

Spragg got up with him and walked to the end of the piazza—away from Mrs. Spragg.

"That seems a lot of money to me," he said, "to put on a place."

The man from Puff's turned on him instantly.

"Mr. Spragg," he said, "let me ask you a question. You are a man of business—I know your reputation. Here you have a place worth twenty, thirty, forty thousand dollars—you can't tell how much it *is* worth until the right man comes along. Now, you know that appearance is nine-tenths of the whole game. Is it business, or not, to let us put five hundred dollars into this place and add all the way from two to ten thousand dollars to its value? I'm not exaggerating. If you want your motor-car repaired, you don't do it yourself—you go to an expert. If you want any law business attended to, you go to a lawyer. Why not place this thing in our hands, and dismiss the whole affair

from your own mind? Have it *right*, Mr. Spragg!"

Spragg swung around.

"Very well, young man," he said. "You go ahead. Send me your layout and fix the place up to suit yourself. I'll give you the order—and see that you do it well."

"Thank you, sir. Our reputation is at stake. Good day!"

"Good day."

The man from Puff's walked down the path, got into his machine, and in an instant was only a distant whir. Spragg walked slowly back, resumed his seat, put his feet up on the rail, and meditatively lighted another cigar.

"Why, in these days," he half soliloquized, "a man can't even afford to take an afternoon off from his business. Now, who would have thought that a confounded, measly, shriveled up, dead-to-the-world, back number remnant of a shrub would ever have cost me five hundred dollars?"

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## Father and Son

BY FRITZ KROG

"NOWADAYS," said Farris, clutching a steaming plate with one hand and dashing his wet towel over it, "man, the individual, has ceased to exist. Collectively, he is civilization. Where is the man to-day who would dare separate himself from modern progress and follow his own mind?"

Rudolph Boehm, bending over a vat in such a cloud of steam that Farris, a yard from him, could see him only from time to time, raised his head.

"Where is he? If you would only look for him, you would see him all around you."

"For example?" said Farris questioningly.

"Listen," Rudolph went on.

"Hear! Hear!" others shouted from various parts of the kitchen.

This was no place for a story to refute the statement of an abstract principle. For Farris, Boehm, and a dozen other youths were working in the kitchen of the University Boarding

Club, an organization that housed the students of a Western college at thirty dollars per annum, and half fed them at a dollar and fifty cents per week. Those in the kitchen were the poorest of the poor youths who lived at the U. B. Club, and they were earning their board by washing the club dishes.

"I know of a German," Boehm began, "who came to America thirty years ago from a little farm in Mecklenburg-Schwerin. He settled down in the foot-hills of the Ozarks, where he bought land at three dollars an acre. On that rocky soil he started to beat out a living. He had a wife, a woman of his kind, who worked with him in the fields when she was not cooking his meals, weaving his clothes, knitting his socks, and nursing her baby, a boy.

"When this man had been on his American farm about ten years and the boy was six years old, the Missouri Telephone Company built its line across Washington County. It planted about

fifty of its poles on that farmer's land and strung the wires. The farmer objected violently, but the company put up its line.

"One dark night the farmer built a fire around every pole, burned them all to the ground, and dragged the wire off his land. The telephone company brought suit. The farmer hired a lawyer. For months and years the case dragged on. When the farmer had used up all his savings, he mortgaged his farm, then his house, then his live-stock. When everything he owned was tied up and he could not raise another cent, his lawyer dropped the case.

"Then the farmer started in to get his farm back. For twenty years he and his wife worked like horses. The last I heard of them they were still paying interest on the mortgages; but each year, with all the spare money that he can scrape together, that farmer hires a lawyer to go on with the case."

As Rudolph finished his story, a messenger entered the reeking kitchen.

"Man named Boehm here?" asked the boy.

"Here you are," Boehm answered.

The boy handed him a telegram, which the youth tore open. When he had read it he called Farris away from the crowd and showed him the message. It was brief:

Come home at once. We can no more.

"That man whose story I told," Boehm went on, "is my father. He has given up. He wants me. I am going home to-night. Good-by!"

## II

WHEN the train stopped on the long grade where the Frisco begins climbing the Ozark ridge, a single passenger stepped out on the cinder platform with a telescope in his hand. In the half-darkness beyond the station a farm-wagon loomed and harness jingled. Some one called from the wagon, and the passenger walked over to it.

"Mine son Rudolph!" said a voice.

Rudolph Boehm grasped his father's hand and looked fixedly at the figure on the seat. There was no need of explanations. That bent, crooked, emaciated frame, with the claw-like hands,

the hunched shoulders, the hollow-eyed face, the quiver in the handshake—everything, even the crazy rattling of the wagon, the stumbling of the horses—told of the struggle ended.

The night, sultry, grew heavier, as the horses stumbled over the rough road. Low peals of thunder boomed in the hills, which sullenly gave back their muffled echo. Over the jagged tree-tops red flares of distant lightning glowed in transient sheets of blood along the horizon.

"Dot telephone business," the father said in a low voice. "it hass done for me at last. For twenty years I fight; but now *mütterchen* is sick—down. I am sick. We are no good now. Next month falls due a mortgage. If we can make no payment, gone is the old home. You made money since you went away?"

"No," Rudolph answered slowly. "I have been studying."

"Study?" the father repeated wonderingly. "Martin, dot lawyer, he said you vas in college. I vonder vat you do dere."

"Studied law," Rudolph answered. "But I have made no money. Next month I—"

He choked with the words. How could he explain? He knew he could not, would not do it.

For eight years Rudolph Boehm had not been near his home. He had left it obeying the same impulse, the *wandlust*, the mysterious longing that had once been in his father's blood and had driven him to America. Five of those eight years Rudolph had spent in college. How could he explain to his father that his eight years had not been profitable ones in a money sense? How could he explain that he had done a man's work, had played a man's part, and yet was almost penniless?

A whole age of human progress separated the minds of the old man and his son driving together through the night amid the warning growls of the advancing storm. Rudolph felt that he had lifted himself out of the world in which his parents lived. He had often denied within himself that he could ever come into their lives again. Yet with the first call for help—brief, clouded, not a dozen words, spread in a tele-

graph operator's hand on a yellow slip of paper—home, father, and mother had leaped into the young man's heart.

A few big drops of rain fell. The son opened his umbrella, which he handed to his father, while he himself took the reins.

"Look!" the elder cried suddenly. Fifty yards ahead of them rose the ashen shafts of two telephone-poles, one on each side of the road. The father laughed—a dry, cackling, raucous laugh. "They done for me!" he said bitterly.

In the instant that they passed between the poles Rudolph heard the steel umbrella-rod rasp on the telephone-wires, which, neglected, hung too low over the road. There came a flash of light, the horses jumped, and the father was thrown into the road.

When the old man had been carried to his bed, he revived enough to speak.

"It iss no use," were his first words. "Der delephone again! I am done!"

Rudolph, standing in the middle of the room, stared absently at the man moaning on the bed and the feeble woman tottering about the room, mumbling and wringing her hands. The son was thinking, searching himself, draining his whole soul for sympathy that he might soften his voice when he should speak, and soften his eye when he must, some time, look at these people, his father and mother.

"It iss no use," moaned the sufferer. "Twenty years that devil chase me, always—"

"Be still!"

Rudolph's tongue was loosened. Gone the fine scruples so carefully wrought during the night, gone the restraint which he had built hour by hour, and gone his patience.

"Listen!" the youth went on. There was a ring in his voice, a thrill of suppressed indignation. "You have been a fool for twenty years. No devil, no evil destiny, no one has pursued you. There was no hand of the Evil One in your accident to-night. You were driving in a storm, through an atmosphere loaded with electricity. A heavy electrical charge had gathered on the telephone-wire—a simple physical phenomenon. Your umbrella-rod touched the wire, you were brought in contact with

the electrical charge; there was a discharge through you, as there would have been a discharge through a stick, or a clod. That's why you were knocked from the wagon. The devil! Nonsense!"

*Mütterchen* shook her head and wrung her hands in fresh dismay. The man on the bed groaned more miserably.

"*Ach, Gott!*" the father exclaimed. "The boy hass grown hard. He is no more the good son."

Rudolph gripped a chair; and then, with an effort that left him trembling, he spoke quietly, even softly.

"Listen, father," he said. "I am going to leave you now. Do you hear? I am going away for several days. When I come back I will have money."

"What?" cried the father. "You go?"

"Never mind," the son replied. "You won't give up, will you? Not before I come back."

For two weeks the youth was gone. Then he suddenly returned with a stranger, a tall, well-dressed man with eye-glasses. He was taken into the sick room at once.

"Father," said Rudolph, "this is Mr. Martin. He is attorney for the Missouri Telephone Company. He will give you two thousand dollars if you will sign this paper. It is all right. It is only your promise not to sue the company for damages received on the night when you were thrown from the wagon."

The sick man heard in a dazed way. Rudolph had to repeat over and over again before anything reached the poor man's understanding. At last a light of joy came into his eyes.

"Two thousand dollars! From dot delephone company—for me?"

"Yes," Rudolph answered. "Here—sign here."

With a trembling hand the old man signed his name. In the last stroke the pen slipped out of his fingers, and he fell back—dead.

When Rudolph Boehm returned to college the following year, he did not wash dishes at the club. The farm was paying him a good profit. When he took his degree, he arranged for a post-graduate course at Harvard.

# THE INHERITANCE

BY DOROTHY CANFIELD

AUTHOR OF "THE KING OF FRANCE," "THE MUSIC-MASTER'S WIFE," ETC.

WITH A DRAWING BY EDMUND FREDERICK

AS the steamer from the Philippines came up to the San Francisco wharf, three men stood waiting for her to unload her passengers. One was a little dark Mexican, owner of a big sheep-ranch in the south; one was a ward politician from Sacramento, and the third was the secretary of a famous university.

As these few specimens from Zadok Peabody's numerous and heterogeneous body of friends pushed forward to the foot of the gangplank, a common thrill of affection moved them to a delighted exclamation. That young man had swung into sight, laughing over his shoulder at some one on the ship.

The three on the wharf held out eager hands of greeting, and when their friend had set down his big valise they smiled at him a moment in silence, as if savoring the fine, sunny confidence in the scheme of things which shone from his untroubled and quite thoughtless face.

"What luck, Zed?" they asked, being as usual unable to surmise anything from his exterior. He was always at least passable as to clothes and joyously buoyant as to bearing.

"Bu'sted!" he cried cheerfully, pulling his empty pockets inside out. "I came back third class, and even then it took my last dollar to tip the cook. Maybe some folks can make money out there, but not *me!*"

The Mexican produced a wallet tied with string.

"*Con permiso de Usted*, if it is that you wish to try again—"

The other shook his blond head gaily.

"You save your good money till the next time I turn up in your country,

Miguel *querido*, and blow it on me then. I'd never stick to a business, and you know it! Anyhow, I got tired of the tropics. Why, I'd been there almost six months, you know! I guess I'll breeze up to Vancouver and strike for a surveying job. I know a fellow there. Or maybe I'll settle down and teach Spanish in a State university again. There's a friend of mine—"

The politician put his hand on the traveler's shoulder.

"Say, Zed, come up to Sacramento, why not? The boys sent me down to say that they'll all meet you at the deepo with a brass band if you'll only say the word."

Before Peabody could answer, the university secretary broke in.

"Hold on a minute! Did your folks come from New England to begin with?"

The animation of the young man's face flashed into the laugh which was at all times so near it.

"How else in thunder do you suppose I got my name? Sure they did, from a little Vermont hole-in-the-ground called Hilltown, or Hillsborough, or something."

"Well, then, my son, you're not bu'sted at all; you've inherited a farm and fixings worth about three thousand dollars."

The heir was jovially incredulous, stroking his short yellow beard with a quaint gesture of good-natured unbelief.

"What you giving me? That's one of the few spots on the globe where I never was in my life. My folks have been dead since before I can remember, and none of their people know me from Adam. And how do you get in it?"