



# The Efficiency Expert

**Edgar Rice Burroughs**

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## CHAPTER 1. JIMMY TORRANCE, JR.

The gymnasium was packed as Jimmy Torrance stepped into the ring for the final event of the evening that was to decide the boxing championship of the university. Drawing to a close were the nearly four years of his college career—profitable years, Jimmy considered them, and certainly successful up to this point. In the beginning of his senior year he had captained the varsity eleven, and in the coming spring he would again sally forth upon the diamond as the star initial sacker of collegedom.

His football triumphs were in the past, his continued baseball successes a foregone conclusion—if he won to-night his cup of happiness, and an unassailably dominant position among his fellows, would be assured, leaving nothing more, in so far as Jimmy reasoned, to be desired from four years attendance at one of America's oldest and most famous universities.

The youth who would dispute the right to championship honors with Jimmy was a dark horse to the extent that he was a freshman, and, therefore, practically unknown. He had worked hard, however, and given a good account of himself in his preparations for the battle, and there were rumors, as there always are about every campus, of marvelous exploits prior to his college days. It was even darkly hinted that he was a professional pugilist. As a matter of fact, he was the best exponent of the manly art of self-defense that Jimmy Torrance had ever faced, and in addition thereto he outweighed the senior and outreached him.

The boxing contest, as the faculty members of the athletic committee preferred to call it, was, from the tap of the gong, as pretty a two-fisted scrap as ever any aggregation of low-browed fight fans witnessed. The details of this gory contest, while interesting, have no particular bearing upon the development of this tale. What interests us is the outcome, which occurred in the middle of a very bloody fourth round, in which Jimmy Torrance scored a clean knock-out.

It was a battered but happy Jimmy who sat in his room the following Monday afternoon, striving to concentrate his mind upon a college textbook which should, by all the laws of fiction, have been 'well thumbed,' but in reality, possessed unruffled freshness which belied its real age.

"I wish," mused Jimmy, "that I could have got to the bird who invented mathematics before he inflicted all this unnecessary anguish upon an already unhappy world. In about three rounds I could have saved thousands from the sorrow which I feel every time I open this blooming book."

He was still deeply engrossed in the futile attempt of accomplishing in an hour that for which the college curriculum set aside several months when there came sounds of approaching footsteps rapidly ascending the stairway. His door was unceremoniously thrown open, and there appeared one of those strange apparitions which is the envy and despair of the small-town youth—a naturally good-looking young fellow, the sartorial arts of whose tailor had elevated his waist-line to his arm-pits, dragged down his shoulders, and caved in his front until he had the appearance of being badly dished from chin to knees. His trousers appeared to have been made for a man with legs six inches longer than his, while his hat was evidently several sizes too large, since it would have entirely extinguished his face had it not been supported by his ears.

“Hello, Kid!” cried Jimmy. “What’s new?”

“Whiskers wants you,” replied the other. “Faculty meeting. They just got through with me.”

“Hell!” muttered Jimmy feelingly. “I don’t know what Whiskers wants with me, but he never wants to see anybody about anything pleasant.”

“I am here,” agreed the other, “to announce to the universe that you are right, Jimmy. He didn’t have anything pleasant to say to me. In fact, he insinuated that dear old alma mater might be able to wiggle along without me if I didn’t abjure my criminal life. Made some nasty comparison between my academic achievements and foxtrotting. I wonder, Jimmy, how they get that way?”

“That’s why they are profs,” explained Jimmy. “There are two kinds of people in this world—human beings and profs. When does he want me?”  
“Now.”

Jimmy arose and put on his hat and coat. “Good-by, Kid,” he said. “Pray for me, and leave me one cigarette to smoke when I get back,” and, grinning, he left the room.

James Torrance, Jr., was not greatly abashed as he faced the dour tribunal of the faculty. The younger members, among whom were several he knew to be mighty good fellows at heart, sat at the lower end of the long table, and with owl-like gravity attempted to emulate the appearance and manners of their seniors. At the head of the table sat Whiskers, as the dignified and venerable president of the university was popularly named. It was generally believed and solemnly sworn to throughout the large corps of undergraduates that within the knowledge of any living man Whiskers had never been known to smile, and to-day he was running true to form.

“Mr. Torrance,” he said, sighing, “it has been my painful duty on more than one occasion to call your attention to the uniformly low average of your academic standing. At the earnest solicitation of the faculty members of the athletic committee, I have been influenced, against my better judgment, to temporize with an utterly insufferable condition.

“You are rapidly approaching the close of your senior year, and in the light of the records which I have before me I am constrained to believe that it will be utterly impossible for you to graduate, unless from now to the end of the semester you devote yourself exclusively to your academic work. If you cannot assure me that you will do this, I believe it would be to the best interests of the university for you to resign now, rather than to fail of graduation. And in this decision I am fully seconded by the faculty members of the athletic committee, who realize the harmful effect upon university athletics in the future were so prominent an athlete as you to fail at graduation.”

If they had sentenced Jimmy to be shot at sunrise the blow could scarcely have been more stunning than that which followed the realization that he was not to be permitted to round out his fourth successful season at first base. But if Jimmy was momentarily stunned he gave no outward indication of the fact, and in the brief interval of silence following the president's ultimatum his alert mind functioned with the rapidity which it had often shown upon the gridiron, the diamond, and the squared circle.

Just for a moment the thought of being deprived of the pleasure and excitement of the coming baseball season filled his mind to the exclusion of every other consideration, but presently a less selfish impulse projected upon the screen of recollection the figure of the father he idolized. The boy realized the disappointment that this man would feel should his four years of college end thus disastrously and without the coveted diploma.

And then it was that he raised his eyes to those of the president.

“I hope, sir,” he said, “that you will give me one more chance—that you will let me go on as I have in the past as far as baseball is concerned, with the understanding that if at the end of each month between now and commencement I do not show satisfactory improvement I shall not be permitted to play on the team. But please don't make that restriction binding yet. If I lay off the track work I believe I can make up enough so that baseball will not interfere with my graduation.”

And so Whiskers, who was much more human than the student body gave him credit for being, and was, in the bargain, a good judge of boys, gave Jimmy another chance on his own terms, and the university's heavyweight champion returned to his room filled with determination to make good at the eleventh hour.

Possibly one of the greatest obstacles which lay in Jimmy's path toward academic honors was the fact that he possessed those qualities of character which attracted others to him, with the result that there was seldom an hour during the day that he had his room to himself. On his return from the faculty meeting he found a half-dozen of his classmates there, awaiting his return.

“Well?” they inquired as he entered.

"It's worse than that," said Jimmy, as he unfolded the harrowing details of what had transpired at his meeting with the faculty. "And now," he said, "if you birds love me, keep out of here from now until commencement. There isn't a guy on earth can concentrate on anything with a roomful of you mental ciphers sitting around and yapping about girls and other non-essential creations."

"Non-essential!" gasped one of his visitors, letting his eyes wander over the walls of Jimmy's study, whereon were nailed, pinned or hung countless framed and unframed pictures of non-essential creations.

"All right, Jimmy," said another. "We are with you, horse, foot and artillery. When you want us, give us the high-sign and we will come. Otherwise we will leave you to your beloved books. It is too bad, though, as the bar-boy was just explaining how the great drought might be circumvented by means of carrots, potato peelings, dish-water, and a raisin."

"Go on," said Jimmy; "I am not interested," and the boys left him to his "beloved" books.

Jimmy Torrance worked hard, and by dint of long hours and hard-working tutors he finished his college course and won his diploma. Nor did he have to forego the crowning honors of his last baseball season, although, like Ulysses S. Grant, he would have graduated at the head of his class had the list been turned upside down.

## CHAPTER 2. JIMMY WILL ACCEPT A POSITION

Following his graduation he went to New York to visit with one of his classmates for a short time before returning home. He was a very self-satisfied Jimmy, nor who can wonder, since almost from his matriculation there had been constantly dinned into his ears the plaudits of his fellow students. Jimmy Torrance had been the one big outstanding feature of each succeeding class from his freshman to his senior year, and as a junior and senior he had been the acknowledged leader of the student body and as popular a man as the university had ever known.

To his fellows, as well as to himself, he had been a great success—the success of the university—and he and they saw in the future only continued success in whatever vocation he decided to honor with his presence. It was in a mental attitude that had become almost habitual with him, and which was superinduced by these influences, that Jimmy approached the new life that was opening before him. For a while he would play, but in the fall it was his firm intention to settle down to some serious occupation, and it was in this attitude that he opened a letter from his father—the first that he had received since his graduation.

The letter was written on the letterhead of the Beatrice Corn Mills, Incorporated, Beatrice, Nebraska, and in the upper left-hand corner, in small type, appeared “James Torrance, Sr., President and General Manager,” and this is what he read:

Dear Jim

You have graduated—I didn’t think you would—with honors in football, baseball, prize-fighting, and five thousand dollars in debt. How you got your diploma is beyond me—in my day you would have got the sack.

Well, son, I am not surprised nor disappointed—it is what I expected. I know you are clean, though, and that some day you will awaken to the sterner side of life and an appreciation of your responsibilities.

To be an entirely orthodox father I should raise merry hell about your debts and utter inutility, at the same time disinheriting you, but instead I am going to urge you to come home and run in debt here where the cost of living is not so high as in the East—meanwhile praying that your awakening may come while I am on earth to rejoice.

Your affectionate

FATHER,

Am enclosing check to cover your debts and present needs.



For a long time the boy sat looking at the letter before him. He reread it once, twice, three times, and with each reading the film of unconscious egotism that had blinded him to his own shortcomings gradually became less opaque, until finally he saw himself as his father must see him. He had come to college for the purpose of fitting himself to succeed in some particular way in the stern battle of life which must follow his graduation; for, though his father had ample means to support him in indolence, Jimmy had never even momentarily considered such an eventuality.

In weighing his assets now he discovered that he had probably as excellent a conception of gridiron strategy and tactics as any man in America; that as a boxer he occupied a position in the forefront of amateur ranks; and he was quite positive that out-side of the major leagues there was not a better first baseman.

But in the last few minutes there had dawned upon him the realization that none of these accomplishments was greatly in demand in the business world. Jimmy spent a very blue and unhappy hour, and then slowly his natural optimism reasserted itself, and with it came the realization of his youth and strength and inherent ability, which, without egotism, he might claim.

"And then, too," he mused, "I have my diploma. I am a college graduate, and that must mean something. If dad had only reproached me or threatened some condign punishment I don't believe I should feel half as badly as I do. But every line of that letter breathes disappointment in me; and yet, God bless him, he tells me to come home and spend his money there. Not on your life! If he won't disinherit me, I am going to disinherit myself. I am going to make him proud of me. He's the best dad a fellow ever had, and I am going to show him that I appreciate him."

And so he sat down and wrote his father this reply:

DEAR DAD:

I have your letter and check. You may not believe it, but the former is worth more to me than the latter. Not, however, that I spurn the check, which it was just like you to send without a lot of grumbling and reproaches, even if I do deserve them.

Your letter shows me what a rotten mess I have made of myself. I'm not going to hand you a lot of mush, dad, but I want to try to do something that will give you reason to at least have hopes of rejoicing before I come home again. If I fail I'll come home anyway, and then neither one of us will have any doubt but what you will have to support me for the rest of my life. However, I don't intend to fail, and one of these days I will bob up all serene as president of a bank or a glue factory. In the mean time I'll keep you posted as to my whereabouts, but don't send me another cent until I ask for it; and when I do you will know that I have failed.

Tell mother that I will write her in a day or two, probably from Chicago, as I have always had an idea that that was one burg where I could make good.

With lots of love to you all,

Your affectionate

SON.

It was a hot July day that James Torrance, Jr., alighted from the Twentieth Century Limited at the La Salle Street Station, and, entering a cab, directed that he be driven to a small hotel; "for," he soliloquized, "I might as well start economizing at once, as it might be several days before I land a job such as I want," in voicing which sentiments he spoke with the tongues of the prophets.

Jimmy had many friends in Chicago with whom, upon the occasion of numerous previous visits to the Western metropolis, he had spent many hilarious and expensive hours, but now he had come upon the serious business of life, and there moved within him a strong determination to win financial success without recourse to the influence of rich and powerful acquaintances.

Since the first crushing blow that his father's letter had dealt his egotism, Jimmy's self-esteem had been gradually returning, though along new and more practical lines. His self-assurance was formed in a similar mold to those of all his other salient characteristics, and these conformed to his physical proportions, for physically, mentally and morally Jimmy Torrance was big; not that he was noticeably taller than other men or his features more than ordinarily attractive, but there was something so well balanced and harmonious in all the proportions of his frame and features as to almost invariably compel a second glance from even a casual observer, especially if the casual observer happened to be in the nonessential creation class.

And so Jimmy, having had plenty of opportunity to commune with himself during the journey from New York, was confident that there were many opportunities awaiting him in Chicago. He remembered distinctly of having read somewhere that the growing need of big business concerns was competent executive material—that there were fewer big men than there were big jobs—and that if such was the case all that remained to be done was to connect himself with the particular big job that suited him.

In the lobby of the hotel he bought several of the daily papers, and after reaching his room he started perusing the "Help Wanted" columns. Immediately he was impressed and elated by the discovery that there were plenty of jobs, and that a satisfactory percentage of them appeared to be big jobs. There were so many, however, that appealed to him as excellent possibilities that he saw it would be impossible to apply for each and every one; and then it occurred to him that he might occupy a more strategic position in the negotiations preceding his acceptance of a

position if his future employer came to him first, rather than should he be the one to apply for the position.

And so he decided the wisest plan would be to insert an ad in the "Situations Wanted" column, and then from the replies select those which most appealed to him; in other words, he would choose from the cream of those who desired the services of such a man as himself rather than risk the chance of obtaining a less profitable position through undue haste in seizing upon the first opening advertised.

Having reached this decision, and following his habitual custom, he permitted no grass to grow beneath his feet. Writing out an ad, he reviewed it carefully, compared it with others that he saw upon the printed page, made a few changes, rewrote it, and then descended to the lobby, where he called a cab and was driven to the office of one of the area's metropolitan morning newspapers.

Jimmy felt very important as he passed through the massive doorway into the great general offices of the newspaper. Of course, he didn't exactly expect that he would be ushered into the presence of the president or business manager, or that even the advertising manager would necessarily have to pass upon his copy, but there was within him a certain sensation that at that instant something was transpiring that in later years would be a matter of great moment, and he was really very sorry for the publishers of the newspaper that they did not know who it was who was inserting an ad in their Situations Wanted column.

He could not help but watch the face of the young man who received his ad and counted the words, as he was sure that the clerk's facial expression would betray his excitement. It was a great moment for Jimmy Torrance. He realized that it was probably the greatest moment of his life—that here Jimmy Torrance ceased to be, and James Torrance, Jr., Esq., began his career. But though he carefully watched the face of the clerk, he was finally forced to admit that the young man possessed wonderful control over his facial expression.

"That bird has a regular poker-face," mused Jimmy; "never batted an eye," and paying for his ad he pocketed the change and walked out. "Let's see," he figured; "it will be in tomorrow morning's edition. The tired business man will read it either at breakfast or after he reaches his office. I understand that there are three million people here in Chicago. Out of that three million it is safe to assume that one million will read my advertisement, and of that one-million there must be at least one thousand who have responsible positions which are, at present, inadequately filled.

"Of course, the truth of the matter is that there are probably tens of thousands of such positions, but to be conservative I will assume that there are only one thousand, and reducing it still further to almost an absurdity, I will figure that only ten per cent of those reply to my advertisement. In other words, at the lowest possible estimate I should

have one hundred replies on the first day. I knew it was foolish to run it for three days, but the fellow insisted that that was the proper way to do, as I got a lower rate.

“By taking it for three days, however, it doesn’t seem right to make so many busy men waste their time answering the ad when I shall doubtless find a satisfactory position the first day.”