

Gallop ing Pete

By Thomas McMorrow

The Story Thus Far:

PETE PEMBERWICK—"Gallop ing Pete," of gridiron fame—learns, to his joy, that his great-aunt, Miss Hannah Jones Pemberwick (deceased), has bequeathed him her art collection, valued at \$85,000!

Mr. Pye (of McGinty and Pye, in charge of the estate) advises Pete to sell the collection and go into business. Pete receives an offer from one Colonel Ernest Swetfager. Swetfager explains to Pete that he was the senior member of a large, but defunct, grocery firm; that he plans to start again; that he needs \$60,000; and that he would like to sell Pete an interest in the venture.

Pete accepts the offer. The colonel gives him an assignment of the old firm's book accounts (worth, according to the colonel, about \$190,000); and Pete (not knowing what he is doing) gives the colonel a bill of sale for the art collection.

Following this little transaction, the two partners visit the collection and find, to their horror, that one Matt Lowery, a crazy doorman, has destroyed it! The astute Mr. Pye informs Pete that the book accounts owned by Pete are worthless and that the distinguished Colonel Swetfager is a scoundrel and a crook.

Octavine Milton, the colonel's charming niece, visits Pete and tries to inveigle him into taking back the bill of sale. But the young man, no longer an easy-mark, accuses the charming young lady of being a swindler, and Octavine departs in a huff!

II

PETE PEMBERWICK, sitting behind a pile of soiled dishes in the dark and greasy kitchen of a Twenty-third Street restaurant, picked up the delicately browned wing of a chicken, gaped manfully at it, and laid it down in defeat.

"Try sitting sideways," said the cook with iron politeness.

"No," said Pete slowly. "I guess I'm all through."

"You guess!" echoed the cook, boiling over. "Young fellow, I hired you to wash dishes in exchange for all you could eat. And here you went and messed about twicet as many dishes as you washed. Say, you ain't no pearl diver—you're a shark with three rows of teeth. Flap out, you pelican—flap!"

"In the A. E. F., Pop," yawned Pete, "when we saw a soldier cleaning his greasy hands on his tunic, we knew he wasn't a cook."

"I should hope not!"

"No—because a cook never cleans his hands," grinned Pete, going.

"That squares you," yelled the cook after him delightedly. "Good luck!"

PETE picked up a discarded newspaper on his way through the restaurant, crossed the street to Madison Square Park, and sat on a bench in the afternoon sunshine to scan the Help Wanted advertisements.

Accountant, analyst, architect, artist, bookkeeper, buyer, chiropodist, credit man—all the way down to young men and youths the word *experience* met Pete's gray eyes like a poking finger. Certainly people didn't start out in life with experience, and yet it seemed a condition precedent to connecting with a pay roll: here was a puzzle. And even with this prenatal experience granted, the pay offered was so consistently moderate and reasonable; above \$25 a week was evidently profligate expenditure.

Pete drooped; his heavy black brows set in a line. He waded into the display advertisements. He wasn't hopeful; advertisements in white border, he had learned, were commonly run by people who had something to sell.

FORMER FOOTBALL PLAYER
of Harvard preferably, is wanted for
straight business proposition uncon-

nected with sport. The man we seek is about six feet tall, of powerful physique, 25 years old, a good mixer, and has lived in California. Clock watchers and check grabbers, lay off.

No investment required. No canvassing or bell ringing. NO EXPERIENCE, except as above. Pay to begin, \$100 per week on straight salary. Bonuses and commissions. The right man will make \$25,000 the first year.

Prepare to shoot your story. Then telephone Midtown 6400.

Pete's mouth opened; he reread the astonishing advertisement. It described



Illustrated by
R. V. Culler

Octavine handed him a judgment search made out against Chumley Sloate

him to the life, even as to being twenty-five years old and having lived in California.

He jumped up and went feverishly through his pockets, turning them inside out, but knowing very well that the search was hopeless. He had not a red cent. And he had to have five cents, a half dime, the twentieth part of a dollar, right away. That job wouldn't keep. Opportunity was knocking on the door, but Opportunity was inside and Pete was out, and he didn't have the moderate and reasonable price of admission.

A pink-cheeked old gentleman with mild blue eyes and a paternal gaze was passing Pete's bench. Pete recognized the type: such a dear old chap as couldn't resist giving pennies to children, perhaps even big round nickels, and without taking them by the ears

and inquiring if they were or weren't playing hooky—a humanitarian, a lover of his kind, a shining mark for a touch.

"Excuse me, sir," said Pete, blushing as he halted the old fellow, "will you please let me have five cents?"

THE old gentleman rang true. He looked shrewdly but kindly at Pete, and said: "You seem to be a decent young man, and I won't refuse you, though I believe that haphazard charity does more harm than good. Come with me."

He led Pete across Twenty-third Street again, and back into the restaurant that his proposed beneficiary had just quitted. He went to the quick-lunch counter, placed a dollar bill on it, and said: "Give this young man all he can eat! And I," he continued, beaming on Pete with pure benevolence, "am going to enjoy watching you. I've been

"Nurse no grudges, Pete," said the colonel soothingly. "It's bad business. Besides, you have the balance wrong"

hungry myself in my time. I aim to do a little good as I go through life, and when I meet a deserving man who through no fault of his own is brought to the ragged edge of starvation—"

"It's awfully good of you, sir," said Pete, his blush deepening, "but the fact is I am not hungry. I'm as full as a tick."

"What!" cried the old fellow, with indignation in which there was a bit of triumph. "Not hungry? That explains all about you, young man. You're a confounded impostor, and I should hand you over to an officer."

He snatched his dollar and stalked from the restaurant.

Made more timid by this rebuff, Pete accosted a lady. He said, "Pardon me, madam, but could you let me have five cents? I must telephone about a position. I'll take your name and address gladly."

"Oh, no, you won't," she said, sheering off. "You'll take my address and come around tonight and rob me, like as not. All you villains say you are looking for work, but you can't rub that on me. You want five cents to buy whisky and get drunk, that's what you want."

Pete's square jaw tightened. He picked out the biggest and grimmest man in sight, a burly fellow who lolled before a cigar store, and whose ready leer and flashy attire were as good as words of warning. Pete strode up to him, slapped him on the shoulder, and said, "Mister, give me a nickel! I'm taking up a collection to buy me a dirty big glass of whisky. I'm not hungry. I don't want a job. I don't want advice—what I want is a nickel!"

"Put it there," chuckled the man. "Brother, I like your talk. If you told me a lie, I wouldn't give you a cent. Here,

"If you were half your age, Colonel," Pete growled, pointing a heavy fist, "I'd put that on your jaw"



get a ball." And he slapped a half-dollar into Pete's hand.

When Pete came out of the store with the change his benefactor was lost in the crowd. After a fruitless look about for him Pete reentered the store, went to a telephone on a show case and called "Midtown 6400, please. . . . Hello—you advertised for an old football player."

"Name, please," said a female voice.

"Peter Pemberwick. I played tackle with Harvard in 1922. I'm from the Coast. I've never worked, not having to. My father, Jake Pemberwick, the lumberman, left me pretty well off, and I—"

"Where are you now, Mr. Pemberwick? On Twenty-third Street? We shall expect you in ten minutes; try not to be late. Come to Room 610 in the Merchants National Building on East Forty-second Street."

"So that's how it's done," murmured Pete dazedly, hurrying from the store. It was twenty minutes to four by the Metropolitan Tower clock; at six minutes to four he was being shunted into a local car by the elevator captain in the new and enormous Merchants National Building.

"He is waiting for you, Mr. Pemberwick," said the young lady who was disclosed to him by the opening door of Room 610. She gestured toward a door upon whose glass was lettered Office of the President.

At the brass-bound mahogany desk in the smartly appointed room beyond was an oldish man, heavy-jowled and shaved to the quick, with small and bright blue

eyes. "Well, Pete, my boy," said this man in a voice made creaky by high living and choice cigars, "you're a hard man to put the bee on, but here you are. Sit down, Pete. We're going to talk business."

"IF YOU were half your age, Colonel Swetfager," growled Pete, pointing a heavy fist, "I'd put that on your jaw." "Nurse no grudges, Pete," said the colonel soothingly. "It's bad business. Besides, you have the balance wrong. If you were twice my age and half my size, and if I had no horse sense, I would trounce you."

"You swindled me!"

"Your attitude, Pete," said the colonel, "amazes and grieves me. Let me state the deal between us as I see it. When we first met, you had just inherited a collection of art objects from your aunt, a collection worth possibly \$75,000. I, for my part had just bought a bunch of uncollectible accounts at the dissolution of a big grocery, cigar and wine house. The face value of these accounts was \$190,000; you knew that."

"You paid \$600 for them. I didn't know that."

"Knowing that you wished to enter business, using this inheritance as capital, I arranged to swap my bunch of accounts receivable for your aunt's pots and pictures," said the colonel insistently. "I was going to sell off the collection and put the proceeds in my business and give you a quarter interest—a very handsome offer. The deal was

made; you gave me a bill of sale of the collection, and I assigned to you the accounts receivable. And then what happens? A dizzy servant who thought your aunt should have put him in her will ran amuck and smashed the pots and pictures into smithereens. That left me with a big round nothing, and left you with the \$190,000 in supposedly bad and uncollectible accounts."

The colonel spread his hands and shrugged his round shoulders.

"You tricked me into that deal," roared Pete. "All that talk about going into business with me was applesauce. You knew those accounts were no good, that the debtors were all dead beats."

"But I was going to collect them for you, my boy," said the older man, rapping the desk. "That was to be the first move in our business venture. That's where we were to get our capital from."

"Then go ahead and collect them now!"

"Precisely," said the colonel. "That's just what I brought you here for, Pete. I'm going to collect every last sou markee from those dead beats."

Pete sat down.

"We'd have a good part of them drawn in now, Pete, if you hadn't vanished into the unknown. What made you leave Mrs. Schimpf's select rooming house up in 126th Street?"

"Rowena herself," said Pete with a reluctant grin. "She's sitting on my trunk up there now. My home address is Central Park."

"You'll catch a cold there, Pete, if you sleep with the gates open. Have a good cigar, my boy. Now hold onto your chair and listen."

"I own an apartment house, Pete, on West Seventy-eighth Street near Amsterdam Avenue; any real estate man will tell you it's worth over a quarter of a million. We're going to use that house to inveigle your dead beats into paying their bills. We'll be partners, fifty-fifty. We'll each draw a hundred per week expenses, and pay the rest into a joint account that will require both our signatures to check against. Fair

enough? Once every little while, when we have so much money that we're worrying if the bank is good, we'll declare a dividend. I won't burden you with explanations, but will let you see the thing work. Say the word, and I'll set the wheels going and you can watch the money tumble in. Blood from turnips, Pete!"

Pete sat silent, surveying the colonel from under beetling brows.

"I've been leading a dog's life of late, Pete. Vee is running me ragged. She thinks I let you down badly, and nothing will square me with her but to treat you like a prodigal son. Come to dinner tonight, Pete."

VEE—Octavine Milton, the colonel's niece—it seemed to Pete that he was gazing once again into eyes of intense, of burning blue. His girl with the electric eyes: widely spaced eyes, set in fully curved cheeks, centered below by a small and thick-lipped mouth! To no puny body could belong a face so strong and beautiful in color and line; Pete had sensed rather than seen the deep torso, the small and round waist, the wide oval of the hips. She walked so springily; she had stamped before him once in a fury, and it seemed to him that her small foot came down like the polished hoof of a blooded mare, delicately and crushingly. She had struck him, a stinging slap. Her teeth were showing.

"I'll take stock in you again, Colonel," he grumbled, "when I see the color of your money."

"Accepted," said the colonel, lifting a sheaf of new bank notes from a drawer. "There's your first week's money, Pete. And now shall we tilt a very small glass to the success of Pemberwick & Swetfager, copartners? Vee will work with us on this; we can't afford to intrust to any stranger our secret formula for extracting blood from turnips, eh?"

ON a morning some weeks later the door of Room 610 opened and a short and paunchy gentleman, attired in a race-track suit and with a purple band on his fifty-dollar panama, appeared on the threshold. From a long amber and meerschaum holder he blew a long, thin wisp of Turkish cigarette smoke into Room 610 while his bulging brown eyes dwelt approvingly on the young woman who had risen to receive him. "Is Colonel Milton among those present, my dear?" he asked in a sweet voice.

The velvety fingers of the tubby gentleman lingered in touch with those of Octavine Milton—she had replaced the office worker who had received Pete Pemberwick—as he gave her a card. His eyes followed her, missing nothing; he liked the coppery lights in her French bob, as he liked the royal blue of the eyes that had smiled on him somewhat puzzlingly.

"Mr. Chumley Sloate," said Colonel Swetfager, standing in the doorway of the president's room and reading from the card. "Come in, sir." Mr. Sloate went in, pausing only for a brief instant beside Octavine, to catch her glance so that he might complete his conquest of her and hold her love during his interview with her employer.

"Colonel Milton?" he said, tendering a cushioned hand.

"It's a pleasure, sir," said the colonel, who changed his name as convenience dictated, but who, as it happened, had been born Ernest Milton.

"You wrote me," said Mr. Sloate, settling himself comfortably, "concerning my claim on a piece of property belonging to you."

"I did," said the colonel. "Mr. Sloate, I shall put all the cards on the table. There are other ways of doing business, but they are not mine."

"Here is a (Continued on page 42)

The Fifty-Cent Peace

By Octavus Roy Cohen

A Short Short Story
complete on this page



Illustrated by
Cornelius Hicks

He distinctly saw her steal
the half dollar which had
been left on the adjoining
table for the waitress

HANK'S is an institution in Hollywood. It is busy at all times and thrice a day is so crowded that only the initiates—those belonging to the movie colony and thus possessing the password—are able to find tables.

The reason for this is twofold: In the first place, it is generally recognized that no place in Hollywood serves better food than may be had at Hank's, or at more reasonable prices. In the second place, the attractive combination restaurant and delicatessen receives the enthusiastic patronage of studio stars.

When Buck Mason arrived at seven o'clock, the dinner crowd was at its greatest. But Mr. Mason, being a movie actor of some importance, shouldered through the crowd and curtly notified the attendant that he wished to speak with Jim . . . this being the password. Jim, a broad and rather handsome gentleman who owned a partnership in Hank's, greeted the newcomer brightly and seated him at one of the little wall tables at the rear.

Buck Mason nodded to a few friends and scowled at the menu. He was colossally unhappy, and particularly tired of restaurant food and hotel living.

Things had not always been this way. Until six months previously Buck had been master of his own home in Beverly Hills, where he had been happy to relax of an evening and entertain his friends.

THEN Helen had left him. Their last quarrel came as a surprise. He knew now that he had been rather arbitrary in his home life, that he hadn't always given Helen a square deal; but he had thought that she loved him devotedly, and only when it was too late—when she left him without argument—he realized he had overplayed his hand.

Of one fact she definitely had convinced him. No matter what her feeling toward him had once been—she was not in love with him now. She did not rail, she merely spoke with chill bitterness in announcing her decision. She was through.

Shocked, he offered her a settlement, enough money to protect her against the unfriendliness which one experiences in Hollywood only when one is in need of actual cash. She thanked him and announced that she could look after herself very well. The next day she was gone . . . and he had not attempted to bring her back because he realized that she no longer loved him.

Tonight—as on all other nights—she

was first in his thoughts. And because he was so miserably engrossed in consideration of the woman he had lost, he did not notice until the blonde waitress brought his meal that Helen was seated at the very next table; her shoulder to his, her cheeks high with color, her eyes straight to the front.

His heart contracted. If only he dared speak to her; if only he dared tell her how he had missed her, how he regretted the mess he had made of their married life, how he lay awake at night and prayed that her love for him might not be entirely dead. . . . But no! She didn't need him . . . he could see that. She looked more beautiful, more competent, more desirable, than ever. She was sufficient unto herself, or perhaps (and he bit his lip at the thought) there was another man.

He didn't dare speak to her. Apparently she was not aware of his presence. He watched her silently out of the corner of his eye, hungering for her; hating himself because he had sacrificed his chance for happiness, because he had failed to appreciate what he had. If only she needed him. . . .

She had finished her meal and he noticed that she had eaten nothing but a sandwich and a glass of milk. The couple at an adjoining table rose and left. And on their table was a fifty-cent piece . . . a tip for the waitress.

Then Buck Mason saw something; something amazing. He saw Helen glance eagerly at that fifty-cent piece. He saw her deliberately drop her napkin and stoop to pick it up.

And as she straightened he distinctly saw her steal the half dollar which had been left on the adjoining table for the waitress.

Cheeks flaming, she instantly rose

and walked from the place; walked swiftly, like a criminal who is fearful of discovery.

Then he understood. Helen's appearance was camouflage. She wasn't doing well. She was actually in need of cash!

He rushed from the place, followed her, caught up with her.

"Helen," he said chokily, "you must let me help you."

She flashed him a startled glance.

"I don't need help, Buck."

"You do. I saw you steal that half dollar just now. It told me that you need money. Please, Helen. . . . Half of what I have is yours. I wouldn't amount to anything if it hadn't been for you. Let me help. . . ."

"I couldn't, Buck. Not under these conditions."

"THESE conditions!" His voice trembled. "God knows I blame myself for these conditions, Helen. I was a fool. I realize you don't care for me; I know you couldn't ever give me another chance. But no matter what you think of me, dear, I love you more than I ever did, and . . . and . . ."

His voice broke. And suddenly, without warning, a warm little hand crept into his.

"Do you mean that, Buck?"

"Mean it? Oh, dearest. . . ."

They walked on in silence; too happy for mere words. They buried the past and faced the future; a future which they knew would be happy for the very bitterness of their past experience.

He begged her to remarry him that night, but she insisted that he wait until the morrow so that he might be sure his sympathy for her plight had not swept him from his feet.

She was starry-eyed with happiness when she reached her room. For a long time she stood at the window staring down at the million lights of Hollywood and at the gaunt outline of mountain etched against the moonlit sky.

Then she seated herself at her desk and wrote a brief note on a sheet of hotel stationery. It was addressed to waitress Number Nine at Hank's place, and marked Important and Personal.

Dear Miss:

I am afraid I caused you to lose a tip this evening. But I hope the enclosed will more than make up for the empty table you found. Please accept this as a token of gratitude from a very happy woman.

Then, from a well-filled purse, Helen Mason took a fifty-dollar bill which she enclosed in the envelope.