



Charles Wesley Sanders

IV—"FOR FIGHTIN'? GLORY BE!"

"GOIN' up to the hospital to-night?" the Cap'n, skipper of Toole's trolley-car, asked Toole. "Goin' up, old-timer?" Here was

a chance for the Cap'n to poke fun at his motorman, but he forbore. There was little sentiment beneath the Cap'n's hairy chest, but he could admire courage whether that was displayed by a charming young woman or by a husky man.

Laura Kane had been in the hospital for three days with a broken arm, the result of an automobile accident in a snow-storm. With that broken right arm clasped in her uninjured left hand she had walked through snow-drifts to summon aid for the others in the car.

She was a school-teacher over at Mansion, and Toole had been attracted by her. He had bought a lot of new duds and had polished the old trolley-car till it shone—all for her benefit.

Also, he had stopped at her road-crossing so that she would not have to walk to and from the regular stop. After she had been hurt Toole had held her in his arms till he surrendered her at the hospital. For three nights he had gone to the hospital to inquire about her.

The Cap'n had noticed a change in Toole. There was a questioning look in his eyes which heretofore had held a challenging stare for all the world.

"When his kind gets hit, they get hit hard," the Cap'n had wisely told himself, and he had treated Toole with deference; for Toole was a fighting man. Also, he was a good motorman. The Cap'n didn't want to mix it with him, and he didn't want either of them to be fired for scrapping. So the question he put to Toole while the car lay at Mansion before the last trip was couched in respectful tones.

"No," said Toole.

The Cap'n was silent for a while. He liked Toole, and he admired the girl. He believed that if a man were going to marry, he couldn't do better than to hook up to a girl with Laura's courage. And certainly she couldn't do better than to grab off Toole while the grabbing was good. That's how the Cap'n phrased it.

The Cap'n sincerely hoped nothing had gone amiss.

After his space of silence he hitched up his pants and coughed. Toole paid no attention to him.

"Now, old-timer," the Cap'n said, "it's none of my business. I'm not goin' to butt in. But anybody can see that you've fell for that lady. Oh, hell, can't a man converse with you?"

For Toole had turned about on his stool and had fixed the Cap'n with a baleful glare.

"A man can converse with me when he converses about something that is everybody's business," Toole stated. "There is snow on the ground and a blue sky overhead. The storm has about passed away. I shouldn't be surprised if we had a spell of fine weather. That was quite a storm we had, for this time of the year. There's other things. Look about you and speak of what you see. It's good trainin' for the mind and for the eye."

He turned away from the Cap'n. The Cap'n stood looking at the back of Toole's head.

"Toole," he said quietly, "I was married once."

Toole turned clear around on his stool now.

"You were?" he scoffed.

"For a year," said the Cap'n. "I went away on a v'yage and when I come back I had nothin' but a mound in the cem'try to put flowers on."

"Excuse me, Cap'n," Toole said.

"It's all right," the Cap'n said. "That was years ago. I just spoke about it so's you'd get a

tip that you never can take one look at a man that's lived fifty years and tell what he's been up against.

"I know you're a wise guy, but mebbe you don't know it all. You go plunging along as if you was saying to yourself, 'I'm Toole. I got a clear track, with rights over everything. You can't drop no block on me and expect me to notice it.' Huh! You'll ride to a fall some of these here days."

The Cap'n turned as if to go to the hind end of the car. Toole stayed him with a hand on his arm.

"I'm nervous, Cap'n," Toole said. "The girl left the hospital this morning. She was took home in a machine. She left word that I could come and see her if I wanted to."

"And that makes you sorrowful," said the Cap'n. "You'd been packed with joy if she had left word that you was never to darken her stoop, I suppose."

"I'm no society man," Toole said. "When I get into her parlor, I'll be all hands and feet, and my face will be the color of a beet that you've just run a knife through. I'll be tonguetied. Won't that be nice?"

"Well, you might go up and set the house on fire, and when it gets to blazin' merrily you could run in and save her and her fambly," the Cap'n scoffed. "Work like that is right in your line. You'd cut off your right mitt for her, but you wouldn't set across from her and make goo-goo eyes."

"What would you do?" Toole asked. "How would you act?"

"Why, I'd go right up there, knock on the door, say 'Good evening, Miss Kane,' when she opened the door, accept her invitation to step inside, go in, and talk to her. Tell her stories about the railroad. Don't be modest. When you leave, have her thinkin' you are the best runner that ever hooked up a lever, and that you're unjustly dealt with by a lot of cheap pencil-pushers that ain't no good but to

decorate an office with a plush rug on the floor."

"Cap'n," Toole said, "you come up and sing that song for me. I didn't know you had anything like that inside you."

"I haven't," the Cap'n said hastily. "I just got it out of me. I can't play a repeater. You've got it now. It ain't patented. It's time we left this thriving village behind us, Mr. Toole."

Toole started the car.

"It's too late for me to go up there tonight," he said as the Cap'n sped toward the other end.

"If it wasn't too late, it 'd be too early," the Cap'n said. "The girl has got your goat."

"Is that so?" said Toole. "When we get to her road crossing, I'll turn this palace car over to you to run in. I'll hop down and run up and see her."

"It ain't as if I couldn't run the car," the Cap'n said.

Toole stopped at the crossing and hopped down. The Cap'n followed him. The Cap'n had a whisk-broom in his hand.

"Stand still," he said, "and I'll get the dust off'n you. There now. Spat down your hair, and you'll look not so bad. Give the lady my respects and tell her I hope that arm don't pain her none by now."

He climbed up to Toole's seat, and the car started. Toole went slowly up the road.

As he neared the girl's home he saw her standing at a side window. The lamplight flowed out into the night, and to reach the door Toole had to step across the path it made.

He saw the girl leave the window. He knocked on the door, and she opened it immediately.

"I was watching to see if you would get off the car," she said. "I hoped you would."

She was not shy at all—merely frank. All the afflictions he had foretold would come to him came to him overwhelmingly. He had

nothing to say, and his face would have put a beet to shame. He followed the girl into a room off the hall.

As Toole saw that a man sat there, he breathed a sigh of relief. He would not have to face this terrible situation alone.

The man was an ancient. He had a fringe of white whiskers from ear to ear beneath his chin, but his eyes were bright, and he showed no signs of feebleness.

"This is my grandfather, Mr. Toole," Laura said.

"Howdy-do, Toole?" the old man said in a voice which was as strong as the Cap'n's, almost. "Sit down."

"Good evening," said Toole, and sat down.

The old man hitched about in his chair and folded his hands in his lap.

"How's it come," he asked, "that you and that dinged old Cap'n, as he calls himself, let this lass run away through the snow while you two stood around and waited for her?"

"Why—" said Toole, and stopped.

"Grandfather!" the girl objected.

"Let me be," said granddad. "I'm set to find out about this business. In my day we done things different. Women was protected. They didn't go running along snowy roads when a couple of good-for-nothings were there to do the job. How about it?"

"Well," said Toole, "it was an excitin' time. A man was dead in the machine, and we didn't know how bad the others were hurt. I guess me and the Cap'n were up in the air."

"That's just what I thought," granddad said triumphantly. "There's a little smash, and two gents from the trolley lose their nerves and let a little girl do the heavy work. And, by thunder, I've heard that dinged Cap'n call himself a railroad man and speak about runnin' that trolley-car as railroadin'. Why, that ain't railroadin'. In fact, there ain't any railroadin' any place any more. A lot of pencil-pushers is sittin' up in the offices,

tellin' a bunch of caboose-riders and engine-sitters what to do."

The old man was becoming excited. For all his years, he seemed to be able to get up a pretty good head of steam. He slapped his knee vigorously.

"You ought to have railroaded with me in my time, young feller," he declared. "I run a train for forty-five years right out on this here line that goes through Mansion."

He held up a hand and pushed the shirt-band back from his wrist.

"You see them white spots," he said. "Well, them comes from twistin' brakes. I've had my wrists all raw from settin' 'em from car to car when there wasn't no time to lose. You'd get the engineer's scream and away you'd go over the top, in ice-storms and sleet-storms and rain-storms, and any old kind of storms.

"I worked my way up from a raw braky to run a string of the varnished ones. And I never had a spill of any description. No fresh engineer never took any chances that I didn't authorize. By jingoes, I was the boss of my train, no matter whether it was the way-freight or a fast passenger.

"But nowadays—pooh! Air and a lot of jimcracks on the engine, and nothin' for a brakeman to do but wonder when he is goin' to get in for his supper. Laws about hours, too. Why, many's the time I've been first out after I'd been without sleep for twenty-four hours. Them was the days. And you trolley-men call yourselves railroaders."

"Well, it isn't such a snap," Toole said. "You've got to make your time on the trolley, and you've got to please the passengers, and—"

The old man rose. He walked to the door leading into the dining-room. There he paused and faced about. He jerked his head back, and Toole understood it for a signal to follow him. Toole couldn't ignore a visible signal. He went into the dining-room, with a murmured

apology to the girl.

The old man stood close to him and looked up at him with hostile eyes.

"I know what your game is," he said. "You've come here sparkin' my granddaughter. She told me about your polishin' up that old bus of yours and gettin' a set of new duds and all that. But you can't put nothing over on the old gent. I been through the mill, m' lad. You can't qualify. You're barred before you're entered. You understand?"

"But—" said Toole.

"Not a 'but. It's past my bedtime. I have to have my rest. I'm goin' up-stairs. I'll give you five minutes to say your adoos. If you don't say 'em in that time, I'll come down and pitch you through the front door. Callin' yourself a railroad man and lettin' a girl with a broken arm wade through snow-drifts to get help for hurt folks!"

He fixed Toole with a final, belligerent glare and went up-stairs.

Toole turned to the room where the girl sat.

She smiled up at him.

"Did grandpa threaten you?" she asked.

"Well, he did," said Toole. He stood looking at her bandaged arm. "Does your arm hurt much?" he asked.

"Not very much now," she answered. A blush spread up over her face. "I want to thank you, Mr. Toole," she added, "for taking care of me that night."

"It wasn't anything," Toole said. "I guess your grandpa is right in what he says. But you were away like a flash through them drifts. I didn't know what you were up to till you were gone."

"I was excited," she said. "I know you would have gone if I had explained to you."

Since her injury the girl had taken on a sort of ethereal air. She was a little pale, except for the pink that seemed to breathe in and out of

her cheeks. As Toole stood there, looking down at her, he felt his heart tighten and his respiration thicken. Something deep in him—some emotion which had slept for a long time in his inner being—seemed to stir and waken.

But that feeling was swiftly crowded out by one more disturbing. What the old conductor had said about him was not true, but there was another truth which was even more bitter. Who was he to permit himself to be attracted by such a girl as this? He was only a motorman on a bum trolley-line. By right he was a first-class engineer, but he had leaped from that eminence to gratify a moment of passion.

"Well," he said, fumbling his hat, "I must be going."

"It isn't late," she hinted frankly.

He laughed. He had to laugh to cover the hard look that he felt was in his eyes.

"Your grandpa said if I was here in five minutes he would throw me out the door," he stated.

"Oh, grandpa!" she exclaimed. "He hasn't anything to say about it. This house belongs to me. My father left it to me when he died. I can have any one I want here."

She had spoken lightly because she had seen that some strong feeling was tearing at the big man before her. But Toole did not accept her assertion lightly.

He took a forward step.

"Do you want me to come here?" he asked.

His voice was throaty. The girl had not expected him to go so far. She had not wanted him to go so far. She hardly knew him yet, though she had been interested in him from her first glimpse of him. He was the first man of just his kind to come into her life.

That life had been rather monotonous. It was made up of trips to and from Mansion and of the teaching of a couple of dozen of tousled kids. Once in a while there was a dance at Mansion, and that was about all there was to

break the monotony.

So she didn't know quite what to say. She rose.

"I'll be glad to see you any evening," she managed to get out.

She gave Toole her hand, and he took it as if he was afraid he might crush it unless he was very careful.

"I'm coming again, in spite of grandpa," he said. "You tell him I aim to land a better job than I got now."

And that, he told himself as he trudged to the other terminal, was exactly what he aimed to do. He'd go about it just as soon as he had saved a little coin. He'd show the old man whether he was a rail or not. He didn't sleep much that night, for the first time within his memory. His mind was caught in the whirl of his new ambition.

He confided his ambition to the Cap'n next morning.

"Sure," the Cap'n said. "I knew you'd come to it sooner or later. You'd have come to it, even if that little lady hadn't woke you up."

"Why didn't you tip me off and hasten me on my way while I had some velvet on me?" Toole asked.

"You danged fool," the Cap'n said, "if I'd of done that, you wouldn't have met that girl. It was Fate, with a big F."

Toole pondered that all day. He found that he was rapidly acquiring a habit of thinking things over.

Night had fallen before he said to the Cap'n, out of a reverie:

"I guess that's right, old hoss."

"What's right?"

"That I wouldn't have met that girl if you had hastened me on my way."

The Cap'n stared at him.

"Gosh," he cried, "but you've got a bad attack. Man, you're moonin'. I made that there observation of mine this mornin', and it's just got around to where you're livin' this evenin'.

I wouldn't get so far away from things if I was you. You might get lost.

"You'd better clean off that front window, also. It's snowin' again. Most motormen like to see where they're a goin'."

Toole wiped off the window. A second snow-storm had set in without his noticing it.

After they got to the terminal they had one more trip to make, and they made it over to Mansion through a whirling cloud of white.

"She's a dandy," the Cap'n said, as they prepared to return.

"I'm glad the little girl is safe at home." said Toole—to himself.

As they neared the railroad crossing, Toole cut off the juice and drifted. He couldn't see five feet ahead of the car. The car's headlight could not penetrate the swirl of white.

When he thought he was almost on top of the crossing, he began to clang the bell. Suddenly ahead of him, just where he thought the railroad tracks ought to be, he saw the light of a red lantern. The lantern was being swung back and forth across the track.

Toole could not stop his car on the crossing. He had no idea what trains were due. He cried out, and the lantern swerve to one side.

"You jumped just in time, son," Toole addressed whoever was carrying the light.

Beyond the crossing he brought the car to a quick stop and jumped to the ground.

The lantern was being borne toward him. A boy of perhaps nineteen emerged out of the snow.

"You're the man that worked on the wreck down here a while ago, aren't you?" he asked.

"Me and the skipper helped unload some matches," Toole answered. "Why?"

"I'm the operator from Mansion tower," the boy replied. "There's something the matter with No. 95 a mile from here. They went in on a passing siding for No. 10. There's no operator there.

"Fifteen minutes ago the conductor called me to the phone and said the engineer had been hurt. They had to lay there quite a while. No. 10 being delayed after No. 95 had passed the last telegraph-office, and they went over to a farmhouse to get some coffee. The engineer knew the folks.

"While they were gone No. 10 went by. They had a new fireman, a boomer, a big, red-headed guy that you'd have thought owned the pike. The engineer and the conductor were coming around behind the caboose after the brakeman had throwed the switch. The fresh fireman took it on himself to back out on the main. They are light, and the caboose hit the engineer before he saw it was moving. The snow was thick. The conductor jumped out of the way.

"The engineer's foot is smashed, and he's laid up in the caboose. That boomer fireman has disappeared."

"I know his kind," said Toole.

"I phoned for a doc, the man up that road over there, and he is hustling over there in his machine. I knew your car was about due here, because it generally comes along about this time. After the wreck, where you fellows unloaded the cars, the gang said you acted and talked like you was a rail.

"There's nothing due for an hour. I thought if you knew enough to run an engine, you could go down there and bring that engineer in."

He stopped for a moment, and Toole saw that he was fighting some deep emotion.

"I wish you would if you can," he went breathlessly. "That engineer is my father."

"What orders have they got?" Toole asked.

"They've got plenty time on the next train east to Mansion if you hustled over there. It's only a mile. If you'll go, I'll run back. The despatcher will want me, probably."

"Scoot, and ease your mind," Toole said. "That doctor will fix up your dad temporarily

so's he won't bleed to death, and we'll get him into my trolley and bustle him over to a hospital at the other end. Quit your worrying now."

"I will," the boy promised.

He turned back along the track, so that Toole would not see his working face.

"Come on, Cap'n" Toole said. "As the man said, there is not an instant to lose."

"We ought to get time and a half for overtime," the Cap'n said. "First we get a train wreck, and then an auto smash-up, and now a guy with a mashed foot. We ought to be runnin' an ambulance, not a bum trolley-car."

"You can hop aboard your bus and trundle it back to the other end, if you want to," Toole said. "It is sweeter to hit the hay than to lend a helping hand while a snow-storm is blowing itself inside out."

"For that I could have you arrested on a criminal charge or bring a civil suit for libel," said the Cap'n cheerfully. "Lead on, Plum Duff."

Toole led on, and lost all inclination he might have had to kid the Cap'n because the Cap'n was blowing like a whale just up from the briny. The snow beat into their faces. The wind made their eardrums ring. Their breath was snatched from their lips so that they had to gasp to get it back. They were two out-of-breath, big juice-workers when they at length sighted the lights of the train. They went alongside the caboose and climbed up. Toole opened the door. The conductor looked up from his kneeling position beside the injured engineer. The doctor was kneeling just beyond him.

There was a ferocious look in the conductor's eyes as they met Toole's. When he spoke his language was inelegant but full of red pepper.

"I thought you were that cussed, blank fireman," he said. "If you had been, this doc would have been busier than ever."

"What can we do for you?" Toole asked.

"I phoned to the operator at Mansion," the conductor said. "I suppose the engine will be cut off the first train that shows up and will be sent out here to bring us in. There's nobody here can get us in."

"I'm here," said Toole.

"Motorman," the conductor said scornfully.

"Sometime engineer," said Toole. "Whenever you want to start, say the word. You got time on the next thing due at Mansion."

"We got plenty of time," the conductor said. "Are you talking sense or are you making a grandstand play? Running this old girl ain't anything at all like pulling the stick on a trolley-car."

"You can leave it to me," Toole said. "I'll go have a look at her fire."

The man whom the doctor was attending stirred uneasily.

"Say, Bill," he said in a voice full of pain, "don't let him pull out of here till the doc gets this dingus fixed on me to stop the bleeding. It'll be rough enough going when he gets me fixed as comfortable as he can. And when you get to Mansion, don't let that boy of mine know that it's me that's hurt."

Toole leaned over the doctor and looked down into the engineer's white, drawn face.

"Don't worry, old man," he said gently. "The boy knows all about it. He come down and flagged my trolley-car. He'd heard some talk and had a hunch that I was a rail. He acted all man."

"He's got a good head, that boy," the engineer said, and seemed to gather comfort from the fact.

Toole and the Cap'n went up to the engine. Toole looked her over, fixed the fire, and climbed up on the right-hand side. A thrill went through him as he caressed the throttle.

"Me for a lot of this immediate," he told

himself. "I'll show old grandpa a thing or two—a whole box of things, mebbe."

He sat waiting for a signal from the conductor. He got it after a while and he started the engine as gently as if it were made of glass. When he judged he was near the trolley crossing he eased off and crept forward through the snow. Presently the lights of the car appeared. Toole stopped.

He jumped down and ran back to the caboose.

"Here's our old wagon," he told the conductor, who had stepped outside. "You can put your man in that and take him to the hospital. The doc and a brakeman can go with him. The Cap'n will run the car. You and me will take our train in."

"Correct," the conductor said, ignoring the plural pronoun.

They carried the engineer to the trolley-car, and the Cap'n started off through the storm. As Toole lit out for Mansion the conductor stood below him.

"How does this happen. O brother?" the conductor asked. "You handle an engine like an expert walks a tight rope, and yet you make your living trotting up and down two streaks of rust at the head end of a first cousin to Noah's Ark. Wherefore?"

"I been on a vacation," said Toole. "The vacation is about over."

"Right on this here pike men who can run engines are needed," the conductor said. "Baxter's getting his foot mashed makes us shy just one more. How soon could you get to work?"

"I could go right away or sooner," Toole said. "But what are you doing in this lowly station?"

"By that you mean what?" the conductor asked.

"Most roads don't let their conductors do the hiring," Toole returned.

"Nor this," the conductor agreed. "But for

a super we have a gentleman that used to go back with a flag himself in the old days. He only hires men that can grow a beard in a week, not counting Sundays. He is a plain man. He calls me and others by their first names. I could speak a word to him for you, and he would listen with his ears wide open. But of course if you are too haughty for any little shove up I could give you, you can—well, you know."

"Before you sleep, talk to him at length, mention my name every other word," said Toole.

"And I'll drop you a line as soon as I get results on the ninth inning," the conductor said.

At Mansion, Toole put the car into clear and relinquished the engine with a sigh.

He went back to the trolley-line. As he neared the square he saw the lights of his car showing up down the track. The Cap'n was returning for him.

"That was kind of you, old timer," he said as he got up on the front end.

"I like you, Toole," the Cap'n said. "I came back because I see that I will have to get as much of your society right away as I can. You will be returning to the big noise soon. I seen the light that was in your eyes as you put your mitts on that throttle. You would kill a man that tried to stop you."

"I got the fever," Toole admitted.

"Before you go, see the lady," said the Cap'n.

Toole saw the lady next night. Granddad answered his knock on the door.

"Come in," the old brake-twister said.

They went into the sitting-room, and the girl joined them there.

She was smiling.

"I listened on the phone last night while the conductor was sending word to the operator about Baxter's getting his foot crushed," the old man said. "To-day I inquired



further. I learned all about it. They tell me you brought that engine into Mansion. Didn't you have your nerve to tackle a locomotive when you've been trained to nothin' but handlin' a trolley-car?"

Toole looked at the old man, but he addressed himself to Laura Kane. Somehow he found his tongue. Perhaps that was because an eager ambition was consuming him and he wished his lady to know about it. Anyway, he told her all. As he finished he glanced at her. Her face was rosy, her eyes bright.

"And what was you canned for?" the old man asked.

"For fighting," Toole answered. "A man hit me on the back of the head with a piece of coal, and I put him in the hospital."

The old man stood looking at him with his lips dropped apart. Then a wide grin swept across those lips. He advanced on Toole with extended hand.

"For fightin'?" he cried. "Glory be! Let me join the host of friends you must have among he-men."