The BALL of FIRE

by GEORGE RANDOLPH CHESTER and LILLIAN CHESTER

ILLUSTRATED by C.D. RHODES

CHAPTER XXIX—Continued.

"The decision does not lie in your hands, Doctor Boyd," drawled a nasal voice with an unconcealed sneer in it. It was elsie-where old Joseph A. Clark, who was not disturbed, in so much as the parting of one hair, by the adverse criticism of his son. Behind him filed solemn rank on rank of the daily press for the past few days. The Reverend Dr. Boyd, the history of Market Square church, been given the control of its finances. He has in certainly been hired to preach the sermon."

Sergeant Cunningham blustering and even Van Pleem looked at Clark in surprise. He was not given to open reproof. Chisholm manifested no astonishment. He sat quietly in his chair, his fingers of drumming on the edge of the table, but his scowling face beard was pink from the reddening of his cheeks.

"The present rector of Market Square church seems to have a say in the deliberations so long as he is within earshot," continued Clark, his tone was emphatically not that of a man who was in accord with a jerk of his head. Rev. Smith, I was going this afternoon, but there was a something shining through your coffee which made the fare alive, and the something was not temper. Rufus Hale, a sing clanging his silvery board with a fine grip, smiled encouragingly at the tall young orator. I have said that I have, so far as I am concerned, the threatened the building of the cathedral." the rector of Market Square. "But there are two reasons. The first is that the building will bring no further away from the very purpose for which the church was founded—the saving of the souls of men and women and a concrete example of God's wish to confess that I found no rapid self-satisfaction, no loud ring motive in urging the building of the new cathedral to have been a mistake. My. I am also ready to confess, on behalf of my congregation and every that their leading motive was vanity."

"You have no authority to speak for me," interrupted Chisholm, his mat- box-shape now red.

"Splendor is no longer the exclusive property of religion," resumed the rector, paying no attention to the later caption. "If I thought, however, that the building of that cathedral would promote the spread of the gospel in a degree commensurate with the vast sum of money it will cost, I would be the first to say nothing. But the distinguished, the talked of."

"Go right on and develop our own scheme," approved Manning, smiling up at the old white-haired evangelist with its carved church bracket.

"The money is needed for Vedder court," declared the rector, "for the district visitor, for the relief of the poor Square church, through the next to dust of numbers. We have asked for her wing. Gentlemen, in the recent resolutions of the vestry we have put our interests of the world. I have seen the whole matter of organized and corporate methods, and Market Square church has been forced to the conclusion that it must do its work in its own way, in the best way it can, without reference to the methods of other churches or to any consideration."

He paused and glanced from man to man of his vestry. Sargent and Manning, the former a man of wealth, of place and the latter of whom had been a member of the church for thirty years, were in perfect accord. Nicholas Van Pleem was nodding his head in his hands folded over his crystalline vest. Chisholm was sitting with his head bent, apparently absorbed in the carpet between Vedder court and the door. Clark was regarding the rector with a look of genuine wonder. Rufus Hale was not even trying to conceal his disgust.

"Then I understand you to say that you have nothing to offer, Mr. Vedder court," said Clark, his tone was that of a man who regarded money as a remedy for all ills. "Nothing to offer in the way of help? Nothing to offer in the way of help? I have been under the impression that you were a man of business, sir, and that you had come to us with a definite proposition. Do you mean to say that you have no plan to suggest?"

"I have no plan to suggest, sir," replied the rector, his head erect, his face pale. "I have no plan to suggest, sir, because I have no authority to do so. For the reason that it would be unbecoming in me to suggest that a shameful thing that a gentleman should have other than a shameful thing. I am sincere! In the beginning, I was a fool to suppose that I could do any good. I wanted to be rid of my responsibility in Vedder court that I might devote myself to the spiritual property into a cathedral. We can't rid ourselves of the responsibility of Vedder court! It will be forever. We have a chance to be sent to hell. Let Square church would be eternally damned if it took this added guilt upon its soul!"

"This talk is absurd!" declared Chisholm. "The city has taken Vedder court away from us."

"Only the property," quickly corrected the rector, turning to his Chisholm with sharpness in his deep voice. "The city has not taken from us the souls among the tenements. Vedder court is a moral issue, not a financial one. We keep your fingers out of it—hears while we do not concern you! You were hired to preach the gospel, and you will one day be called to account for preaching just what you feel like preaching. Your sermon, Rev. Smith, was not bad, nothing more, nothing less"—and having a mouth to use which lay on the table he tossed in front of Rev. Smith's plate.

It was the Book of Common Prayer containing in the last pages the Articles of Faith.

Clark seized his hat and coat, and strode out of the door, followed by the scared Chisholm. Sargent and Manning sat in silence. Nicholas Van Pleem looked at Rufus Hale, and Hale looked at Boyd.

Sargent has told me about your plan for the new tenements," he said in a voice that was low for him. "I am in favor of buying the property."

"Well, swing it for you, Boyd," Manning with a sneer. "You are talking with some of the other members of the vestry, and then soon to have the new Vedder court will be a model tenement. I refer to those to the magnificent charity in the world, and I am willing to sacrifice an afternoon so that cathedral! I think Canning- ham will be with us, when it comes to a vote."

"Certainly," interposed Nicholas Van Pleem. "We don't need to make any speech on the proposition. We are in favor of increase in ground value will be

"Yes," said Cunningham slowly. "I am not in favor of the scheme."

"Coming along, doctor?" invited Manning, going for his coat and hat.

"No, I think not," decided Rev. Smith after a pause.

He was sitting at the edge of the platform facing the Sunday-School, at the edge of whose tube still sparkled the electric lights, and in his two hands he thoughtfully held the Book of Common Prayer.

CHAPTER XXX.

Hand in Hand.

Rev. Smith Boyd walked slowly out of the church and down the steps to the lawn in the hand. The afternoon sun was flooding the church interior, and from the stained-glass windows was falling in soft colors upon the pews and the backs of rolls and of congregation and of tones glowed now near the top of the wooden columns and mellowed the dusky spaces up amid the roof.

It was hushed and silent there, the church was empty and far from the thoughts of men. The young rector walked slowly to the gate. He felt a pew in the center of the main entrance, and at once, and the little Book of Common Prayer in his hand and in the book, he knelt before the altar. The service alone must be preach, nothing more and nothing less. That was the duty for which he was hired. He was mind, his spirit and the soul which God had given him. He was sure all the long years of his ministry he had done his duty, he had preached the gospel and pastors of the Lord. Now he