

A MOVING STORY OF A MAN WITH A PAST

Second Chance

by HOLLOWAY HORN
Author of "George," "Two Men and Mary", Etc.

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WHO'S WHO IN THE STORY

John Fingal Ferguson, otherwise Hal-
let, a man about 35; handsome, prema-
turely grey. His past history is some-
thing of a mystery.
William Trevove, head of Trevove's
Ltd., of Mossford. When the story opens
Trevove gives Ferguson a job in the
office of his firm.
Teddy Wilson, otherwise Sternberg,
manager of a theatrical company.
Mrs. Gaddesen. A motherly woman
with whom Ferguson lodges.
Mary Donovan, a secretary on the
staff of Trevove's. She is also a niece
of Mrs. Gaddesen.
Lucia Desmond, Principal actress in
Wilson's company, and wife of Wilson.

SYNOPSIS

John Fingal Ferguson, aged about
35, has obtained a post with Trevove
and Co., Ltd., an old-established busi-
ness in the country town of Mossford.
He arrives at the place on the Saturday
before he starts work and finds lodg-
ings with a Mrs. Gaddesen. During
the week-end he meets Mrs. Gades-
den's niece, Mary Donovan, who is sec-
retary to Mr. Mumford, manager at
Trevove's.

There has been some discussion at
Trevove's among the staff, concerning
Ferguson's appointment, for he is com-
ing to the firm not through normal
channels, but on the initiative of Mr.
Trevove himself.

Mary Donovan tries, unsuccessfully,
to draw Ferguson, for they received no
references apart from the commands
of the managing director. But so far
John Fingal Ferguson remains a mys-
tery.

(Now read on.)

CHAPTER II
STRANGER IN MOSSFORD

Mossford is not a very exciting place
on Sunday. Shops and cinemas are
closed and the streets in the centre of
the town are practically deserted. The
people are in their homes; the British
Sunday Dinner is still an institution in
Mossford.

"It's going to be a lovely day," Mrs.
Gaddesen told her new lodger when
she brought in his breakfast. "If you
cared, you could get a bus at the end
of the road to Ferry Woods; they are
very nice in the spring. Dinner will be
at one o'clock, if that suits you."

"It does, admirably," he smiled.
He felt even more a "stranger in a
strange city" than he had done on the
Saturday, and he was glad to follow
Mrs. Gaddesen's advice.

Ferry Woods were all that remained
of what, in the Middle Ages, had been
a great forest, and generations of Moss-
ford people had walked in them. But
few of the people who were there that
lovely April morning were alone. Many
courting couples were there, and groups
of young men and maidens, but few
solitary people. But it was a pleasant
place and Ferguson returned to Num-
ber Five quite ready to face the insti-
tution.

In the evening he went to the big
church he had noticed in the London
Road. The preacher was a broadminded,
tolerant man, who had something to
say and knew how to say it. He took
as a text that wonderful phrase: "Let
him among us that is without sin cast
his stone."

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FRUIT-A-TIVES LIVER
TABLETS

disguised attempts to find out more
about him. But he gave nothing away.
There was a reserve in him, a reticence,
and by the end of the week most of
them had given up attempting to find
out his story. He rapidly demonstrated
that he was a really able man, and it
became clear to Maynard that he had
not merely mastered the "system" on
which the department worked but was
in a position to suggest certain obvi-
ous improvements.

These suggestions were made in no
arrogant spirit. Ferguson spoke diffi-
dently: "Don't you think Mr. May-
nard" and so on.

"Isn't my system, old chap, it's
Goodspeed's," Maynard told him. "He's
been here since the year dot and it's
more than I dare do to suggest any
drastic alteration. He'll be back next
week."

"It merely struck me," Ferguson put
in hurriedly. "I'm quite happy to work
on the old lines."

All of which was duly reported to
Mr. Mumford.

TAVERN GOSSIP

On the Friday afternoon Ferguson
received his first pay envelope. It con-
tained five pounds ten shillings, which
was the sum that had been arranged.
Within an hour, the amount in that
particular envelope was known to many
of the staff. It was rather more, for
example, than the amount in May-
nard's envelope.

On the Friday evening, Maynard and
several of his pals usually broke their
homeward journey at the Crown, a
very pleasant hostelry in the London
Road. Generally their dissipation did
not extend beyond a couple of glasses
of beer and the custom provided an
excellent opportunity for a quiet talk.
Inevitably, on this occasion, Ferguson
provided the main topic of conversa-
tion.

"Who is this chap that William Tre-
vove has sent down?" one of the men
asked.

"He's a very decent fellow," May-
nard said.

"What's the idea? Pal of William's,
isn't he?"

"I don't know. He's close as a clam."

"A mysterious sort of chap, isn't he?"

another said. "I hear that old Mumford
himself knows nothing about him."

"He's a gentleman," said Maynard,
who had been in much closer contact
with Ferguson than the others.

"So are we all."

"I don't mean like that. He speaks
French, for one thing."

"That's nothing."

"And he's been in a position of au-
thority. He's not like an ordinary clerk.
He wasn't a clerk before he came to
Mossford."

"Did he tell you?"

"No. He's told me nothing. That's
what I mean by being a gentleman. You
ask him a question and he doesn't an-
swer—not as you would answer—but
he does it so politely that you don't notice
that what he has said boils down to
inviting you to mind your own banking
business. Damn it all, you can't help
being curious about a chap you've got
to work with."

"Course you can't. What's he got to
hide?"

"Search me," said Maynard. "He's
drawing five ten."

"So I heard. Young Cannock in the
cashier's office told me, so I know it's
right."

"Mind you, he's a good man. He's got
old Goodspeed's precious system taped
up good and proper."

"Old Mumford as good as told me
that it was up to us to see that he made
good," Maynard said.

Maynard shrugged his shoulders:
"He's a pet lamb of William's. I sup-
pose. But it doesn't seem right to me
that he should be getting more than I
am."

"It isn't right!" they agreed.

"Looks to me as if he's come down to
stay. Old Mumford can't carry on much
longer and it looks to me as if your
Mr. Ferguson's going to be boss here
before any of us are a lot older."

"I'd wondered that," Maynard ad-
mitted.

"But that doesn't explain him. If he'd
come from some big firm in London,
why not say so? Why hide it? William
Trevove can do what he likes—within
reason. But why all the secrecy?"

"The queer part is that old Mum-
ford doesn't know any more about him
than we do," Maynard put in.

"Well, mark my words," one of them
said. "He's started in the Sales. He'll
go from there to another department
and sooner or later he'll go to all of
them. Then Mumford will go to his
well earned retirement"—as the saying
is—and we shall be calling that
chap 'Sir'."

"Shouldn't wonder," several of them
said.

The curiosity Ferguson had caused
was not limited to Maynard and his
pals. John Rossiter—"Old" Rossiter as
everyone in Trevove's called him—had
been the firm's chief London traveller
for many years. He was not often in
Mossford but he happened to be there
that Friday. And, as he usually did, he
dined with Mr. and Mrs. Mumford.

"Do you know a chap called Fergu-
son? John Fingal Ferguson?" Mumford

asked his guest as they were drinking
their final whisky and soda.
"No."
"He wasn't at the London office?"
"No. I'm certain he wasn't. Besides,
you know he wasn't."
"Then are people there I don't know
and I thought he might be one of
them."
"Who do you ask?"
"His just turned up here. William
sent him, himself."
"Who is he?"
"A clerk. William took up his refer-
ence—or said he did. I know nothing
whatever about him. A man about
thirty-five or forty. Seems a very able
fellow. I put him in the Sales Depart-
ment."

"Then I hope to goodness that he is
able. It's about time you had somebody
intelligent in there."

Mr. Mumford smiled; he had heard
Old Rossiter on the Sales Department
before.

"He's a gentleman, a man of consid-
erable education, and I should say he
has been in a position of authority. Yet
there's something docile about him."

"There's always been something 'doc-
ile' about that durned Sales Depart-
ment."

ROSSITER APPROVES

"Goodspeed's getting a bit past it, I
know. But then so are many of us. We
haven't done badly, all things consid-
ered. But this chap Ferguson worries
me. It's absurd you should have a man
in your office of whom you know abso-
lutely nothing. It's so unlike William.
Usually he takes old colleagues like us
into his confidence, just as his father
did."

"He's not the man his father was."

"Don't you believe it! You'll be at the
office in the morning!"

"Of course. What do you think I
came here for?"

"The pleasure of seeing me!"

"I might have a worse reason, old
friend."

"Why not have a chat with him?
You'll have a dozen grouches to work
off on that Department anyway, if I
know you."

"I have and all!" said Old Rossiter.
"Be lieve me or not, I sent an order
through from Maybury of Reading."

"Then you ask Mr. John Fingal Fer-
guson about it," smiled Mr. Mumford,
"and tell me afterwards what you think
of him."

Nor was the curiosity limited to the
male staff, for Mary Donovan was sit-
ting alone in the dining room of her
aunt's house—thinking the wireless
was turned on but the wireless always
was turned on in the evening in that
room. Mary Donovan, however, had
long accustomed herself not to listen if
he didn't want to. Neither the Dance
Music, the Talk, nor the Gramophone
Records interfered with her thoughts,
which, that evening, were of Ferguson.

There was something sad in his face,
something disillusioned. There was a
gentleness in him, some subtle thing
she associated with people who had

Your Dentist says
CHEW!
WRIGLEY'S
JUICY FRUIT
CHEWING GUM
HAS A FASCINATING FLAVOR
KEEPS TEETH SPARKLING!

suffered. She had heard most of what
Maynard had said to Mr. Mumford
about him, and her own observations
had confirmed the verdict that he was
a clever man.

What was he doing there as a clerk?
Why had he taken a position which
put him off altogether from his old
life—whatever and wherever that was?

Why did he volunteer no information
about himself?

Was he married?

She knew nothing whatever about
him; she had no facts on which to base
an opinion.

Yet she had an opinion of him—
which, if you came to think of it, was
significant.

She realized suddenly that she was
alone in the room. She turned off the
wireless and sat awhile by the fire.

She still thought of the same man.

Which, of course, was not quite so
serious.

The following morning Old Rossiter
breathed into the inner sanctum of the
Sales Department.

"Good morning, Mr. Rossiter!" May-
nard greeted him.

"Morning. What about that order
from Maybury's? What's the good of
my getting orders if you can't get the
stuff off to the date it's ordered?"

"I'm sorry, Mr. Rossiter. But you
struck a line on which there's been a
very big run."

"Don't I know it? Haven't I sold
hundreds of that line? Didn't I tell you
and the nitwits in the stock room to
get stock up?"

"By the way, let me introduce Mr.
Ferguson, Mr. Ferguson, Mr. Rossiter—
our chief London traveller."

"How do you do?" said Old Rossiter.
"Hope to goodness you can live in this
department up a bit."

Maynard winked at Ferguson over
Old Rossiter's shoulder.

"The goods were despatched to Read-
ing yesterday by passenger train with-
in a quarter of an hour of their getting
here from the factory," Ferguson told
him.

"You're sure?"

"Quite. We advised Messrs. Maybury
that they would be delivered today, and
explained the delay."

"But I was there on Thursday!"

"Possibly. They had the letter this
morning, of course."

"Um— it's not quite as bad as I
thought it was, then."

Old Rossiter stumped into Mr. Mum-
ford's office a few minutes later: "I've
seen the mystery man!" he said.

"Well?"

"He's a good chap!"

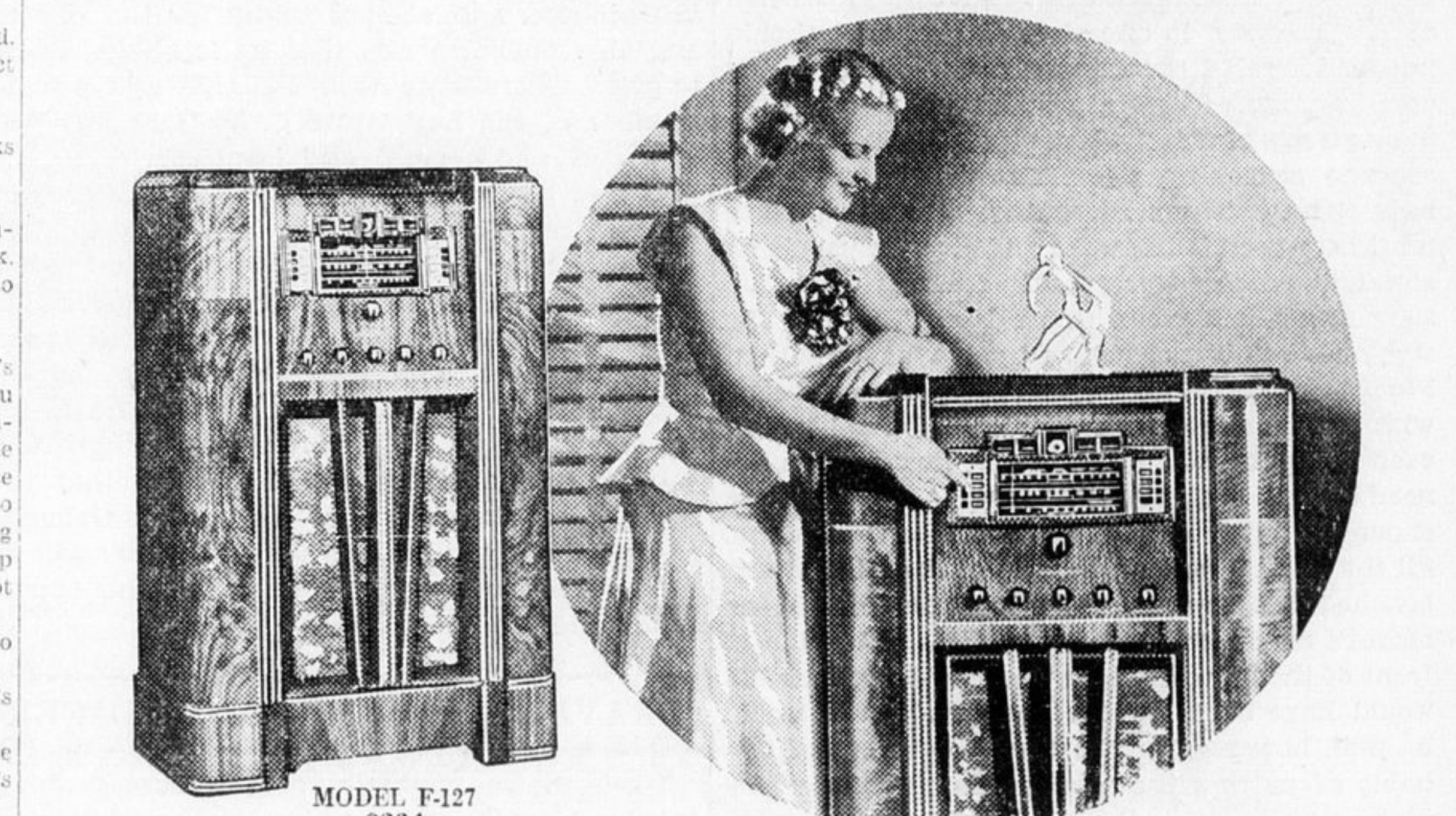
"I'm very glad to hear it," said Mr.
Mumford.

So, too, was Mary Donovan, sitting
demurely in front of her typewriter.

(To be continued.)

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