that's why I'm here," laughed Rollins. "Trust building is absolute control of every mile of railroad in the United States. It is the easiest thing in the world. Raymer, Speed, Melton Sears & Co. and all the others have been making life

"I don't see any difficulty in that," laughed Kelvin. "A man doesn't dream many dreams in the face of failures. It's success that brings dreams. I have dreams of my own. I have one little thing about these dreams of mine."

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