# MOVING STORY OF A MAN WITH A PAST

# Second Chance

# HOLLOWAY HORN

Author of "George," "Two Men and Mary", Etc.

Copyright

"I can understand that, sir,"

guson, if you think I can help you.

a very hearty respect for his judgment.

THE NEW CLERK

many aspects of the business. Now I'll

"We heard about you on Saturday,

he went on to the girl who was waiting

went on when the two men were alone.

"You'll pick up the system-it's Mr.

"I've had a fairly general experience.

"You're a friend of the boss, I hear?

Ferguson listened: "Now is that clear?"

"I know him."

hand this morning

at it, shall I?"

nard's desk rang.

or so later.

nard replied.

make a do of it."

he was shaping."

"I hope you do."

he replaced the receiver.

Maynard asked at the end.

patiently. "I'll ring for you presently."

proved a good friend."

"You are very kind."

tating a letter to a typist

Mr. Ferguson.'

the door.

WHO'S WHO IN THE STORY

thing of a mystery. William Trevowe, head of Trevowes soul of at least one of his listeners. Ltd., of Mossford. When the story opens

office of his firm. manager of a theatrical company.

with whom Ferguson lodges. of Mrs. Gaddesden.

Lucia Desmund. Principal actress in Wilson's company, and wife of Wilson. 2 4 4 4 4

### SYNOPSIS

John Fingal Ferguson, aged about 35, has obtained a post with Trevowe and Co., Ltd., an old-established business in the country town of Mossford. He arrives at the place on the Saturday before he starts work and finds lodgings with a Mrs. Gaddesden. During the week-end he meets Mrs. Gaddesden's niece. Mary Donovan, who is secretary to Mr. Mumford, manager at Trevowe's.

There has been some discussion at Trevowe's among the staff, concerning Ferguson's appointment, for he is coming to the firm not through normal channels, but on the initiative of Mr. Trevowe 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 mystery.

### (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. Gaddesden tole 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. Gaddesden's advice . Ferry Woods were all that remained of what, in the Middle Ages, had been a great forest, and generations of Mossford people had walked in them. But myself." 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 Number Five quite ready to face the Insti-

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

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It's Time . .

the first stone." The sermons that get what the films call a 'break', but John Fingal Ferguson, otherwise Hal- have been preached on this phrase are, our people are clannish and are almost lett, a man about 35; handsome, prema- of course, innumerable, but the young bound to regard the coming of a man turely grey. His past history is some- man who preached that evening touch- from London as a personal slight-in a ed some deeply responsive chords in the sense.'

Slowly and thoughtfully, Ferguson Trevowe gives Ferguson a job in the walked homeward after the service. In your references; he made that quite some subtle way he no longer seemed Teddy Wilson, otherwise Sternberg, so utterly alone and could face the life ahead with a new courage. His reaction Mrs. Gaddesden, A motherly woman was rather curious for he was not usually, conventionally religious. He ment: "Quite," he said. Mary Donovan, a secretary on the had, indeed, gone to the church in the staff of Trevowe's. She is also a niece first place to escape from his own Mumford," Ferguson said, and for loneliness, from a fear of being alone.

> Five minutes to nine the next morning found him one of the stream of workers who turned through the big entrance of Trevowe's Ltd. Just inside he saw a notice: "Enquiries".

> He tapped at the window and after a minute or so tapped again; evidently there was nobody on duty until nine. He waited and was startled when the window was suddenly opened: "Yes?" young woman said.

> "Er I have an appointment with Mr. Mumford. My name is Ferguson." "Will you wait over there," she said. indicating the room opposite and closed the window.

> The waiting room was hot and stuffy. It had evidently been closed over the week-end and the big radiator was apparently functioning fully. Ferguson waited. He examined the framed advertisements of Trevowe's, Ltd., which decorated the room, and still waited. Ten past, a quarter past, when suddenly the door was opened and the young lady in the "Enquiries" said: "Come this way, please."

> She led him along a corridor from each side of which offices opened. At the end, she tapped at a door and stood aside for him to enter.

"Good morning, Mr. Ferguson," said Mary Donovan. "Sit down, please." There was no one else in the room.

"Er good morning." "Mr. Mumford is busy just at the moment, but he won't be long."

"It's very pleasant finding you here. "I'm always here," she smiled, "I'm Mr. Mumford's secretary.

At that moment Mr. Mumford him-

self came into the room. Ferguson rose: "Good-morning, sir he said. "My name is Ferguson."

"Oh, yes. I was expecting you. Mr Trevowe said you would be here. Sit down, won't you? To be quite frank, livery.' Mr. Ferguson, I've only the vaguest information about you. About your experience, I mean, and the kind of work to put you on. Usually, of course, I atof thing?" tend to appointments to the office staff

"I've had a fairly extensive experience of office work." "In London?"

"Yes. And abroad, I was some years n Singapore.'

"You quite understand, Mr. Ferguson, that, for the time being at any rate you will occupy a comparatively junior position in the office?"

"I quite understand," he said.

"Then I think you had better go into the sales department. Mr. Goodspeed, better use that desk." who is in charge of it, has been with us for many years, but he is away ill." "Thank you."

"I think I should warn you that you are almost bound to meet with a cerain amount of suspicion-I had almost said hostility-in the staff, Mr Ferguson," the elder man said with a a certain diffidence in his manner. "Coming as a stranger?"

Mr. Mumford nodded: "But it won" mean anything. If you meet with any serious difficulty I should like you to some straight to me."

"Thank you. But I hope the necessity

"Don't misunderstand me. You will

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disguised attempts to find out more about him. But he gave nothing away "Mr. Trevowe himself has taken up There was a reserve in him, a reticence, and by the end of the week most of them had given up attempting to find "Yes, It was very kind of him. He has out his story. He rapidly demonstrated that he was a really able man, and it cile' about that durned Sales Depart-Mr. Mumford did not reply for a mo- became clear to Maynard that he had ment." not merely mastered the "system" on "I'm starting afresh in Mossford, Mr which the department worked but was moment the eyes of the two men met ous improvements.

"Don't forget to come to me, Ferarrogant spirit. Ferguson spoke diffiand his father before him, and I have nard " and so on.

been here since the year dot and it's did." He suddenly realized that he was more than I dare do to suggest any "He's not the man his father was." alone with Mr. Mumford. Miss Dono- drastic alteration. He'll be back next van had evidently silently left the week."

"It merely struck me." Ferguson put "And if I'm not here, you might do in hurriedly. "I'm quite happy to work came here for?" worse than consult my secretary, Miss on the old lines."

Donovan. She's a very able girl and All of which was duly reported to knows at least as much as I do about Mr. Mumford.

## TAVERN GOSSIP

take you along to the Sales Departreceived his first pay envelope. It con- off on that Department anyway, if I Many curious eyes followed the two tained five pounds ten shillings, which know you." men as they passed through the main was the sum that had been arranged. office. At the end of it they came to Within an hour, the amount in that "Be lieve me or not, I sent an order stuff off to the date it's ordered?" a glass door leading into a rather small- particular envelope was known to many through from Maybury of Reading er room, and at the end of that into a of the staff. It was rather more, for still smaller one where a man was dic- example, than the amount in May- guson about it," smiled Mr. Mumford, very big run. nard's envelope.

"Mr. Maynard, I want to introduce On the Friday evening, Maynard and of him several of his pals usually broke their "Pleased to meet you," said Maynard. homeward journey at the Crown, a male staff, for Mary Donovan was sit- get stock up?" He was a man rather older than Fer- very pleasant hostelry in the London ting alone in the dining room of her . "By the way, let me introduce Mr guson with reddish hair and a plea- Road. Generally their dissipation did aunt's house thinking. The wireless Ferguson, Mr. Ferguson, Mr. Rossiternot extend beyond a couple of glasses was turned on but the wireless always our chief London traveller." "For the time being Mr. Ferguson will of beer and the custom provided an was turned on in the evening in that be with you," Mr. Mumford said. "I excellent opportunity for a quiet talk. room. Mary Donovan, however, had "Hope to goodness you can liven this feel certain that you will put him Inevitably, on this occasion, Ferguson long accustomed herself not to listen if department up a bit." through his paces. Well good luck!" provided the main topic of conversa- she didn't want to. Neither the Dance he went on to Ferguson and turned to tion.

vowe has sent down?" one of the men which, that evening, were of Ferguson, ing yesterday by passenger train with-Maynard said, "That'll do, Miss Tyler," asked.

"The bulk of our work consists of

controlling the travellers." Maynard isn't he?" "I don't know. Hes as close as a clam. "Their orders come to us and we check "A mysterious sort of chap, isn't he?"

them up before they are passed for de- another said. "I hear that old Mumford himself knows nothing about him." "He's a gentleman," said Maynard, Goodspeed's system, not mine, by the who had been in much closer contact way-and then it'll be fairly plain sail- with Ferguson than the others.

ing. Had any experience of this kind "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-

"Well, anything we can do to help thority. He's not like an ordinary clerk. you, of course. Now what we've got on He wasn't a clerk before he came to Mossford." He went on to explain the work and "Did he tell you."

"No. He's told me nothing. That's what I mean by being a gentleman. You "Quite. Thank you. I'll have a shot ask him a question and he doesn't answer-not as you would answer-but he "Go ahead. And for to-day you had does it so politely that you don't notice that what he has said boils down to The work was, in actual fact, perfect- inviting you to mind your own blinking ly simple, but rather complicated by business. Damn it all, you can't help Mr. Goodspeed's elaborate "system". being curious about a chap you've got Just before lunch the 'phone on May- to work with."

"Course you can't. What's he got to "Yes?" Ferguson heard him say and hide?" "Search me," said Maynard. "He's a moment later he added: "I'll come at

drawing five ten."

"It's old Mumford," he explained as | "So I heard. Young Cannock in the cashier's office told me, so I know it's "What do you think of him May- right." nard?" Mr. Mumford asked a minute "Mind you, he's a good man. He's got

old Goodspeed's precious system taped "He'll be quite a useful man," May- up good and proper." "Old Mumford as good as told me

"I'm glad. It's up to us to give a that it was up to us to see that he made hand. I rather fancy that Mr. Trevowe good." Maynard said. will want to know why, if he doesn't

Maynard shrugged his shoulders: "He's a pet lamb of William's, I suppose. But it doesn't seem right to me "I think he will. He seems to have fitted in very well. You know, sir, he's that he should be getting more than I had a better job than this before now." am.

"It isn't right!" they agreed.

"Looks to me as if he's come down to in London and so it's really nothing to stay. Old Mumford can't carry on much do with us. I just wanted to know how 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-

Miss Donovan was apparently too mitted. deeply immersed in her work to listen "But that doesn't explain him. If he'd to what the two men were saying, come from some big firm in London. but she noticed the smile on Maynard's why not say so? Why hide it? William face as he turned to the door. Appar- Trevowe can do what he likes-within ently, however, she had not missed a reason. But why all the secrecy?"

great deal, for as the door closed, she "The queer part is that old Mumsaid: "I'm glad he's shaping well, Mr. 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 "That's as may be, Miss Donovan. As go from there to another department far as we are concerned, he came here and sooner or later he'll go to all of from the London office and we've got them. Then Mumford will go to his to see that he well that he doesn't "well earned retirement"-as the saying is-and we shall be calling that

"Shouldn't wonder," several of them

The curiosity Ferguson had caused everyone in Trevowe's called him-had The suspicion of which Mr. Mumford been the firm's chief London traveller

asked his guest as they were drinking their final whisky and soda.

"He wasn't at the London office?" "No. I'm certain he wasn't. Besides you know he wasn't."

"There are people there I don't know and I thought he might be one of

them." "Why do you ask?" "He's just turned up here. William

ent him, himself."

"What is he?" "A clerk. William took up his reference-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-

"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

"He's a gentleman, a man of considerable 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 'do-

## ROSSITER APPROVES

"Goodspeed's getting a bit past it. I in a position to suggest certain obvi- know. But then so are many of us. We haven't done badly, all things consid-These suggestions were made in no ered. But this chap Ferguson worries me. It's absurd you should have a man have worked for and with Mr. Trevowe dently: "Don't you think Mr. May- in your office of whom you know absolutely nothing. It's so unlike William. "It isn't my system, old chap, it's Usually he takes old colleagues like us Goodspeed's,' Maynard told him. "He's into his confidence, just as his father significant

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

"Of course. What do you think I

"The pleasure of seeing me!" "I might have a worse reason, old

"Why not have a chat with him? On the Friday afternoon Ferguson You'll have a dozen grouches to work nard greeted him.

"Then you ask Mr. John Fingal Fer- struck a line on which there's been a "and tell me afterwards what you think

Nor was the curiosity limited to the and the nitwits in the stock room to Music, the Talk, nor the Gramophone Old Rossiter's shoulder. "Who is this chap that William Tre- Records interfered with her thoughts,

"He's a very decent fellow," May- something disillusioned. There was a here from the factory," Ferguson told gentleness in him, some subtle thing him, "What's the idea? Pal of William's, she associated with people who had! "You're sure?"

suffered. She had heard most of what Maynard had said to Mr. Mumford that they would be delivered today, and about him, and her own observations explained the delay." had confirmed the verdict that he was "But I was there on Thursday!"

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 Yet she had an opinion of him-

which, if you came to think of it, was 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

The following morning Old Rossiter breezed into the inner sanctum of the

Sales Department. "Good morning, Mr. Rossiter!" May-

"Morning. What about that order from Maybury's? What's the good of "I have and all!" said Old Rossiter, my getting orders if you can't get the "I'm sorry, Mr. Rossiter. But you

> "Don't I know it? Haven't I sold hundreds of that line? Didn't I tell you

"How do you do?" said Old Rossiter Maynard winked at Ferguson over

"The goods were despatched to Read-There was something sad in his face, in a quarter of an hour of their getting

CHAS A FASCINATING VEEPS TEETH SPARKLING.

"Quite. We advised Messrs. Maybury

"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. Mumford's office a few minutes later: "T've seen the mystery man!" he said.

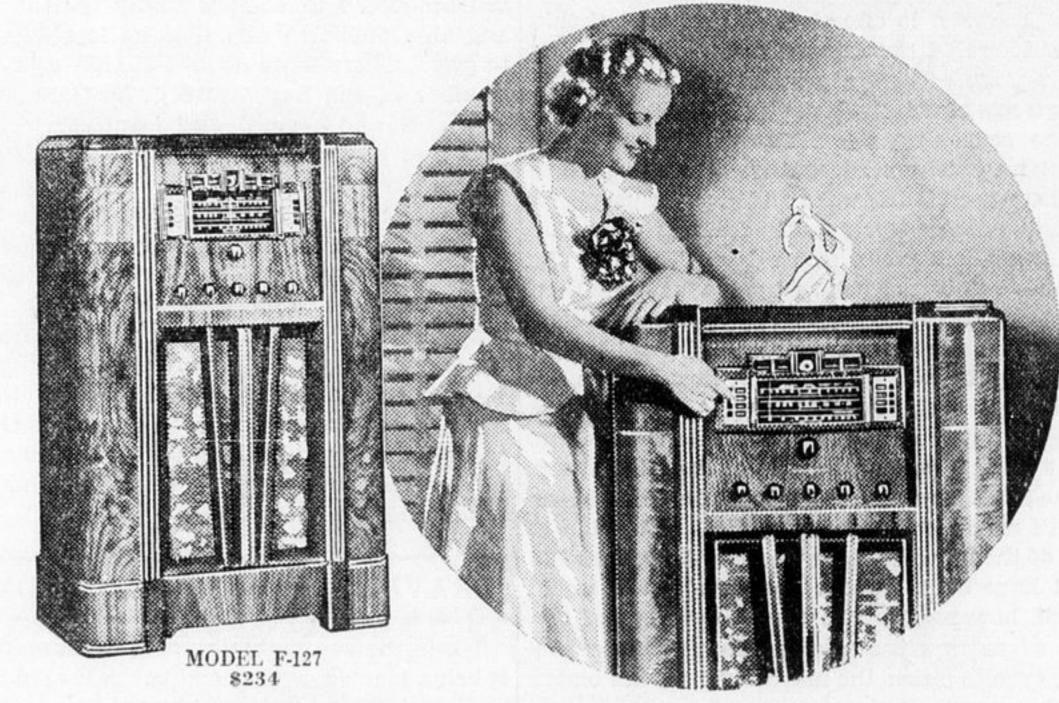
"Well?" "He's a good chap!" "I'm very glad to hear it," said Mr. Mumford.

So, too, was Mary Donovan, sitting demurely in front of her typewriter. . (To be coffinued.)

Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph:-If you find it hard to climb and want the rest of the people pulled down to where you are, that's Communism.



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Mumford."

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"Was he in the London office?" she chap: 'Sir'.

"I didn't say he was. He came said. through them. They are responsible, I mean." Mr. Mumford spoke shortly. was not limited to Maynard and his which was unlike him, and Miss Dono- pals. John Rossiter-"Old" Rossiter as van turned to her work.

"I don't know anything about that.

Maynard. They took up his references

"I understand, sir." said Maynard.

had spoken was not apparent to Fer- for many years. He was not often in guson, but Mossford folk rarely show Mossford but he happened to be there their feelings to strangers. As the days that Friday. And, as he usually did, he passed many of the staff with whom dined with Mr. and Mrs. Mumford. he came into contact betrayed a curi- "Do you know a chap called Fergucsity about him, and made, indeed, un- son? John Fingal Ferguson?" Mumford