

# A TALE of RED ROSES

By **GEORGE RANDOLPH CHESTER**

"Well, Glider, tell us about it," invited Bendix as Marley went out.

"I want you to tell me," laughed Glider, in happy unconsciousness that he was a deadly offense to Sledge, who called him "pretty," "is the Ridgewood avenue extension a sure go?"

"Why do you want to know?" inquired Bendix.

"I have a little speculation in mind which depends on it," confessed Glider. "Subdivision at the end of the line, I suppose," guessed Bendix.

"Well, yes," acknowledged Glider. "You of you to think of it," applauded Bendix. "Your only fault is that you don't guess those things first. Who do you suppose would acquire a deed to that land before the extension was publicly announced?"

"I know the answer," returned Glider, crestfallen, but still handsome; "you fellows."

"Certainly not," denied Bendix. "But some friend of the family—yes, maybe. How much will you give for the land?"

"I'm not at liberty to state," replied Glider uncomfortably. "The owner made me a price on it this morning, but it was confidential."

"The owner didn't know he was tagged," retorted Bendix dryly. "You may have the land, I think, for twenty thousand, Glider, but you'll have to speak quick."

"Twenty thousand!" gasped Glider.

"Why, old Porson offered it to me for eight."

"That's what we intend to pay him."

"Give me a day or two to think it over," begged Glider.

"All right; you're on," agreed Bendix and hurried out of the room.

Bert was about to follow him when Sledge called.

"Glider," was his peremptory summons, "what kind of flowers does Molly Marley like?"

Bert Glider almost stuck the ash end of his cigar in his mouth, then suddenly upbraided himself for a fool as he mentally complimented Sledge on deserving his reputation by being the most astute politician in the state.

"Red roses," he promptly returned and twisted the right hand curl of his mustache. He stopped that process abruptly and felt of the curl with deep concern. One of the hairs was disarranged, and he fixed it with the aid of a vest pocket mirror.

"Thanks," said Sledge and resumed his interested inspection of the hand hole in the gate.

Sledge looked out of the window for long moments of thick silence, and then he expressed his thoughts on a plot in hand in this fashion:

"Say, Bendix, send a load of roses out to Molly Marley for her party tomorrow night, the reddest ones they've got."

## CHAPTER II. Molly Invites an Additional Guest.

"WHERE are the red roses, Molly?" asked Bert Glider as he walked into the reception parlor of Marley's pretentious big house that night.

"I don't know," replied Molly, much concerned. "Did you send some?"

"No, but I thought some were to be sent to you," laughed Bert. "It's too good to keep, Fern. By the way, that Fern just slipped, and you'll have to pardon me for it. It's Molly's fault. She never called you anything else."

"Who is it?" demanded Molly, more eager to hear the news than he liked to see.

"The information is highly important, if true, and I must not be kept in suspense."

"Hold on to something, then," he warned her. "One, two, three—Sledge!"

"Sledge!" she repeated. "What? That great big?" She paused for lack of words, and her face flamed suddenly scarlet with indignation.

"Sledge," he joyously insisted, and then, to the puzzled Fern, "You remember the big fellow whose car stopped just abreast us last night?"

Mr. Glider, who as a boy had been an expert in pulling the wings from flies, went straight on with the slaughter, seizing immediately the glorious opportunity which presented itself when Mr. Marley, brave in smoking jacket and pumps, sauntered into the parlor.

"Great news, Marley!" hailed Bert, beaming with delight upon the joyous laughter of Fern. "Molly has captured a new honor for the family. Whose do you suppose is the latest scalp at her belt?"

"It might be almost anybody," returned Marley, who felt that his motherless daughter's popularity reflected somehow on himself. "Who is the particular victim you have in mind?" and he laughed in advance.

"Sledge!" exploded Bert. "By the way, Marley, he gave you a hint of it too. Didn't he ask you today while I was there for an invitation to Molly's party tomorrow night or something like that?"

"Well, not exactly, but he did throw out some pretty strong hints," acknowledged Marley with a grin, entering into the joyous spirit of the occasion. "He asked permission to call on Molly. I told him that was up to her."

"How unusually considerate!" observed Molly, biting her lips to suppress the rising fury which had driven the blushes from her cheeks and left them almost waxen.

The Marley butler, a thin faced and thin legged young man with a painfully intellectual countenance, stalked past the hallway portieres in answer to a below stairs ring and returned from the front door with:

"Mr. Sledge, sir, to see Mr. Marley."

"Show him into the library," hastily directed Marley, suddenly contrite and feeling a sinking horror, as did all the others in the room, of having this man face to face with Molly, especially after the crimes against her, of which they had themselves been guilty.

The instructions were too late, however.

"Good evening," rumbled the deep voice of Sledge, who just then appeared directly in the center of the opening in the portieres. He wore an Inverness topcoat, the open front of which disclosed a marvelous expanse of white shirt front, spaced with diamond studs, the glitter of which paled, however, by contrast with the enormous solitaire which illuminated the solid gold watch fob presented to him by the Young Men's Marching club of Ward G. His hair was pressed as smoothly to his skull as an earnest Italian barber could plaster it, and various angry specks on his cheeks told how microscopically he had been shaved. The evening triumph of his toilet, however, he carried. In his right hand he bore, held by a wide velvet ribbon, in the same huge fingers which clutched the gold headed cane presented by the Capital City Sledge club, a thirty dollar box of candy, two feet across, wrapped with six beribboned layers of fancy paper and provided with an absolute maze of drawers and partitions. In his left hand he carried a speckled silk hat of the latest French shape, and that arm encircled a conical parcel, so big that it would have staggered a small man, while from the upper end of the cone protruded a square yard of screaming red roses.



"I brought these for you myself."

"Good evening, Miss Molly," he added, becoming more specific. "I brought these for you myself," and he beamed his cordial good will upon the entire assemblage.

It was in this breathless crisis that Molly Marley, aggravated beyond endurance, took her merciless revenge.

"How perfectly delightful!" she cried, and she swept toward him with more eager cordiality than she had ever bestowed upon Bert Glider himself.

"We've just been talking about you," and then, to the intense consternation of her father and her foremost suitor, she added: "I want you at my party tomorrow night. Won't you come, please?"

The next day Smash, Molly's pet, like the way of many good dogs, fell

into the hands of the official dog-catcher and was taken off to the pound. Molly was in a pitiable state. She appealed to her father. He testily said that he was busy. In her desperation and hardly knowing why she did it, she telephoned to Sledge. One of Sledge's men said that he was very busy. But when he heard it was Molly he jumped into an automobile, accompanied Molly to the pound and got Smash. On the way home Sledge talked of his dog Bob, and Molly shivered when he said he'd like to match Bob against Smash. As if nothing her displeasure, he changed the subject to Molly's party, and for the hundredth time Molly was sorry she invited him.

A yelp on the front porch announced the arrival of Ben Sledge, and he appeared in the brilliantly lighted hall, holding a tightly stretched chain, to the other end of which was attached a one-eyed, stub eared, battle scarred bull terrier, which took such a violent dislike to the intellectual faced Marley butler that Sledge was compelled to hold him clear of the floor with one brawny hand and spank him loudly in the ribs with the other, whereupon Bob gave a single yelping promise to be good, and Sledge let him down.

"This is Bob, Miss Molly," introduced Sledge. "I'm sending him right back with Mike, but you said you'd like to see him."

"Delighted to meet you, Bob," laughed Molly, stooping down and patting him on the seamy head.

Bob deliberately batted his good eye with all the effect of a wink and wagged his absurd stump of a tail by way of friendly greeting, then he suddenly made a lunge of about four feet and strained, choking, at the end of his chain, on his hind feet, with his tongue hanging out. From the rear of the lot he had heard the bark of the suspicious Smash.

"Where's Mike?" demanded Molly hastily and in some fear.

Bert Glider and five of the eight couples whom Molly had invited had already arrived and were now, of course, thronged eagerly in the doorways.

"What's your hurry, Molly?" snickered loose jointed Dicky Reynolds. "Hold your caller till I run out and get Smash. He knows me."

"Don't you dare!" shrieked Molly, distrusting him with good reason.

Bob loosened his throat enough to answer the challenge from the kennel, and there wasn't a girl left in the doorways except Jessie Peters, who clung to Dicky's sleeve.

"I'll go with you, Dicky," offered circular little Willie Walters, with an echo of Dicky's snicker.

"If you do he'll bark at you," hotly retorted Molly, knowing Wee Willie's cautious propensities.

The rest of the boys were for keeping up the good work, but Sledge cut short the incipient hysteria by picking up Bob by the neck, returning to the door and booming into the night the silent, potent syllable:

"Mike!"

A squat man, who looked so much like Bob, even to a patched eye, that they could have been taken for twins emerged from the darkness, hugged Bob to his bosom like a brother and hurried away.

Fern and Molly looked at each other with dismay. If this was the start of the evening what else might they expect?

"Why didn't Mike take them both away?" whispered Fern. "You poor girl!"

"I'm not!" denied Molly fiercely. "I said this morning that I'd like to see Bob, and, of course, Mr. Sledge brought him. The only trouble is he's so quick."

"He's instantaneous," corrected Fern. "You have to admire it," laughed Molly. "Well, the only thing I can do is to be as game as he is." And upon Sledge's return from some careful directions to an unseen companion of Mike's she introduced him to her friends with all the sprightliness of which she was capable.

In that process she firmly intended to make him the center of things and to see that he had a good time. He relieved her of that tremendous burden, however, for after moving through the introductions with a cordial ease which not only delighted but surprised her, until she was reminded that he had been introduced to more notable than she would probably ever see, he quietly disappeared into Marley's den and smoked fat cigars in calm comfort, with a stein of cool beer at his elbow, leaving the young people to enjoy their hilarity without the damper of his presence.

Molly, mindful of her duties as hostess, dropped in occasionally to see that he was satisfied, and each time she found him in exactly the same position, as placidly contented as he could possibly have been in the little back room of the Occident saloon. On one of her visits, after answering in the affirmative her inquiry if he was all right, he rose from his comfortable nest in the big leather chair.

"I suppose we eat," he guessed.

"I think you'd call it bluff," she laughingly returned.

"I get you," he replied. "Mostly decorations. Souvenirs?"

"The usual."

"Hand 'em these," and he thrust into her hands two bundles of small envelopes, red ones and white ones.

She looked at them blankly a moment.

"I get you," she smiled, flushing slightly as she wondered whether her adoption of his phrase was flattery or ridicule. "Red ones, in honor of the roses, are for girls, and the white ones for the boys. What are they?"

"Aw, nothing much," he diffidently replied as he resumed his seat. "Sea-

son tickets for grand opera week in the red ones and for the Athletic club fights in the white ones. Admit two. Is it all right?"

"Is it all right? It's glorious!" she assured him, with shining eyes.

Delighted with this unmatchable novelty, Molly was herself placing the red and white envelopes at the covers in the dining room when Bert Glider found her there and closed the door after himself.

"Molly, you're carrying this Sledge joke too far!" he hotly charged.

"Who elected you?" she quietly wanted to know and laid a white envelope at his place with extreme care, angling the corner of it just so.

"Both of us, I hope," he stated, displaying a warning signal by pulling at the top of his collar to give his throat more room. "Molly"— And he advanced toward her.

The symptoms were unmistakable. Molly, having rounded the end of the table, slipped out through the pantry door and handed her remaining envelopes to the intellectual looking butler.

"Place these on the table just as I have done. Alternate red and white ones," she kindly directed, and the next time Bert saw her she was the live center of the laughing taffy pulling. She had preferred to escape rather than to treat this matter either seriously or flippantly when she was annoyed with him.

At 11:30 Mr. Marley, with the worry of eight absent mothers on his own shoulders, was fretting over some invention to send them home when the earth split open in the wide stretch of vacant land across the street and ejected into the sky, with a loud, unearthy noise, a tremendous assortment of fiery meteors, mostly red. Roman candles in reckless bunches shot up from behind every bush, skyrocketed dragged their spiraling tails through all the available circumference, while fancy bombs carried their aerial floaters and other brilliant pyrotechnical surprises into all the celestial territory hitherto unoccupied.

Through it all Sledge stood as immovable and as impassive as if he had been glued to the spot and frozen. Even when the display flowed out into the middle of the highway and piled up the street cars for two blocks in both directions he remained a calm and disinterested spectator. The president of the traction company was thrown into extreme agitation by this excess of zeal, for he had some consideration for the feelings of the public, and he rushed right out to restore the scattered schedule.

"Here, what's this?" he demanded of a demon with a smoke blackened face. "Why are you holding up the cars?"

"Sledge's orders," replied the demon, lighting the fuse of a red rose set piece. "He said everything went, and it's going."

Mr. Marley came back.

Sledge was no longer on the porch. Molly had slipped in to wrap up some cake for Baby Peters, and Sledge, who seemingly saw nothing, had followed her.

"Well, is your party a hit?" he anxiously inquired.

"It's a scream!" she said, unable to control her laughter. "Really, Mr. Sledge, I have you to thank for the most extravagantly joyous occasion at which I have ever had the good fortune to preside."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Lucky Boy.

An extraordinary accident is reported from the neighborhood of Maldstone, England. A lad, eight years of age, was flying a kite when he stepped backward into a forty foot quarry, to the great horror of the bystanders. Fortunately for the little fellow, the string of the kite was tight around his wrist, and the kite, acting as a parachute, effectually broke the violence of the fall, and he was only slightly bruised.

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**Well, Hardly.**  
Ding—I believe in publicity. I would put up a sign everywhere. Dong—But you don't think it would be necessary to put up the placard "Stop, Look, Listen!" in a drawing room?—Richmond Times-Dispatch.

**In Agreement.**  
"Do you think your constituents agree with your views?"  
"Yes," replied Senator Sorghum. "I made it a point to have my views in agreement with theirs before I said a word."—Washington Star.

**A Giveaway.**  
Mother (at the party)—Why did you allow that young man to kiss you?  
Daughter—Why, ma! Mother—Oh, you needn't "why, ma," me! One side of his nose is powdered and one side of yours isn't!—Boston Transcript.

**Unkind.**  
"Why, Mrs. Robinson says she would no more be without her chafing dish than without her piano!"  
"H'm! If her friends could have their way she'd be relieved of both."—Puck.

**Of One Mind.**  
Mrs. Hokus—Do Mr. and Mrs. Dashaway get along well together?  
Mrs. Pokus—Oh, beautifully. He lets her have her own way in everything. She is suing for a divorce now, and he isn't even contesting it.—Life.

**Awaiting Her Chance.**  
Maud—I do wish Tom would hurry up and propose.  
Ethel—But I thought you didn't like him.  
Maud—I don't. I want to get rid of him.—Boston Transcript.

**Wheat Russia Consumes.**  
Computing the population of European and Asiatic Russia at 180,000,000 and allowing five bushels per head for food and seed, the consumption of wheat in that region would amount to 900,000,000 bushels a year.

**Influence of the Humble.**  
In works of major interest there is none like the humble, with their concerted weakness, for realizing immense strength. Swollen by numbers the next to nothing becomes an enormous total.—Fabre.

**Last Hope Gone.**  
Here is a hopeless paragraph from the Weekly Bostonian:  
"An Ohio newspaper says there will be no typographical errors in heaven. This disposes of printers and proof-readers at one fell sweep!"

**14,000 Sparrows Destroyed**  
The Ixworth Sparrow Club, in Suffolk, in twelve months has destroyed 14,669 sparrows at a cost of £19 8s.

**Ants That Sew.**  
A writer in the Visitor tells of a party of German naturalists recently returned from Ceylon, who have reported the existence of a species of ant that has been observed in the act of sewing two leaves together for the purpose of forming a nest. This report confirms the observations of the English naturalist, Ridley, made in 1860. They saw a row of the insects pulling the edges of leaves together, then others trimming and fitting the edges and finally the completion of the work by still other ants, which fastened the edges with a silky thread yielded by larvae of the same species, which the workers carried in their mandibles. It is said that the sewing ants pass the thread-giving larvae like shuttles through holes in the edges of the leaves.

**Vary the Cornfield.**  
Corn should not be grown in the same field continuously. Many weeds are especially difficult to control in cornfields. If other crops, such as alfalfa, clover, and small grains are occasionally grown the weeds are more easily controlled, and many of the insects which feed on the corn but not on these crops die of starvation.

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