



(Continued.)

CHAPTER IV.  
THE CONTRACT.

"I have devoted more study to the science of boxing than to anything else," explained Harold. "So much

so, indeed, that, although not a strong man, I can best any of my acquaintances. From some words that I overheard I am satisfied that a plot is on foot to humiliate me. There is to be an exhibition to-night at the clubrooms for the benefit of a public charity. I have agreed to meet an unknown boxer. Of course he is a professional, and is able and intends to knock me into the middle of next week."

"And I will take your place?"  
"That's it. Holy gee!" And the good fellow leaped to his feet, hardly able to restrain himself in anticipation of the way in which the tables would be turned on his false friends.

"But it will not do for each of us to go thither in propria persona, for you will be taken for yourself and I for you, and things will be mixed."  
"That is easy enough. It is I who will change my personal appearance so that no one can possibly suspect you."

Both of us were clean shaven. Harold adjusted a moustache so skillfully that no one could suspect it. It caused a marked change in his appearance. Then he applied a wash to his curly hair, which did not turn it black, but of a dark brown, several shades deeper than its natural hue. The eyebrows were touched so as to correspond with the moustache.

"Nothing more is needed. But as to your dress?"

"I have a score of suits, and therefore am never judged by my attire. We will separate just before reaching the building, and take widely separated seats. When a call is made for you to go on the stage, you will do so and be guided by circumstances."

At 8 o'clock that evening the spacious hall of the club contained fully 500 persons, most of whom were well dressed, and members of swelldom.

As I walked in and took my seat one man after another extended his hand and greeted me effusively.

"Good luck to you, Westcott! I've got \$100 on you to-night."  
"I'm afraid you'll be a loser," I replied, modestly, though well aware that the fellow was lying, and hoped to see me knocked senseless.

"No fear of that if you handle the mitts as you did last week, when you gave me and Robbins our quietus."  
"That was more luck than skill. But I'll do my best."

Similar remarks were repeated. It was clear to me that Harold was right. A plot was on foot to overwhelm him with mortification by visiting an ignominious defeat upon him.

In fact, I caught some words not intended for me. They revealed that the pugilist who had been imported was the notorious Sid Buxton, generally known as the Western Cyclone, a burly giant, who had knocked out every aspiring boxer that had presumed to stand before him.

The exhibition was similar in most respects to those with which every New Yorker is familiar. There was club swinging, fencing, dancing, some good singing, several pleasant exchanges of taps between amateur boxers, and finally the event of the evening was announced as a sparring bout between a gentleman, Mr. Richard Mortimer, of Chicago, and the well-known clubman, Harold O. Westcott.

The audience broke into uproarious applause. There was stamping, clapping of hands, and loud calls of "Westcott! Westcott!"

As yet Mr. Mortimer had not shown himself. He was in the dressing-room behind the stage. I slowly rose to my feet, and with my topcoat over my arm, walked forward. As I ascended the steps at the end the applause became deafening.

"What hypocrisy!" I mused. "Of the 500 men in this room four-fifths would give a goodly part of what they are worth to see me stretched almost lifeless before this brute that has been brought here for the express purpose of half-killing me."

The man who had expressed fervent wishes for my success and who declared that he had \$100 upon me was obsequious in his attentions. He accompanied me to the dressing-room, helped me to shed my outer clothing and to adjust the gloves to my hands, repeating his best wishes and his confidence in my prowess.

"Who is this Mortimer?" I asked, after the strings were tied at my wrists.  
"Some Chicago dude, I believe. He has been practising out there until he fancies, like every one from the Windy City, that he knows it all. He has come East to give the New Yorkers a few lessons, but I reckon he'll know more to-morrow than he does now."

"Possibly, though it seems to me that we ought to have been introduced before meeting on the stage. However, let that go. Where is he?"  
"In the next room. Would you like to see him?"

"Yes. Lead me to him."  
Passing through the door separating the apartments, I was introduced to Mr. Mortimer, of Chicago. He was a prodigious brute, a mass of rigid muscles, piano-like legs, enormous army-bullet head, with a flat nose, beaklike eyes; close-cropped hair and a countenance that reminded me of a gorilla. He nodded with a grin that showed his yellow teeth, but did not speak. Perhaps he was afraid of revealing his personality by his language.

Five minutes later we were introduced to the audience from the stage. The applause was tremendous. One in my position sees much more than is suspected. I could easily read the expectant looks, and knew that nearly

every man there was gazing in advance over my humiliation.

I looked at Harold. He caught my eye and nodded. He was the happiest person in the house, for he knew what was coming. Possibly I was equally happy, for I felt that it was to be my pleasure of baffling a mean plot.

Mr. Mortimer evidently looked upon his task as such a "dead easy" one that he felt able to toy with me as a cat does with a mouse. He must keep up the semblance of fairness and not be too rough from the start.

We had sparred a few minutes, when he landed lightly on my chest. It sent me backward a couple of paces, for I was not expecting it.

It was apparent to me that the fellow was a skillful sparrer, and it was important to be on my guard, for, although my strength was prodigious, I was as vulnerable as ordinary mortals to attack.

If I suffered him to land one of his terrific blows, I should be laid out. My only safety, therefore, was in anticipating him.

Sparrers, like fencers, look straight into each other's eyes. It is a fatal mistake to do otherwise. We continued see-sawing round each other, I landing a blow now and then, which was not hard enough to trouble him, while I stopped one or two ugly thrusts. Suddenly there was a peculiar whistle and call from several quarters of the house. The people were becoming impatient. They did not wish to wait any longer for my overthrow.

I saw a look of hideous devilishness come into the gorilla-like face before me. The brute was gathering himself for the knockout blow, and while going so an extraordinary thing took place.

The Western Cyclone was seen to rise abruptly from the stage and then speed outward and through the air, like an enormous bullfrog. He shot half way across the room, sprawling in the aisle directly behind where the astounded Harold Westcott was sitting.

The blow which did this was planted squarely in the middle of the hairy chest. Had it struck his skull it would have been smashed like an eggshell. Had he been an ordinary person, his trunk would have been ground to pulp. As it was, he lay as if dead, and nearly every one believed him fatally injured.

At the end of ten minutes of indescribable confusion the physician announced that the stricken pugilist was reviving, and would rally from the blow. Then something like order settled upon the house, and the master of ceremonies announced that the bout had been won by Mr. Westcott.

"And I would add," I said, advancing to the front of the platform, "now that the Western Cyclone has been disposed of, that I will be pleased to meet anyone who would like to take his place."

The only answer to this challenge was a renewal of applause, amid which I withdrew to the dressing-room, soon resuming my seat. But the exhibition was over, and, escaping the tiresome congratulations, I sauntered homeward.

Harold joining me in front of his apartments and accompanying me to his rooms as the guest of myself, or perhaps of himself.

He wrung my hand and capered with joy.  
"Ye gods! It was the most glorious sight on which I ever looked. What a wonder that you did not kill him!"  
"So I would, had I not restrained the blow just as I was launching it."  
"Restrained the blow! It was as resistless as the stroke of a piston rod. At any rate, it settled the hash of Mr. Richard Mortimer, the Western Cyclone."

"But," said I, seriously, "what is to be the end of all this? I cannot masquerade as Harold O. Westcott while you sink your individuality."  
"Why not?"  
"Why," I said, wonderingly, "it must end some time."  
"True, but not yet awhile. See here, Harmon!" exclaimed my friend, dropping into a chair, drawing it up in front of me and leaning over. "I've a proposition to make."  
"I am listening."  
"I wish you to become myself, while I become somebody else."  
"I don't quite catch on."  
"With your consent, I shall disappear for one year. No one but us shall know the fact. I will go to Europe. I will be utterly lost to the world for that time."  
"And at the end of that period?"  
"If alive, I return and resume my identity. Meanwhile you are to be Harold O. Westcott. Our initials are the same, so there need be little trouble."  
"What is the object of this prank?"  
"I wish you to take my place for one year, in order to scrape off the barnacles that have gradually attach-



Such a "dead easy" one.

...myself to me. I can't do it. Your task is to free me wholly of these parasites, so that when I come back it will be like beginning life over again, with everything smooth sailing."  
It was an extraordinary proposal, and I bent my head in thought. In shouldering the name and character of Harold Westcott what responsibilities would I assume? Suppose he had committed some serious crime and was arranging that I should incur the penalty?  
But I dismissed the last thought as an unworthy one.  
"You have nothing to fear. There are some annoyances, but you are at liberty to treat them as you choose. I only ask that everything shall be smoothed out to the best of your ability against my return. I will pay you \$50,000 for the favour."  
"Fifty thousand dollars!"  
Instead of explaining, he said:—"Take the pen there and let me see your handwriting."

I signed my name underneath several words. He scrutinized it carefully and then did the same alongside it. There was scarcely a hair's difference in the penmanship.

Neither of us was surprised. We expected it.  
"That's good. You will sign your cheques 'H. O. Westcott,' which is my custom, so there will be no forgery on your part. I shall draw out all the money I can possibly need for two or three years to come and leave something like \$100,000 in the bank subject to your order. You may need more than the amount I have named and must feel free to draw upon it. But if all goes well you are to receive \$50,000 for personating me for one year from date."

"I foresee a good many embarrassments and complications."  
"Were it otherwise I should not make you the offer. Do you accept?"  
"Yes, even though it is taking a leap in the dark."  
"Give me your hand on it."  
We shook hands.

(To be Continued.)

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### A Failure.

A certain professor in one of the leading schools of this city was not long since desirous of incorporating some negro dialect in a story he was preparing. Not being very well versed in their manner of speech, he bethought him that it would be a good idea to study the language in its purity undefiled. With this end in view he betook himself to the vicinity of the Union depot, near which representatives of the 'ebon race are always to be found.

One effort was enough. Meeting a coal black negro driving a wagon rather well loaded and accosting him as "Uncle John," the following brief dialogue ensued:

"Pretty heavy load, uncle. Can you get up the hill with it?"  
"I do not know, sir, but I presume so."

Such an example of pure and undefiled English coming from such an unexpected source almost paralyzed the professor, who muttered something about the "degeneracy of the modern negro," and, mentally deciding to consult the works of "Uncle Remus," he retraced his steps to his apartments.—Nashville American.

### Photographing the Arteries.

After much study and painstaking an artery in the arm of an adult has been photographed. The patient had been suffering from some trouble in the arm which the physicians were unable to correctly diagnose. By means of the X rays deposits of lime salts in the blood were clearly shown, and the case was treated in accordance with the facts elicited by the photographing as described.—New York Ledger.

### Clothes and Credit.

When a man realizes that he can't pay his debts and has got to ask for an extension of time, the first thing for him to do is to go to a fashionable tailor and get him a new suit of clothes. Creditors are seldom lenient with a seedy man.—Somerville Journal.

Snakes in South Africa fear the secretary bird and will even crawl away from its shadow. This bird can easily thrash a bird twice its size.

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