

# The Younger Set

By ROBERT W. CHAMBERS.  
Author of "The Fighting Chance," Etc.

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"I knew it," she said. "I understood there was something. If it is trouble, and I see it is, bring it to me. If I am the woman you took me for, give me my part in this. It is the quickest way to my heart, Captain Selwyn. I ask it."

"Why?" Her eyes wavered, then returned his gaze.

"For love of you," she said, as white as death.

He caught his breath sharply and straightened out, passing one hand across his eyes. When she saw his face again in the dim light it was ghastly.

"There was a woman," he said, "for whom I was once responsible." He spoke wearily, head bent, resting the weight of one arm on the table against which she leaned. "Do you understand?" he asked.

"Yes. You mean—Mrs. Ruthven." "I mean her. Afterward, when matters had altered, I came home."

He raised his head and looked about him in the darkness.

"Come home," he repeated, "no longer a man—the shadow of a man, with no hope, no outlook, no right to hope."

He leaned heavily on the table, his arm rigid, looking down at the floor as he spoke.

"No right to hope. Others told me that I still possessed that right. I knew they were wrong. I do not mean that they persuaded me. I persuaded myself that, after all, perhaps my right to hope remained to me. I persuaded myself that I might be, after all, the substance, not the shadow."

He looked up at her. "And so I dared to love you," she said, "scarcely breathing."

"Then," he said, "came the awakening. My dream had ended."

She waited, the lace on her breast scarce stirring, so still she stood, so pitifully still.

"Such responsibility cannot die while those live who undertook it. I believed it until I desired to believe it no longer."

He took one step toward her, and his voice fell so low that she could just hear him.

"She has lost her mind, and the case is hopeless. Those to whom the laws of the land have given care of her turned on her, threatened her with disgrace. And when one friend of hers halted this miserable conspiracy her madly came swiftly upon her, and suddenly she found herself helpless, penniless, abandoned, her mind already clouded and clouding faster. Eileen was there then the shadow of a doubt as to the responsibility? I dare not utter one word of love to you. I dare not touch you. What chance is there for such a man as I?"



"The chance—for us," she whispered. "For a second he stood motionless, then, swaying slightly, turned on his heel. And long after he had left the house she still stood there, eyes closed, cold lips set, her slender body quivering, racked with the first fierce grief of a woman's love for a man."

## Chapter 26

NEERGARD had already begun to make mistakes. The first was in thinking that, among those whose only distinction was their wealth, his own wealth permitted him the same insolence and ruthlessness that so frequently characterized them. He had sneeringly dispensed with

Gerald; he had shouldered Fane and Harmon out of his way when they objected to the purchase of Neergard's acreage adjoining the Slowitha preserve and its incorporation as an integral portion of the club tract; thus he was preparing to rid himself of Ruthven for another reason. But he was not yet quite ready to spurn Ruthven, because he wanted a little more

out of him, just enough to place him on a secure footing among those of the younger set where Ruthven, as hack cottillon leader, was regarded by the young with wide eyed awe.

Why Neergard, who had forced himself into the Slowitha, ever came to commit so gross a blunder as to drag on or even permit the club to acquire the acreage, the exploiting of which had threatened their existence, is not very clear.

Already the familiarity of his appearance and his name seemed to sanction his presence. Two minor clubs, but good ones—in need of dues—had strained at this social camel and swallowed him. Card rooms welcomed him—not the rooms once flung open contemptuously for his plucking, but rooms where play was fiercer and where those who faced him expected battle to the limit.

And they got it, for he no longer felt obliged to lose. And that again was a mistake. He could not yet afford to win.

George Fane, unpleasantly involved in Block Copper, angry, but not very much frightened, turned in casual good faith to Neergard to ease matters until he could cover. And Neergard looked him in the tighter and shouldered his way through Rosamund's drawing room to the sill of Sanxon Orchill's outer office, treading brutally on Harmon's heels.

Harmon in disgust, wrath and fear went to Craig; Craig to Maxwell Hunt; Hunt wired Mottly; Mottly, cold and sleek in his contempt, came from Palm Beach.

The cohesive power of caste is an unknown element to the outsider. That he had unwittingly and prematurely aroused some unsuspected force on which he had not counted and of which he had no definite knowledge was revealed to Neergard when he desired Rosamund to obtain for him an invitation to the Orchills' ball.

It appeared that she could not do so—that even the threatened tendency of Block Copper could not sharpen her wits to devise a way for him. Very innocently she told him that Jack Ruthven was leading the Chinese cottillon with Mrs. Delmour-Carnes from one end, Gerald Erroll with Gladys from the other—a hint that a card ought to be easy enough to obtain in spite of the strangely forgetful Orchills.

It was since he had fixed upon Gladys Orchill as the most suitable silent partner for the unbull house of Neergard, unconcerned that rumor was already sending her abroad for the double purpose of getting rid of Gerald and of giving deserving aristocracy a look in at the fresh youth of her and her selling price.

He had come on various occasions close to the unruffled skirts of this young girl—not yet, however, in her own house. But Sanxon Orchill had recently condescended to turn around in his office chair and leave his amusing railroad combinations long enough to divide with Neergard a quarter of a million copper profits, and there was another turn to be expected when Neergard gave the word.

Therefore it puzzled and confused Neergard to be overlooked where the gray world had been summoned with an accompanying blast from the public press; therefore he had gone to Rosamund with the curtest of hints that he would like to have a card to the Orchill affair.

"There is no use in speaking to George," she said, shaking her head. "Try it," returned Neergard, with a hint of a snarl. And he took his leave and his hat from the man in waiting, who looked after him with the slightest twitching of his shaven upper lip, for the lifting of an eyebrow in the drawing rooms becomes warrant for a tip that runs very swiftly below stairs.

That afternoon, alone in his office, Neergard remembered Gerald, and for the first time he understood the mistake of making an enemy out of what he had known only as a friendly fool.

But it was a detail, after all—merely a slight error in assuming too early an arrogance he could have afforded to wait for. He had waited a long, long while for some things.

As for Fane, he had him locked up with his short account. No doubt he'd hear from the Orchills through the Fanes. However, to clinch the matter he thought he might as well stop in to

see Ruthven. So that afternoon he took a hansom at Broad and Wall streets and rolled smoothly uptown, not seriously concerned, but willing to have a brief understanding with Ruthven on one or two subjects.

As his cab drove up to the intricately ornamental little house of gray stone a big touring limousine wheeled out from the curb, and he caught sight of Sanxon Orchill and Phoenix Mottly inside, evidently just leaving Ruthven.

His smiling and very cordial bow was returned coolly by Orchill and apparently not observed at all by Mottly. He sat a second in his cab motionless, the obsequious smile still stenciled on his flushed face. Then the flush darkened. He got out of his cab and, bidding the man wait, rang at the house of Ruthven.

Ruthven in a lounging suit of lilac silk, sashed in with flexible silver, stood with his back to the door as Neergard was announced, and even after he was announced Ruthven took his time to turn and stare and nod with a deliberate negligence that accentuated the affront.

Neergard sat down. Ruthven gazed out of the window, then, soft thumbs hooked in his sash, turned leisurely in impudent interrogation.

"What is the matter with you?" asked Neergard. "I see there's some trouble somewhere. What is it? What's the matter with Orchill and that hatchet faced beagle pup, Mottly? Is there anything the matter, Jack?"

"Nothing important," said Ruthven, with an intonation which troubled Neergard. "Did you come here to ask anything of me? Very glad to do anything, I'm sure."

"Are you? Well, then, I want a card to the Orchills'."

"A wfully sorry," "You mean you won't?" "Well, if you really insist, they—ah—don't want you, Neergard."

"Who—why—how do you happen to know that they don't? Is this some petty spite of that young cub, Gerald, or"—and he almost looked at Ruthven—"is this some childish whim of yours?"

"Oh, really now—" "Yes, really now," sneered Neergard. "You'd better tell me. And you'd better understand now, once for all, just exactly what I've outlined for myself so you can steer clear of the territory I operate in. I need a little backing, but I can get along without it. And what I'm going to do is to marry Miss Orchill. Now you know, and I think I'll discount right now any intentions of any married man to bother Miss Orchill after some Dakota decree frees him from the woman whom he's driven into an asylum."

Ruthven looked at him curiously. "So that is discounted, is it?" "I think so," nodded Neergard. "I don't think that man will try to obtain a divorce until I say the word."

"Oh, why not?" "Because of my knowledge concerning that man's crooked methods in obtaining for me certain options that meant ruin to his own country club," said Neergard coolly.

"I see. How extraordinary! But the club has bought in all that hand, hasn't it?" "Yes, but the stench of your treachery remains, my friend."

"Not treachery, only temptation," observed Ruthven blandly. "I've talked

nothing important," said Ruthven. It all over with Orchill and Mottly. I told Orchill what you persuaded me to do."

"You—you—" "Not at all; not at all!" protested Ruthven, languidly settling himself once more among the cushions. "And, by the way," he added, "there's a law—by-law, something or other—that I understand may interest you"—he looked up at Neergard, who had sunk back in his chair—"about unpaid assessments."

Neergard now for the first time was

looking directly at him. "Unpaid assessments," repeated Ruthven. "It's a detail—a law—never enforced unless we—ah—and it convenient to rid ourselves of a member."

"Thought it just as well to mention it," said Ruthven blandly, "as they've seen fit to take advantage of the—ah—opportunity—under legal advice. You'll hear from the secretary, I fancy—Mottly, you know. Is there anything more, Neergard?"

He looked at Ruthven, scarcely seeing him. Finally he gathered his thick legs under to support him as he rose, stupidly, looking about for his hat.

Ruthven rang for a servant. When he came, Neergard followed him without a word, small eyes vacant, the moisture visible on the ridge of his nose, his red, blunt hands dangling as he walked. Behind him a lucky laughed.

In due time Neergard, who still spent his penny on a morning paper, read about the Orchill ball. There were three columns and several pictures. He read every item, every name, to the last imbecile period.

Then he rose wearily and started downtown to see what his lawyers could do toward reinstating him in a club that had expelled him—to find out if there remained the slightest trace of a chance in the matter. But even as he went he knew there could be none.

There was a new pressure which he was beginning to feel vaguely hostile to him in his business enterprises—hitches in the negotiations of loans, delays, perhaps accidental, but annoying; changes of policy in certain firms who no longer cared to consider acreage as investment, and a curiously veiled antagonism to him in a certain railroad, the reorganization of which he had dared once to aspire to.

And one day, sitting alone in his office, a clerk brought him a morning paper with one column marked in a big blue penciled oval.

To be continued.

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## Ops

Ops council met M. a.m. All members Communications Mrs. Stewart re from Board of Railers re O'Halloran's County Treasurer, re in 1909; from inspe Ops patients; re Massey re graders, re

In regard to Mrs. quest that council Wallace family to burned after Mr. something should the township ha expense for mainten ily and for funeral decided on motion son and Deyell to wards this purpose.

The clerk was inst Board of Railwa that Ops Township an overheard crossing R. at O'Halloran's, have some of the ba obstructed the view, light placed there fo after night traffic.

Messrs. Flavelle an present, and on beh present Company offer old township hall b interest in the land situated; and on m Deyell and Sloan th cepted.

Walden-Hickson instructed to notify to fence their lot crossing.

## Co-Operative Experi

Several of the Lindsay and vicin circular letters from ricultural and Exp Guelph, telling the ance of bee-keeping flowers of Ontario sufficient nectar to of tons of honey no superior in the this is being taken prising men who are thing out of it by gention to their bee

The Ontario Depa culture takes a live welfare of the indust increasing the appr advancement from y provides a course of management at the tural College by a been acquainted wit fancy, and has leav like a boy on a suc learns to know cou lary is being establi mental work and pi en. Co-operative aculture are being nest by the Agricul mental Union. Sixt apiaries during the will carry forward mination against th us Foul Brood of B

The circular issu lows:

"The members of cultural and Experi pleased to state the are prepared to ad the list of departm mental work. At p material to distrib posed to take up s important problems ment of bees for p greatest of these id swarming. When b swarming entirely, cured. When they

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