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# STORM KING BANNER

By H. A. CODY

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# STORM KING BANNER

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# CHAPTER I

## WHY HE LAUGHED

When Jim Weston's house burned to the ground, it caused a great deal of talk not only in the Valley but all along the Shore Road. There had been other fires in the parish, but none had aroused such a general interest as this. There were several reasons. The record of Jim's past life was well known. Many had shaken their heads in disapproval when the "jail bird" had settled in the Valley. They did not want such a man in their midst, for there was no telling what he might do. They were, therefore, not surprised when his wife had left him two weeks before the fire. Perhaps she knew that he intended to burn the house down to get the insurance, and she would not agree to the deed. A man who would scuttle his ship for gain would not stop at anything, so people openly declared.

This suspicion was strengthened by the fact that Jim Weston had laughed when his dwelling was destroyed. There was no doubt about that, for several had heard him, and it formed a choice topic of conversation at the Corner store where a number of people were gathered.

"I can swear I heard him laugh," Billy Wright declared, "for I was only a few feet away. But it was a funny laugh which sent the shivers up an' down me spine. Jim was standin' right by his household stuff we had saved, an' lookin' at the burnin' sticks, when he gave that queer laugh. I asked him what he was laughin' at, but he made me no answer. You heard him, Tom, for you were quite near."

"Oh, I heard him, all right," Tom Griswell replied. "His laugh was queer, and no mistake. I've been thinking about it all day. Jim's been a puzzle to me ever since he came among us. But he puzzled me still more this morning. I happened to be passing his place when the fire broke out. Jim was at the barn, and I yelled to him, so we both got to the house about the same time. There was nothing we could do to save the building, but there was a chance to get some of the furniture out. To my surprise, Jim dashed at once upstairs and dragged down a baby's cradle. He ran a considerable risk, for the smoke was so thick up there that I don't know how he could see or breathe. But down he came with that cradle and carried it out in the yard. After that he didn't seem to care whether anything else was saved or not, and if the neighbors hadn't soon arrived he would have lost everything except what I managed to rescue."

"It was his baby's cradle," Billy explained. "He lost her last year, and it nearly broke his heart. She meant everything to him and his missus. But why he laughed is more'n I can understand."

Jim Weston himself was the only one who could solve the mystery. But he offered no explanation. Perhaps he did not know that his short laugh had aroused so much curiosity among his neighbors. And if he had known, it would not have concerned him in the least. He had other things to think about, and one was the home-coming of his wife. She had written that she would arrive on the evening boat, and for him to meet her at the wharf.

When his neighbors had gone, Jim remained for some time near the ruins of his house. Nell was coming home today, home to this! Again he laughed, but no one was near to hear him this time. He then pulled a letter from his pocket and held it in his blackened hands.

Dear Jim,

I am going home on Tuesday. Meet me at the wharf. I am sorry I left you, and want to go back to you again. Please forgive me. You need me, and I need you.

Your loving wife,  
NELL.

For some time he stood there with the letter in his hand. He was a lone figure of a man, in harmony with the ruins around him. Ruins! He had known nothing else for years. The destruction of his house was as nothing to the ruin of his own life. One could be restored; the other was beyond repair. He folded the letter and thrust it back into his pocket.

"Nell once said she wished the house would burn down. Her wish has been granted, and she is coming home today! Home to this!"

The rest of the morning he worked at a small building near the barn used for storing waggons, plow, harrow, and other farming implements. He cleared the place of these, and then set to work to make the building as habitable as possible. It would have to serve as their dwelling for the present. He worked with a feverish energy as an outlet to the passion that was stirring his soul. Life had treated him hard, but he would fight to the last. He would not give up. He had often driven his ship, the *Ocean Belle*, through a raging sea with mountainous waves reaching out their cruel arms to engulf him, and he had laughed their utmost efforts to scorn. And he would do the same now against the winds and waves of fate and the devilry of men. That sea-spirit was in his blood and had upheld him in most trying times. While clearing his rough land, when building his fences during the heat of summer, or facing the storms of winter, he was always the captain in command, and the *Ocean Belle* with her graceful lines, her proudly-lifting prow, her tall masts, swaying yards, and her clouds of canvas, was his inspiration. Nothing could ever blur that vision. Once a captain, always a captain, whether on sea or land.

That evening Jim arrived as the *River Queen* nosed her way into the wharf. He saw Nell, carrying her small grip, coming down the gang-plank. How pretty she looked, and so happy. She smiled as she came to where her husband was standing by the waggon. But the smile faded when she saw the expression upon his face. She shrank back as from a blow. Her lip quivered and a sudden weakness came upon her. Jim took the grip and tossed it into the waggon.

"Climb up," he ordered.

His wife, however, hesitated and glanced back at the steamer, as if she longed to return. Jim saw and interpreted her look. His face darkened, and he clutched her somewhat roughly by the arm.

"Climb up," he repeated.

His wife at once obeyed, and in another minute they were on their way towards the main road. Nothing was said for a time, and Mrs. Weston sat very rigid by her husband's side. She was angry, and it was impossible for her to remain silent any longer.

"This is a strange welcome you have given me," she began. "You don't seem one bit glad to have me home again."

Jim aroused as from a deep reverie and laughed sarcastically.

"H'm, what other kind of a welcome should a deserter receive?"

"But I'm not a deserter. I merely went home to visit mother."

"I suppose so. But if any one of my men had left the *Ocean Belle* for two weeks, I know what it would have been called. It would have been desertion, pure and simple.

"But I'm not a sailor. I'm your wife, and I have a right to go on a visit when I desire. It is the first time I have left you since we came to the Valley. Surely you do not begrudge me a holiday."

"No, I can't say I do. But it was the way you left, Nell. You didn't intend to come back. I don't know what changed your mind, and it's not necessary for me to know."

"It was the thought of you all alone without any one to help you. I was tired when I left, and my nerves were unstrung. But when I had a good rest, I saw things in a new light, so decided to come home."

"Well, that's interesting. I did miss you, Nell, that's a fact. When I came in from work the house was mighty lonely. Outside of the Deans I saw very few of the neighbors. They don't want anything to do with a jail-bird."

"Don't say that word. Please don't. You are going to live it down, and I am going to help all I can. And oh, Jim, I am going to fix up the house and make it more cosy. Mother gave me some lovely stuff for new window-curtains, and other things which you will like."

"That will be very nice, Nell. It will take a lot of stuff to fix up the windows."

"But I have plenty, more than enough. There is some specially fine material for the front windows. I have always been ashamed of those old muslin curtains. I knew the neighbors criticized them."

"They did, and everything else, chiefly me."

"But the Deans didn't, Jim."

"Oh, no; they're different. But for them I wouldn't stay a day in this cursed Valley."

"Have you seen Jacynth lately?"

"Mostly every day as she rode by. She always waved to me, and several times brought me over a hot dinner. She's a great girl."

"Indeed she is, and she will be delighted to help me fix up the house. Mother gave me several pieces of cloth to cover those old chairs which are worn thread-bare."

"They need fixing, all right."

"And, Jim don't you think the house should be made more respectable outside? We can't afford paint, I know, but it could be whitewashed, and that would improve its appearance so much. I could do it myself."

"Yes, I suppose it would be an improvement. It's a mighty good idea. It'll take a lot of work, though, Nell, to put our house in good shape now. It's in a pretty bad mess."

"Oh, I'll soon get it set to rights again, and with the new curtains to the windows, and other improvements I have in mind, it will be almost a new place."

Jim smiled grimly as he flicked the horse with the whip. What a surprise was in store for Nell. She would soon find out what the house was like. She had wanted it to burn down, so her wish had been granted.

It took them about an hour to drive from the wharf over a road by no means smooth. The old waggon bumped a great deal, for the small bridges were composed of poles with earth piled in mounds on top, the ruts were deep, and many holes lined the way. Mrs. Weston did most of the talking, telling about her visit to her mother and the friends she had met. Jim said little, and as they drew near their journey's end, he became somewhat restive. He knew the ordeal was ahead, and dreaded it. But it served Nell right, he reasoned with himself. It was a just punishment.

As they at length rounded a bend in the road, Mrs. Weston looked eagerly ahead for a view of the house which she was planning to transform. At once a startled expression came into her eyes, and she clutched her husband's arm.

"Where is the house?" she gasped. "It is gone!"

"Sure, it's gone. It went up in smoke this morning. You wanted it to burn, didn't you?"

With a pitiful little cry, Mrs. Weston slumped down in the seat and remained silent for a few minutes. It was only with considerable difficulty that Jim Weston controlled himself. If his wife had begun to scold and upbraid it would have been different. But to feel her limp form at his side, and to hear her half-smothered sobs, touched his heart. He regretted now that he had not told her sooner about the fire.

"Did you do it, Jim?" Mrs. Weston at length asked in a low voice which was scarcely more than a whisper.

"Burn it? No! What made you think I would do such a thing?"

"To spite me. You thought—"

"I'm not a devil, Nell, although fate is trying to make me one. Yes, fate and the demons of hell. But, by God, I'll win out in spite of them. I'm not down yet, even though my house is burned to the ground, and I'm a tainted jail-bird."

In a few minutes Jim stopped his horse by the blackened embers and the heap of household effects. His wife said nothing, but stared at the desolate ruins where but a short time before had stood their small house. She then looked at the pile of stuff on her right, beds, tables, chairs, cupboard, and stove. But she hardly noticed these, for her eyes were centred upon one object. With a little cry of joy, she quickly alighted and went at once to the cradle. Kneeling by its side, she examined it carefully. It was just as she had left it two weeks before, made up, as for a child. And there at the foot she saw a doll and a pair of little shoes. Nothing had been disturbed, although the clothes were somewhat blackened by

the smoke. Then, overcome by her emotion, she flung out her arms over the cradle and sobbed as if her heart would break. In an instant Jim was by her side, and with his right hand upon her shoulder stood silently there gazing down upon the doll and the shoes. Presently Mrs. Weston lifted her head and looked at her husband.

"Oh, I am glad you have saved this, Jim. It's all we have to remind us of Annie."

"That and—and memory."

He suddenly turned, and his hand dropped from his wife's shoulder, for the sound of a horse's hoofs had reached him. And as he looked, he beheld a man mounted upon a large bay mare coming towards him. Mrs. Weston rose to her feet, wiped away her tears, and smiled as the horseman approached. No one could have been more welcome at such a time than this man who had been their firm friend during their trying years, and who understood them better than anyone else.

Prosper Dean took in the whole situation at a glance. He had seen the kneeling woman and the man standing by her side, so surmised its meaning. He lifted his hat to the woman in a courtly manner as he drew rein. His whole appearance, in fact, was in keeping with the noble horse he was riding. They were both thoroughbreds, as any one could see at a glance. Erect and with an easy grace, Mr. Dean rode as if born to the saddle. He might have been a commander leading a victorious army, so strong and confident did he seem. The proud, dignified poise of his head, the high, broad forehead, keen eyes, slightly aquiline nose, sensitive mouth, clean-shaven intellectual face, stamped him as no ordinary person. He seemed like a man of such dominating force of personality that he was not only able to rule himself, but all with whom he came into contact. And this was so, for Prosper Dean was a name of respect, not only in the Valley, but for miles around.

"Accept my sincerest sympathy," he began. "I have been to the city today, so only learned of your loss a short time ago from Mrs. Jukins. Have you any insurance?"

Jim shook his head.

"Ah, that is too bad. But you have saved your furniture, I see. That is something, anyway. In a day or two I shall help you with a new house, as I have plenty of boards and scantling to which you are welcome. But at present I want your help, Mrs. Weston. Hettie Jukins came home yesterday. She is sick, and she will be worse shortly. The doctor is away from home and will not be back until some time to-morrow. Mrs. Jukins is at her wit's end. She is generally like that, poor soul, always upset about something. Now, however, she has real cause for worry. She hailed me as I was passing and told me about Hettie. When I heard that you were home, I came at once to you for help. I hope you can go."

"Why certainly I shall go, unless I am needed here," Mrs. Weston replied as she looked at her husband.

"There is nothing you can do just now, Nell," was the quiet response. "You will have shelter, anyway, over your head to-night."

"And where will you sleep?" his wife inquired.

"Oh, it doesn't matter about me. But I have been fixing up the waggon-house over there, so it will be quite comfortable. To-morrow I shall get it all set to rights, and it will do until we get a new house built."

"Come with me to-night," Mr. Dean invited. "We have plenty of room."

"No, thank you kindly, sir. I prefer to stay here."

"Suit yourself, Jim, but I want your help to-morrow. I have an order for several large ships-knees, which must be delivered in a few days for the *Bonnie Lass* which is now being built at Marsh Creek."

"How can I help you, Mr. Dean, when I have so much to do here?"

"Because I am going to assist you with your new house. And, besides, I have news that will interest you. Old Thistle is in town."

At these words Jim Weston started and a fierce gleam came into his eyes. His body became tense, and his hands clenched hard together as he stepped towards Mr. Dean.

"When did he come?" he asked.



"A week or so ago. One of his sons has been in the city for some time, and has opened up an office there."

"What for?"

"Shipbuilding and lumbering."

Jim asked no further questions but stood lost in thought. His eyes had narrowed to mere slits, and the expression upon his face was not pleasant to behold. Mr. Dean reached out and laid a hand upon his shoulder.

"Steady, Jim. Be careful and don't do anything rash. Come and help me to-morrow, for I want to have a talk with you."

"But are you sure he's in town, Mr. Dean?"

"I saw him on the street."

"Did he see you?"

"No. But that will do now, for I must get home."

As Prosper Dean rode away, he turned once, looked back and saw Jim Weston standing just as he had left him, unheeding his wife who was apparently pleading earnestly with him.

"Jim is in an ugly mood. If he meets Old Thistle, it's hard to tell what might happen, murder, maybe. Now, what can I do to avoid a tragedy? I shall need much of Prospero's magic to control Caliban."

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## CHAPTER II

### A FRIEND IN NEED

The musical click of Midnight's steel-shod hoofs upon the Storm King Valley road harmonized well with the clear August afternoon. It was a fitting accompaniment to nature's symphony of bird, insect, and lisping leaves. Midnight was a noble animal, black and glossy, with great chest, proudly-arching neck, full eye, swift as a grey hound and nimble as a mountain goat. He had given his fair mistress a thrilling ride from the river road. He had sped like the wind up hill and down, with ears laid back, flowing mane and loose rein. Now, however, at the entrance to the Valley he had been checked in his headlong speed, and he well knew the hand that restrained him. His strong body quivered with the excitement of the run, and he champed somewhat impatiently at his bit, for he was longing to overtake Lad, the thoroughbred collie, speeding on ahead.

Jacynth Dean noticed this, and smiled. Her face was flushed, and her dark hair was tossed by the wild ride. She knew how Midnight enjoyed such a run, with Lad just far enough ahead to keep clear of those lightning-like hoofs. But she was satisfied now, so the horse had to obey her imperious will. Grace, confidence, and repose marked every movement of her slightly-swaying body as Midnight strode forward. She was perfectly at home in the saddle, not the kind generally used by women, but a man's saddle where she could ride astride, free and unrestrained by long flowing skirts which she despised when on horseback. She had ridden thus from girlhood, at first bareback, on horses as strong and noble as Midnight. She had scandalized her neighbors then. But when they came to know and understand her, they merely smiled, and decided that she was different from other girls. But Jacynth never minded what people said or thought. She enjoyed life too much to give a moment's worry about the opinions of others.

For several hundred yards the road wound its way through thick trees, then suddenly opened upon a large newly-cleared piece of ground from which the grain had been recently gathered. It was enclosed by a rough snake-fence, the poles of which were charred by the fire they had undergone during the spring burning ere the sowing of the grain had taken place. The whole clearing was dotted with numerous stumps, and a serious expression came into Jacynth's eyes as she thought of the man who had toiled there, the strong, reserved Jim Weston. She looked over to where the house had stood. No one was to be seen about the place, and she knew why. Jim had gone to the river to meet his wife who was coming on the afternoon boat. She had been away from home for two weeks, so Jim had burnt down the house to spite her, so people said. Yes, that was one of the things she had heard that afternoon. But she knew it was untrue. Jim Weston was not the man to do such a deed. She had too much confidence in him to believe such a report.

And she had heard something else which had inflamed her heart. Several had even suggested that Jim had burnt his house to get the insurance. A man who would scuttle his ship for money, would not hesitate to burn his house for the same reason. It was nothing more than could be expected from a jail-bird. She had spiritedly defended Jim, although she was well aware that it made no difference to what people thought. So the wild ride from the shore had been necessary to relieve her excited feelings, and it had accomplished its purpose. She was quite calm now, and as Midnight clipped on his way she was in a most thoughtful mood. She paid no attention as formerly to the beauty of the scenery, the great wooded hills surrounding the Valley, the soft foliage of the sun-kissed trees, the twitter of birds, and hum of insects. Even Lad, racing and doubling after squirrel or rabbit, did not arouse her from the reverie into which she had sunk. For a time she was lost to the world, and thought only of the two upon whom the gossip of the community had centred.

She was at length aroused as Midnight turned suddenly from the main road upon a path among the thick trees on the left. This led to the brook, and in another minute the horse was knee-deep in the water. He was about to drink, when he threw up his head and started back with a snort of fright. Something on the opposite bank had attracted his attention, and as Jacynth looked in that direction, she saw a young man seated upon the ground with his back against a great pine tree. Astonished at the sudden appearance of the horse and its rider, he rose to his feet, and leaning upon a stick, limped slowly towards the brook. At his side hung a flat knapsack, suspended by a strap across his right shoulder. This Jacynth noticed at a glance, for the brook was narrow here, and she was almost in midstream. Midnight, having recovered from his fright, had his nose buried into the flowing water, and was slaking his burning thirst. A jerk at the rein, and a sharp word of command, caused him reluctantly to lift his head and move forward, splash his way across the stream and leap with a bound up the bank.

With kindling eyes the young man watched the horse and rider. Never had he beheld such a scene. It thrilled his soul, and

at once his right hand moved towards his knapsack. He was about to unfasten the strap, when he hesitated and a smile overspread his face. He limped forward a few steps and then stopped.

"Pardon me," he began, "but may I sketch you and that great horse? I was tempted to do so without your permission."

Jacynth smiled as she looked into the clear eyes upraised to hers. They were fearless, honest eyes, and she felt that she could trust this stranger.

"And I should like to sketch you, too, sir, if I had the ability. My, what a picture you would make! What has happened to you, anyway?"

"Nothing much. Just a sprained ankle. I hurt it back there in the woods, and had a hard time getting here. I became separated from my companion, and he is searching for me, most likely. But no one will worry much over me. Some might even be glad if Kent Rayson never came back."

Jacynth was surprised at this note of bitterness. What was this young man doing in the woods? Where had he come from? Perhaps he would explain later. Now, however, he needed assistance.

All at once a peculiar fancy came into her mind. She was suddenly transported back to the days of ancient chivalry of which she had read so much in her father's wonderful books. This young man was a knight of fair renown who had gone forth against a cruel enemy. He had been wounded and unhorsed in a fierce encounter, and now needed her help. A smile flitted across her face as this vision passed, and a slight flush mantled her cheeks. What if this stranger surmised what she was thinking about? Did he notice her momentary confusion?

Kent Rayson, however, was not looking at her just then. He was gazing at the brook, and in his eyes was a dreamy expression. The scene he had beheld of the girl mounted upon the horse was stirring his imagination. What a picture that would make, with the trees as a verdant background. Again his hand fumbled at the strap of the knapsack, and he looked at the girl.

"Do you mind if I sketch you, Miss—?"

"Jacynth Dean. That is my name, with no 'Miss' attached to it. But suppose you wait and make your sketch later. You are tired and suffering, so I want you to come with me."

"Do you live near here, Miss—Jacynth, I mean? What a pretty name. It is another form of hyacinth, a flower I love, and which I have often painted. Or it might be the sapphire, as some think, worthy to adorn a queen's hand or a monarch's crown. But to me it is now both a flower and a jewel when it is the name of a woodland princess who has so unexpectedly rescued me in my sad plight."

A sunny smile overspread the girl's face, and her heart quickened at these words. She had never heard a man speak like this before. He was different from any she had ever met. And she admired his courage, too.

"This is no time or place for poetry, sir," she reminded. "How can you talk in such a way when you are suffering?"

"Suffering means little to me in surroundings such as these. 'It is the mind that makes the body rich', as Master Shakespeare says. And it is true, for though I suffer in body, I am still in the bliss of heaven, and think little of bodily pains."

During this outburst Jacynth's right hand had been stroking Midnight's glossy neck. She was thinking of her father. How he would enjoy talking to this stranger who quoted Shakespeare so readily. What a bond of friendship it would be between them, and what a pleasure it would be for her to listen. Her father had often told her that there was no one near to whom he could talk about the master minds of the ages, and he was forced to keep his great thoughts to himself. Now, perhaps, his wish would be satisfied in this young man.

Slipping lightly from her horse, she motioned Rayson to the saddle.

"You take my place, sir."

"No, no," the young man protested. "I can walk quite well."

"Perhaps you think so. But from your words I judge you need a guardian. Your mind may be what you say it is, but if it makes you forget your suffering, your injured foot, for instance, it is necessary that some one more earthly should look after your body. Midnight and I must do that now, and Martha will attend to you later. So do as I say, and take my place."

"And let you walk! No, I cannot. That would not be right."

"Very well, I shall have to leave you here alone with your surroundings and the master minds. Perhaps they will care for you. But, come, be sensible."

"I suppose I must," Kent reluctantly agreed. "If you leave me here I shall be helpless. And, besides, I do not want to be separated from my woodland princess. Is it far to your home?"

"Not far when one is well, but a long way when every step is an agony. Mount, sir, and I shall take you there."

Seeing that further resistance was useless, Kent was soon in the saddle, and Midnight was moving along the winter lumber road which led to the main highway. Nature was at her best on this bright August afternoon. The air was laden with the invigorating scent of balsam-dripping trees, leaves, damp moss, and woodland flowers. Bees buzzed, birds chirped, and squirrels chattered from over-hanging branches. The brook murmured gently over tiny bars and around smooth stones on its placid way to the river. Little wonder, then, that the hearts of the young man and maiden should be deeply affected by these mystic influences. Wise old nature was doing her part, and doing it wonderfully well, in weaving about these two young people her web of subtle enchantment.

So on they moved along the woodland road, Jacynth with her right hand upon the bridle rein restraining Midnight's impatient haste, and guiding his steps over the rough places. To Kent Rayson it all seemed like a marvellous dream from which he was afraid he would suddenly awaken. He could not keep his eyes off the girl on his left. The proud poise of her head, her animated face, her strong self-reliance, and the ease with which she controlled the high-spirited horse, impressed him deeply. Who was she, anyway? And what was such a girl doing in a wilderness like this?

They came at length out upon the main highway, which was merely a rough road leading to the settlement farther inland. To the right a wooden bridge spanned the brook, and as they entered upon this Kent uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"What a scene for an artist! Let us stop here for a few minutes. I must make a sketch of that rippling water down among those stones and through such an entrancing setting of dark green trees. Oh, it is wonderful!"

"You can get that again," Jacynth smilingly replied. "You are forgetting yourself in your enthusiasm. See," and she motioned to the left, "I live there, quite near."

Kent looked and caught a glimpse of a house among the trees. This was another surprise to him, although he said nothing more as they passed from the bridge, and a few rods beyond turned aside and entered upon a well-made, slightly-ascending gravel road. This led to the house beyond, a neat, fair-sized building, of artistic design, its soft, light-greenish color harmonizing well with the various shades of the trees surrounding the place. And around it was a garden filled with a profusion of old-fashioned flowers, now at their best. They were not arranged in a stiff formal manner, but seemed as if they had sprung from seeds sown at random. At a glance, however, Kent knew that such was not the case, for what appeared like confusion was really the outcome of an artistic arrangement. He turned inquiringly to the girl.

"This is fairy-land! Who did it?"

"Prospero, of course, with some help from Miranda, Ariel and Caliban."

"Prospero! Miranda!"

Jacynth laughed outright at the bewildered expression upon the young man's face. She was in a teasing mood, and it pleased her to see this stranger's astonishment.

"Yes," she continued, "Prospero has the magic art and is able to do wonderful things, even to producing flowers from this poor soil. Just wait until you see him and learn of his great wisdom."

"But who is Prospero?"

"My father, and I am Miranda. Ariel is the spirit of the air, and Caliban is—but, perhaps, it is just as well that you do not

know. Allow me to help you from the saddle, sir."

But Kent did not seem to hear this invitation. He was staring up into the air, for his attention had been arrested by something above the trees on a hill, eastward of the house. There he beheld a flag floating from a pole attached to the top of a tall pine. It was the flag of no nation, so far as he could tell, but a piece of cloth in the shape of a pointed banner containing three colors, red, white and blue.

"What is that for?" he asked. "It's a strange place for a flag."

"It's Prospero's idea, so you will have to ask him. He can explain its meaning better than I can. But, come, let me assist you down."

They were now in front of the verandah steps, and Kent alighted, his mind filled with wonder at the girl's strange words, the meaning of this beautiful place in the forest, and the flag floating from the tall pine.

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# CHAPTER III

## CONTROLLING CALIBAN

As Prosper Dean approached his house by the brook, he heard the sweet strains of a violin coming from an open window. He was somewhat surprised, for Jacynth very seldom played on her favorite instrument unless he accompanied her on the piano. Drawing nearer, his trained and finely-sensitive ear detected something in the music that caused him to rein up his horse and listen attentively. There was an unusual throbbing passion of joy in every note, causing an anxious expression to come into his eyes. Only one thing could make Jacynth play like that. It was something he knew must come, but he had always banished the thought from his mind, hoping that his daughter would be his, and his alone, for several years, at least. But was he now to lose her, the joy of his life? Had some one unexpectedly crossed her path who would take her from him?

After he had stabled and fed Camilla, he walked slowly to the front door of his house and entered. He paused just inside, for what he saw in the room beyond held him spellbound. There stood Jacynth, her face alight with animation, as she drew the bow deftly across the strings. There was no doubt about her happiness, for it was expressed in her countenance and every movement. And lying upon the couch by her side was a young man, his eyes fixed in rapturous admiration upon the fair player. Prosper Dean had not been mistaken. The scene before him dissolved any doubt. Jacynth was his no longer! The time had at last arrived when another had usurped his place in her heart. And who was the young man? He could see his face quite plainly, but it brought no recollection of any one he knew. It was a strong, manly face, he could tell at a glance. But it seemed to him just then like the face of an evil spirit which had entered his home to steal away the heart of his only child. And how had he come here? What was he doing lying on that couch? It was strange that he appeared so perfectly at home. Thoughts hot and furious surged through his mind, and his first impulse was to rush forward and demand an explanation. But when he looked at his daughter, his anger cooled. Perhaps it would be better to do nothing rash. He would make inquiries and decide later. Jacynth must be considered.

Suddenly the music stopped, for the girl had caught sight of her father standing in the hallway. Placing the violin and the bow upon the table, she hurried towards him and gave him an affectionate kiss of welcome.

"Oh, father, I'm so glad you've come," she exclaimed. "You are late, and supper is waiting. And we have company. See what I found by the brook with a sprained ankle."

"So that is the trouble, eh?" Mr. Dean queried as he followed his daughter.

Kent Rayson had risen to a sitting position, and was about to stand when Jacynth motioned him to lie down again.

"You must be careful and remain very still," she advised. "Father, this is Kent Rayson. He is an artist and paints wonderful pictures. He must show you some of the ones he has with him."

Mr. Dean's outstretched hand of welcome dropped to his side at the mention of the young man's name. At first he thought he had not heard aright.

"Rayson, did you say?" he asked turning to his daughter.

"Yes, that's it, father, and isn't it a nice one?"

"I don't like it," Kent declared with a bitterness that seemed foreign to his nature. "I have often longed to change it. But excuse me, sir, I did not intend to mention this."

"Why do you wish to change your name, young man?"

Kent's face flushed a little, and he became somewhat embarrassed.

"Never mind now," Mr. Dean continued. "You can explain later if you wish. In the meantime, I bid you welcome here, and we shall do all we can for your welfare."

"I have received every attention already, sir, and am most grateful."

"Martha has been wonderful," Jacynth explained. "She knew just what to do. Now she has supper ready, so we must not

keep her waiting any longer."

"I shall be with you shortly," her father replied. "I am dusty, you see, and my face and hands are grimy. You begin supper, and I shall be with you as soon as I can."

Upstairs in his room Mr. Dean stood and gazed for a few minutes out of the window. He heard the voices of the young people, and their happy laughter as Jacynth helped the invalid into the dining-room. "Rayson!" That name struck him like a blow. It leaped at him now in the face and form of "Old Thistle" Tim Rayson, the man who had wrecked so many men, Jim Weston's and his own among the number. Could it be possible that this young man downstairs was Rayson's son! And Jacynth knew nothing about it. He had kept the story from her, as Prospero had kept the tale of his ill treatment from Miranda. He had done it with the best intention, that he might conquer the Caliban in his heart, and rise superior to all outward circumstances. He had done so for years, and when he felt sure of himself, this son of Old Thistle had unexpectedly met Jacynth, and from all appearance the two were fascinated with each other. He had taken Prospero of the Tempest story as a guiding light. He had been his inspiration, for like him he, too, would be the master of things in heaven above and the earth beneath, because he would be master of himself. But now! His hands clenched hard, and he groaned inwardly. What should he do? It was one thing to follow Shakespeare's tale in fancy, but quite another thing in reality. But this young man might not be Tim Rayson's son. That was his only hope. He must find out, and at once.

Gradually Prosper Dean regained his self-control. He must be master of himself if he hoped to master others. Perhaps the test was now before him, and here was his opportunity of putting into practice some of Prospero's magical power. He glanced out of the window, off to the triple-colored banner floating above the great pine, and what he saw was known only to himself.

When he reached the dining-room he was himself once more. He took his place at the head of the table with no trace of the mental struggle through which he had recently passed. Jacynth and Kent hardly noticed his arrival, so deeply engaged were they in conversation about music and painting.

"I have often wished that I could paint the beautiful things I see every day," the girl was saying. "It must be wonderful to do so."

"But you express your thoughts in music," Kent reminded. "I long to do that, but cannot. My mother could, though, for she was a fine pianist. She tried to teach me, but it was no use."

"Is your mother dead?" Jacynth asked, detecting the note of sadness in his voice.

"Yes, she died when I needed her so much. She was the only one who understood my longing for something more than ship-building, lumbering, and money making, which possess my father soul and body. I was her son, while my twin brother Matt was my father's. Mother named me Kent, her maiden name, and from the English County where she was born. She often told me that her family was descended from William Kent, the famous painter and sculptor."

"So your father is a ship-builder?" Mr. Dean questioned.

"He has been that all his life, with lumbering as a side-line. He owned several vessels when we lived at Chaddick, but he has only one now."

"What happened to them?"

"They were wrecked. My father became discouraged, so he left Chaddick and moved to Saint John where he hopes to do better. Matt has been in the city for a year overseeing the building of another ship. He likes that work, but I hate it. When I left college I wanted to continue my studies in art, but my father would not listen to such a thing, so I am forced to grind over books and accounts in the office. But in another year I shall be free, and then—"

He paused abruptly, somewhat confused.

"Excuse me, Mr. Dean, I did not intend to trouble you with my affairs."

"You are not troubling me, young man. I am greatly interested. I feel sorry for you. As you say, there are more things than money-making, and it is a pity you cannot continue your studies. There are many who are quite willing to become hewers of wood and drawers of water to one who has seen the vision."

"Ah, I am glad to hear you say that, sir. Now, what kind of a life would I lead chained to a desk when my mind is upon the great things of the soul? Matt is my father's son in every way, and he is just like him. Why, he was given his name after St. Matthew, the apostle, who took father's fancy because he was a money-maker. I used to think it funny, but later when I realized that Matt's whole soul was given up to money, it worried me. Matt and I have nothing in common except our looks. Many cannot tell us apart."

"Are you having a holiday now?" Mr. Dean abruptly inquired.

"Holiday! No one has a holiday who works for my father. This has turned out to be one for me, though. I was sent with a letter to Mr. Horn who lives in the settlement near you. Joe Burton, a woodsman, went with me. We came by boat to Gravel Cove and struck in overland through the woods by a trail around Square Lake. I had never been that way before, but Joe knew it well. After I had delivered the letter to Mr. Horn, we started to return to the river by Storm King Valley to catch the afternoon boat to the city. Joe was much interested in the great timber region we passed through, while I could think only of the scenery. In some manner we became separated. I wandered about for a long time, sprained my ankle, and when I had about given up hope of finding my way out of the wilderness, I came at last to the brook where a forest fairy found me. Joe is searching for me, most likely, and wondering what has become of me."

"You have had a hard time of it," Mr. Dean remarked. "Your father will be very anxious if Joe returns without you."

A peculiar expression came into Kent Rayson's eyes, and his face grew serious.

"Oh, I guess he won't mind. He might be pleased if I never returned. But, there, I must say no more about that. I did not intend to mention it."

Curious though he was to know the meaning of these words, Mr. Dean did not question him about the matter.

"So your father knows Peter Horn?"

"He never met him. But Mr. Horn has some very fine logs on his place which father is anxious to obtain for lumbering next winter. The letter was about that, I suppose, although I am not certain. Father never tells me his business except when it is absolutely necessary."

During this conversation Jacynth's eyes were glowing with the light of interest. She said nothing, being satisfied to listen, especially to what the visitor said. Her heart was full of sympathy, and she longed to know more about Kent's past life. Here was a mystery which stirred her romantic mind. To her he was a hero who had stepped out of the old tales she had read in her father's books. And he was so noble looking, a young Apollo, so he seemed to her. And when he looked at her, as he often did during the meal, a strange and wonderful thrill possessed her soul. It seemed almost like a dream from which she would suddenly awaken.

When supper was ended, Mr. Dean went to the stable to attend to the horses. This was the excuse he made for leaving the table somewhat abruptly. He felt that he must be out of the house by himself to think over what he had just heard. Although very calm outwardly, his mind was greatly disturbed. He was favourably impressed with Kent Rayson, and that troubled him. If he had been any one but Old Thistle's son it would be different. But this young man, of all men, to be in his house, seated at his table, and winning the heart of his only child! The thought was almost unbearable. Unknown to Jacynth during supper he had been watching her animated face, the light shining in her eyes, the rapt attention she paid to every word which fell from the young man's lips, and read their meaning.

He was longer than usual caring for the horses this evening, for at times he would stand very still gazing off at Storm King summit, or at the flag on his left surmounting the great pine. His love for his horses came next to his love for his daughter. They had never failed him, had never been untrue. Day or night they were ever ready to serve him without question, and to die, if necessary, without a protest. And now they seemed nearer to him than ever. A daughter, even, might give her heart to another, but not these animals. Their constancy was enduring. Fondly he stroked their glossy necks in turn.

"Ah, my beauties," he murmured, "let me have a portion of your courage, patience, and faithfulness. Inspire me with your nobleness that I may be strong to face all trials with a spirit that nothing can daunt. You are horses, and I am supposed to be your master and superior to you. But you can teach me the lesson I now need. Help me, Midnight and Camilla, to conquer and be just."



He left the stable and stood for a while looking across the brook towards Storm King, now dark with the shades of the steadily-deepening twilight. How often Jacynth had thus gazed with him, for she had always accompanied him to the stable to care for the horses. Always, except this evening! They had been everything to each other. But now some one else had taken his place, and he was alone.

He did not care to go into the house just then. He felt that the place would almost stifle him. No longer did his books allure him. Only in the great open could he think clearly. Jacynth must not know of his mental struggle. He did not blame her for deserting him. It was but natural, for youth is passionate and susceptible. She loved him as much as ever, he knew, but added to that was now her love for another. He had to bow to the inevitable, and take a second place. It had always been so, and would be to the end of time.

He was thinking of this as he made his way along the brook on his left. There was no path here, and he was glad, for contending with the roughness and unevenness of the way was in keeping with the agitated state of his mind. The struggle was bracing, so when he at length came out into a small clearing, he felt somewhat like a conqueror who had fought his way through an opposing host. He bared his head, and with his handkerchief wiped the perspiration from his brow.

"That has done me good," he declared. "I am myself again. Yes, I am Prospero, master of myself and others. The invigorating scent of these great trees has stimulated me like a magic elixir. Or is it the spirit of Ariel, released by Prospero long ago, that has come to do my bidding? Ah, it may be so, for Master Shakespeare has said that 'There are more things in heaven and in earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy'. Come now, Ariel, thou elfin spirit, arouse or allay the elements at my command, and be the swift-winged messenger of my every behest."

He was brought suddenly to earth by the sound of footsteps. Startled, he turned and saw a man but a few yards away coming towards him. At first he could not distinguish his face owing to the darkness, but as he drew nearer, he recognized him as Joe Burton. He was in a hurry, and panting hard from exertion and anxiety.

"Oh, it's you, Mr. Dean, is it?" he asked in astonishment. "I thought at first it was a bear. But, say, have you seen anything of a d— fool? I lost him back yonder, and have had a h— of a time huntin' fer him."

"He's at my house with a sprained ankle."

"Thank God!" Joe fervently exclaimed with a sigh of relief. "I'll be damned if ever I act as guide to an artist again. He's a nice young feller, but he's silly as a loon when he gets into the woods."

"In what way, Joe?"

"Well, I can hardly explain. But all the way from the river he was dartin' here and there, exclaimin' at what he called 'scenes', and such like. He also talked about 'local color', 'background', 'light and shadder', and other words I can't remember, and couldn't pronounce if I did. But I'm glad he's safe."

"How did you get separated, Joe?"

"Oh, Kent wandered off to look at some scene, so I lost track of him."

"And what were you doing?"

"Me? Oh, I was cruisin' around through Peter Horn's fine block of timber. It's the best in the country, so Old Rayson should have a good winter's cut."

"So he intends to lumber there?"

"I can't say fer sure. Rayson has bought a strip of land adjoinin'. He may cut there first."

"He will pay Peter well, I suppose?"

"Most likely. It will be a good thing fer Peter, as he's too old to do the lumberin' himself. But, say, Mr. Dean, I'm as hungry as a bear, fer I haven't eaten much since this mornin'. We brought only a small lunch with us."

"Come with me, Joe. You shall have supper at my house. Martha will be pleased to serve you."

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# CHAPTER IV

## STARTLING NEWS

The vapours of night had lifted from the Valley, and only a few stray wisps were hovering over the hills as Kent Rayson mounted Midnight before the door of Val Haven, the name Mr. Dean had given to his house. He smiled as he looked at Jacynth standing at the horse's head with her right hand upon the bridle-rein.

"What a helpless creature I am this morning. Wait until my foot is well, and then you shall see how I can mount a horse. I wish you were going to the shore."

"Father won't let me. He thinks a man can take better care of you than a girl."

"But when shall I see you again, Jacynth? I must come back. Why, this place is a heaven on earth."

"I hope you will come soon. Steady, Midnight. You are anxious to get away."

"He is more anxious than I am," Kent declared. "What a noble horse he is. He is your own, I suppose?"

"He is, and I have ridden him for several years. He was quite unmanageable at first, and I had a hard time with him. But we are great friends now."

Kent watched the girl as she stroked the horse's glossy neck. He noticed the glow upon her face, the sparkle in her eyes, and the stray tresses of hair touching lightly her cheeks and brow. She looked very beautiful to him this morning. What a girl! And she was hidden away here in this lonely place! She was a woodland flower, untouched by the great world of artifice and strife beyond. What a discovery he had made!

All through the night he had thought about her. He had not slept well owing to the pain in his foot. But he did not mind, for he believed that Jacynth was thinking of him as he was of her. He recalled every word she had uttered, the expression upon her face, the look of sympathy in her eyes, nothing escaped him, all came back touched with the enchantment which love alone can bestow. He had unexpectedly entered a veritable fairy-land. But what was the meaning of this house in the forest, and of the banner floating above the great pine? Why was Mr. Dean living here with his daughter and old Martha? That he was no ordinary man was most apparent. Not only in manner and appearance, but everything about the house pointed to his outstanding personality. He was a deep student, as his shelves of books testified. His artistic taste was shown by the pictures of the master-painters on the walls, the furniture, mostly old mahogany, carpets of Oriental pattern, with rich curtains and draperies over doors and windows. All these clearly revealed his refinement of soul and mind. Why had such a man retreated from the world to a place like this? He longed to know the reason. There must be some mystery connected with his life. He recalled Mr. Dean's strange manner when he first met him. Why had his hand dropped so suddenly at the mention of the word Rayson? All this was very puzzling.

He rose early, before anyone else was astir, and sat for some time at the window facing the east, feasting his eyes upon the scene which was presented to his view, especially the dense land-fog in the valley struggling vainly against the steadily-rising sun. To him they seemed like two great giants in combat, each contending for supremacy. Then as the vapour slowly dispersed, it appeared like a fleeing army with its ranks broken and its banners in tatters. As it retreated, the outlines of trees became visible, first like innumerable shadowy spectres, and at last standing forth in all their strength and beauty. It was a picture to entrance his artistic eye, but instead of sketching the scene, he began to meditate upon his own life. It was something like what he was beholding, shrouded in the vapour of disappointment and failure. But light had come to dispel the darkness, and the light was the girl he had met the day before. Was she to do for him what the sun was doing in the valley? He hoped so, and the thought gave him much pleasure and comfort.

Kent was in no hurry to leave for the city, but Mr. Dean took it for granted that he wished to be away as soon as possible.

"You must have your foot attended to, young man," he informed him at breakfast. "See a doctor when you get home. I shall go with you to the wharf. Joe left an hour ago, but we shall overtake him. I shall get the horses at once."

There was little opportunity for Kent and Jacynth to talk to each other, for in a few minutes Midnight and Camilla were before the door. But just then Mr. Dean had to return to the house to change his coat and hat, so the two young people

were alone for a short time.

"I am so sorry to leave this beautiful place," Kent remarked with a deep sigh as he looked around.

"You will come again, I hope," Jacynth replied. "But you must not hurt your foot the next time."

"Oh, I shall not come on foot. One experience of that kind is enough. But here is your father, and he is in a hurry."

Mr. Dean kissed his daughter and sprang into the saddle.

"We must get on our way, for we have not much time. Do you feel like a sharp ride this morning?" he asked turning to Kent.

"I am in good form, and with such a horse as this to ride, it will be a great pleasure."

"If you keep up with me you will do well. Midnight is a fine horse on a long journey, and he has great staying power. But on a short run he is nowhere with Camilla. She is like her namesake, the queen of the Volscians, who was so swift of foot that she could fly over standing corn without causing it to bend. This horse may not be like that ancient queen, but she is very swift, as you shall soon see."

A word to Camilla, and she was off down the road, with Midnight following, eager to overtake his rival. Jacynth watched them as they sped on their way until they disappeared around a bend in the road. Once Kent turned and waved a hand to her. Then he was gone, and she was left alone.

For a while she stood there looking in the direction the horsemen had taken. How she longed to be with them, for a wild ride was what she needed now to calm the agitated state of her heart and mind. There was nothing, however, she could do but wander about the woods. She might help Martha in the house as was her usual custom, but the thought of remaining in doors this morning was distasteful to her now. She must be in the open to think over all that had taken place since yesterday.

Suddenly she remembered that Kent had called to see Peter Horn, and most likely Mrs. Horn had met him. She would like to know what she thought of him. Acting on this idea, she crossed the bridge and walked along the road leading to the little settlement beyond. She was surprised to see how everything had changed since she was here a few days before mounted upon Midnight. The trees seemed to have a brighter hue, the songs of the birds sweeter, and even the squirrels had a new note of joy in their chatter. She did not know that it was her own heart that made the apparent difference in all she beheld. Neither did she realize that love transforms everything with its own subtle magic. And it was doing this to her now, for as she walked she was thinking of a strong manly form who had come suddenly into her life, and she vividly pictured him speeding towards the river. She was glad that he was riding Midnight, her own horse, and the thought brought her much happiness.

In this mood she passed out of the wooded region into a clearing, used as a pasture, where raspberry bushes grew in profusion about the large stone piles. The berries were plentiful this year, and she and Martha had already picked sufficient to make preserves for the winter.

She was about half-way through this clearing, when a shout arrested her attention. At once she saw a straw hat waving from behind a heap of stones, and then two little figures appeared in view. She knew them at once, waved her hand in reply, and moved towards them. The little ones ran to meet her, a boy of ten and a girl of eight, with sun-browned faces, and eyes glowing with delight. Each carried a basket, well-filled with red luscious berries. These they proudly displayed for inspection.

"My, my, what a lot you have picked!" Jacynth exclaimed. "Your baskets are full."

"Mine's fuller than Peggy's," the boy declared. "She ate more'n she picked."

"Oh, Tom, that's a lie, and you know it," the girl indignantly defended. "You ate as many as I did. And my basket is as full as yours, isn't it, Jacynth?"

"You both have done well," was the tactful reply. "But how hot you are! And you must be tired, too. Suppose we rest for a while under the shade of this big tree."

"We were just going home when you came along," Tom explained. "Gran'ma told us not to stay too long. She didn't want us to come, for she's afraid the bears might get us. But I'm not afraid. I could fight a dozen bears. But Peggy's afraid of them."

"I'm not," the girl stoutly protested. "But you are, Tom. And you're afraid of the dark. You wouldn't go from the house to the barn alone at night, and you know it, so there."

Jacynth smiled good-naturedly at the wrangling of these two little ones. She loved them both, and many a happy hour had she spent with them. Their father, Captain William Horn, one of the youngest masters of the famous clipper-ships that sailed from the Port of St. John, had been lost at sea two years before when his ship, the *Sea Faun*, struck a derelict at night and sank with all on board. Since then Tom and Peggy had lived with their grandparents, while their mother worked in the city to make a living for herself and provide as much as she could for her children. Jacynth had often seen young Mrs. Horn, and always admired her courage and great affection for her two little ones.

"Tell us a story, Jacynth," Peggy begged, as she seated herself comfortably upon the ground.

"What kind of a story, dear?"

"About the Babes in the Wood."

"I don't want to hear that," Tom protested. "That's all right for girls and babies. I want a story about ships and the sea."

"Oh, no, no," Peggy cried. "I'm afraid of the sea. It took our Daddy from us, and now Mummy has to work so hard."

"I'm going to sea when I grow up," Tom declared. "I'm going to be a captain, too. All captains don't get drowned. And I'm going to have a ship just like the *Sea Faun* and sail round the world. I'll bring you all kinds of lovely things, Peggy, and maybe I'll take you with me once in a while."

"I don't want to go, Tom. I'm going to stay with my Mummy and help her all I can."

"Help her! What can a girl do? But I'll make a lot of money, and then our mother won't have to work so hard."

Jacynth smiled a little sadly as she watched the lad standing so erect before her, his face aglow with eagerness, and his eyes gleaming with the light of enthusiasm. She knew how the sea was calling him, as it had called his father and so many other hardy men who had made a great name for Bluenose skippers and clipper-ships in every port of the world. She herself had often longed to be a man that she, too, might go to sea. Living so near to a large shipping-port, where noble vessels were being constantly built, listening to tales of the sea, and breathing the very atmosphere of shipping, it was but natural that she should long for adventure upon the deep. So she could sympathize with the boy in his desire to follow his father's example.

"I believe you would make a fine captain, Tom," she said. "Your father was brought up here, and he left to be a sailor. You will do the same some day, no doubt, and we shall all be proud of you when you become the master of a great clipper-ship."

"I'll have to go sooner than my father, I guess," Tom replied. "I'm going as cabin boy when I'm a little older. You see, we've got to leave this place and go away. Gran'pa says we'll all have to go to the Poor House now."

"Poor House!" Jacynth exclaimed in surprise. "What do you mean?"

"Why, haven't you heard, Jacynth?"

"Heard what?"

"That old Mr. Rayson is going to turn us out."

At these words, Jacynth reached up and clutched the boy by the arm.

"What are you talking about, Tom? I can't believe that Mr. Rayson is going to turn you all out. What for?"

"But it's true. Two men came to our house yesterday and gave Gran'pa a letter. It was from Mr. Rayson, and he says this place is his, and he is going to cut all our big trees. Gran'pa is nearly crazy. He and Gran'ma talked late last night and

kept me awake. I don't know what they said, but I heard Gran'ma crying. I never heard her cry before, did you Peggy?"

"No, I never really heard her," the girl thoughtfully replied. "But I saw her cry once when we were talking about my Daddy. Gran'ma was telling me what he was like when he was a boy like you, Tom. I was looking right into her face, and I saw tears rolling down her cheeks. Now, wasn't that crying, Jacynth?"

The latter made no reply, but rose to her feet and brushed some leaves from her dress.

"I am going home with you," she announced. "I was on my way there, anyway, when I saw you two here."

Just then Tom gave a shout and pointed towards the road.

"It's Lad! He's looking for us."

He gave a sharp whistle, and at once the dog lifted his nose from the ground, saw them, bounded forward. He leaped upon Jacynth and almost knocked her down in his frenzied delight, at the same time making the woods re-echo with his frantic barks.

"Down, Lad," she ordered. "You are too rough. Where have you been? Not up to any mischief, I hope?"

Then she suddenly realized that this was the first time she had seen him this morning. And she had not missed him! The thought was startling, for he had always been early at the door eager to get into the house. But today she had not noticed his absence. And she knew the reason.

Affectionately she laid her right hand upon the dog's head. As she did so, she caught sight of a cord about his neck, so deeply embedded in his mass of thick fur that she had not noticed it before. She stooped and examined it carefully.

"What is the meaning of this?" she asked. "What has happened to you, Lad?"

"Somebody's been trying to steal him," Tom replied. "See, Lad broke this rope and got away. It's tight around his neck. I'll cut it."

Drawing a knife from his pocket, he severed the cord, at which the dog expressed his gratitude by barking more furiously than ever, and bounding around them like a creature half-crazed.

"He's glad to be free from that," Jacynth remarked. "Why should anyone want to steal my dog?"

"I dunno, Jacynth. But if Mr. Rayson wants this place, maybe there's somebody who wants Lad. He's a great dog, the finest in the world, I guess. He'd fight for you, wouldn't he?"

"He would, Tom. When I have Lad along I feel perfectly safe."

"But no one would want to hurt you, Jacynth. Everybody loves you."

"Bears might, though," Peggy reminded. "They don't love anything."

All at once there flashed before Jacynth's mental vision a face, low and brutal, which brought a sense of fear into her heart. Why should it come to her now? And why should she connect that face with the piece of rope which had been around Lad's neck? It puzzled and worried her as she walked with the children out of the pasture and along the road towards their home.

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# CHAPTER V

## MORE THAN SHIPS-KNEES

The great spruce tree was quivering to its fall a short distance from the brook which flows through Storm King Valley. It was giving up its life for the sake of commerce, to satisfy world-wide trade. Ships-knees were necessary for the great clippers being built down at the harbor and other places in the province. Timber of various kinds was needed, so a lucrative business was carried on both winter and summer to supply the demand.

Prosper Dean confined himself to ships-knees from the large fir, spruce, and pine trees which grew on his own land of over one hundred acres in extent. From these he made considerable extra money. It was not really necessary for him to carry on this business, as he had all he needed for living purposes, as well as books and other things which meant food for his mind and soul. But he liked to be in the woods, digging at the roots of trees, inhaling the fragrant scents of the forest, and feeling that he was master of these towering giants. It always thrilled him to look up at a great pine or spruce which had withstood the storms of many years, and to know that what the tempests had failed to do he could accomplish in an hour or two, and the mighty tree would crash to the ground at his will. This was the spirit that animated his soul. He believed that what could be done here could also be done with all living creatures, especially human beings. When the master spirit was strong enough it could overcome everything, and bend all things beneath its sway, as Prospero did on his island long ago. He liked to think that he had solved the meaning of The Tempest story.

As a rule Mr. Dean worked alone in the woods, and only occasionally hired some one to assist him, especially with a very large knee. But today it was not for such help that he had Jim Weston with him. There was something far more important.

He had worked with Jim digging around the foot of the tree, laying bare the great elbow-like root which made the tree so valuable, and cutting away the smaller ones. He noticed that his companion worked with a feverish excitement, and when the last shovelful of earth had been cast out, he saw Jim seize a partly-dulled axe and attack the roots with unusual vigor. As he watched the stalwart form hurling great blows upon the insensate roots, and saw the expression upon his face and the gleam in his eyes, he knew that he was attacking more than wood. At length the tree began to quiver, lean a little, and when another root had been severed, it fell to the ground with a resounding crash, tearing off branches of nearby trees, and crushing the small underbrush in its downward sweep.

With almost savage delight Jim seized a sharp axe by his side, leaped upon the tree, and measured with the handle the length required for the knee. Then standing upon the trunk, he drove the blade of his axe through the bark and deep into the side of the fallen giant. As Mr. Dean watched his swaying and bending form, he seemed like a veritable titan hurling blow after blow upon some bitter enemy. At any other time he would have enjoyed such a scene, but now a feeling of anxiety possessed him. This was intensified as Jim ere long swung suddenly around and began to cut into the opposite side. His face was clearly visible, and what Mr. Dean saw there was not at all pleasant. He said nothing, however, but waited until the last blow had been given, and the root severed. Driving his axe into the tree, Jim wiped his forehead with a big red handkerchief he had pulled from a hip-pocket.

"There, that's done. My, I'm hot!"

"That's because you have been doing double work, Jim," Mr. Dean quietly replied.

"Double work! What do you mean?"

"You have been cutting more than a ship-knee, haven't you? What about the enemies you have been smiting?"

Jim looked keenly at Mr. Dean, and a smile overspread his face. This was only for an instant, however, for his countenance darkened like black clouds shutting out a ray of sunshine.

"Maybe I have, sir," he acknowledged. "But haven't I a good reason?"

"Perhaps so. But don't do it, Jim. It might lead to action."

"Ah, that's just what I want. Action! Heavens! how I long for action, to get my hands on the devil who ruined my life."

"And when you do, you will get more than prison, remember."

"I don't care, so long as I give Old Thistle what's coming to him."

"Steady, Jim. I don't like to hear you talk this way. There's a devil in your heart which must be conquered."

"And who put it there, sir? Who is the man that wrecked my life and had me sent to prison to save his own skin? Wasn't it Old Thistle, who swore to lies, paid out money hand-over-fist to bribe others to clear himself? I never scuttled my ship. Others were bribed to do it. That's God's truth, and you know it."

"I do, Jim. It's a sordid tale of injustice. But rise above it, man. Conquer the devil within you."

"Conquer the devil within me! That's easier said than done. I want to conquer another devil first."

"Sit down, Jim," and Mr. Dean motioned him to the fallen tree. "There, that's better. I have not brought you here merely to help me with this ship-knee. Ah, no. But it is well to remember that you were not the only one injured by Tim Rayson."

"I do, sir. I know that he ruined you, too."

"No, Jim, he didn't. He tried to, but failed."

Jim's eyes opened wide in surprise, and he looked keenly at his companion.

"What do you mean, sir? I always thought he ruined you. Didn't he take the money you entrusted to him, bought that old ship, had her sunk, collected the insurance, and never paid you a cent? He did all that, and a great deal more."

"I know he did. But that didn't ruin me. It made a new man of me."

"I can't understand that at all. It's beyond me."

"No doubt it is, Jim."

Mr. Dean paused and stood very still, lost in thought. He then sat down by his companion's side.

"I have something to tell you, Jim. It is the main reason why I have brought you here today. Last evening when I told you that Old Thistle is in town I saw murder in your eyes. Wasn't I right?"

"I guess so. And it's there still, and in my heart, as well."

"I know it is, and I want you to overcome it. I am interested in you, so wish to do all I can for your welfare. But if you think only of revenge, all my efforts will be in vain. You can conquer that evil spirit as I have mine."

"But you have not suffered as I have, Mr. Dean. If you'd been in prison, maybe you'd talk differently."

"I have been there, too, Jim, in the bondage of hell. But I am free now, and have broken the shackles which held me. You don't understand me, I see. That's quite natural. Let me explain. Years ago I saw *The Tempest* played, and since then I have studied it until I know it by heart, and can repeat it all from beginning to end. You do not know the play, I suppose?"

"I do, sir. I saw it once in England, when my ship was there. It was great."

"I am glad, for I need not tell you the story. But you remember how Prospero was wrongfully treated by his brother, sent adrift with his daughter to perish. He was cast upon an island, and there through the greatness of his spirit he was able to do wonderful things. He was the master of all because he was master of himself. And you know how he controlled the vile Caliban. Then, when his brother and others were wrecked and landed upon the island, instead of taking revenge, he was great enough to forgive the wrongs that had been done to him. I have tried to follow his example. When the Caliban nature rises in my heart, I crush it down. Do you think I am going to let such a brute rule me, made in the image of God? I tell you, no. I should be ashamed to call myself a man if I allowed myself to be overcome by the spirit of revenge. I have been watching you, Jim, since you followed me to the Valley. So far you have acted the man. But now I am becoming uneasy."

"Oh, you needn't worry about me, sir," Jim slowly replied. "I am quite able to take care of myself. You don't understand



me. You think you do, but you don't. Your nature is different from mine. And, besides, as I said, you have not suffered as I have. If you had lost everything, ship, home, honor, child, you'd know how I feel. Could you forgive?"

Mr. Dean rose from the log and stood erect before his companion. There was something so impressive about his appearance that Jim looked at him with a mingled feeling of awe and surprise. He had always respected and admired Mr. Dean, considering him superior to most men in knowledge and manner of living. But he had never seen him look as he did now, as he waited for him to speak. It seemed that at first Mr. Dean found it difficult to express what he wished to say. At length, however, he stepped forward and laid a hand upon his workman's shoulder.

"Jim, I have something to tell you, and then you will know how I am feeling. Old Thistle's son spent last night at my house."

The effect of this information was startling. Jim leaped to his feet, his eyes ablaze with eagerness.

"At your house! Old Thistle's son! Where is he now?"

"He has returned to the city."

"Ah, it's well for him that he has. Why didn't you let me know this last night?"

"Why? What would you have done?"

"Don't ask me, for I don't know. But what was he doing here?"

"He brought a message from his father for Peter Horn. Old Thistle is going to lumber in the valley next winter, and he is determined to take Peter's place. He contends that the old line is wrong, and he is planning to have a new one run which will take in all of Peter's fine tract of timber. The Horns are nearly crazy. Jacynth was at their place this morning, so that is how I heard the news."

Jim made no reply. He stood very still for a while, gazing off among the trees. Mr. Dean surmised the thoughts that were seething in his mind. He touched him on the arm.

"Don't look that way, Jim. I want your help, but if you have murder in your heart you will be useless to me, and spoil everything. This is the time for clear sober thinking and right action if we are to save Peter's property."

"Sober thinking! Right action! Bah! And let that devil have his own way? You think the law will stop him, I suppose? The law be d——! Don't I know what it did to me. It cleared Old Thistle and sent me to prison. And if Peter goes to law, what will he accomplish? Nothing. Old Thistle has money, and money will do anything, law or no law. No, there's another way, and by——"

Jim never finished his sentence, for a sudden blow upon his jaw from Mr. Dean's fist sent him reeling backwards. Too much amazed to be angry at first, he stared at the man standing calmly before him. Then his face grew white, and he was about to leap forward to avenge the blow, when Mr. Dean held up his right hand.

"Just a minute, Jim, before you attack me, and kill me, if you wish, for you are strong enough to do it. I did not hit you in anger, remember, but to bring you to your senses. When master of the *Ocean Belle* you often struck men to teach them a lesson, didn't you?"

"I did, but it's different here," was the reluctant reply. "I was in command at sea, and the men had to obey or take what was coming to them."

"Why, Jim?"

"Because I was responsible for the ship. I couldn't do anything if the crew didn't mind. There was always too much at stake to put up with any nonsense."

"That's just the point, Jim. At sea you were in command, and your word was law. There was no other way to deal with rebellious people. But on shore it is different. Every man is not allowed to take the law into his own hands and do as he pleases. There is a better way."

"I suppose you mean the law? Look what the law did to me. Didn't it send me to prison?"

"Steady, Jim. Let us forget the law at present. I hit you, and you want to get back at me. But something restrains you, I see. Is it the way I look at you?"

"Blame if I know," Jim growled. "If any other man hit me, he wouldn't get off with it, let me tell you that."

"There is a reason. You know that I am interested in you and seek your welfare. I did not hit you, but Caliban, the devil in you. There, now, wait until I'm through. When at sea you felt responsible for your ship. So I feel responsible now for something more important than a vessel and its cargo. It is for your honor, Peter Horn's place, for Jacynth's sake, as well as my own."

"Jacynth! What about her?"

"A great deal, Jim, but it's no use to tell you my trouble. I hoped I could, but I see you are not the one to help. I am disappointed. I believed that you were the only man I could talk to who would understand and assist me. But Caliban is too strong within you for my purpose. I shall have to depend upon myself, and, perhaps, the spirit of Prospero will sustain me."

While Mr. Dean was talking, Jim had brought forth his pipe, tobacco and knife. Thoughtfully he whittled off several slices from the black plug, rolled the pieces between the palms of his hands, and slowly filled his pipe. The fire had died out of his eyes. He was now in a more reasonable frame of mind, and this Mr. Dean noticed. When he had lighted his pipe, he crushed the burnt match between his fingers and then threw it upon the ground.

"I think I understand the meaning of your words, sir," he at length began. "You want me to help you, I see. You're troubled about Jacynth, and I believe I know what it is. She's taken with Old Thistle's son. Is that it?"

"You are right, Jim. They are in love with each other, so what am I to do?"

"Do? Don't let him come near your place again. Keep the two apart."

"That's easier said than done. You surely know what Jacynth is like. She has a strong will of her own, and any interference on my part would only make matters worse. And, besides, I like the young man. He is altogether different from his father. He is an artist, too. I believe he and Jacynth would be very happy if—"

As Mr. Dean abruptly paused, Jim took the pipe from his mouth.

"Look here, sir. You may know a lot about books, and have the spirit of that Prospero fellow, but you don't know men as well as I do. I don't believe that any good thing can come from Old Thistle. You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, and you know it."

"But he takes after his mother, Jim. He told me so himself."

"H'm! And you believed him, I suppose? But with the blood of Old Thistle in his veins, I have my doubts. Have nothing to do with him, sir. That is my advice. Jacynth is too fine a girl to be thrown away upon the first grinning jackass that comes along. That's my opinion, and it's all I have to say."

"So I can't depend upon you, then, to help me, Jim?"

"I'm willing to do all I can for you and Jacynth. Just leave it at that for the present."

"Very well," and Mr. Dean gave a deep sigh. "You may hit me now, Jim, and get it over."

"Forget that, sir. It was only a tap, and I hardly felt it. Why, if I hit a man like that on the *Ocean Belle*, he would have thought nothing of me as a captain. Unless I broke his nose, or laid his cheek open, he would have had no respect for me."

"And you will have little respect for me, I suppose?"

"Oh, it's different here. And, besides, you're not used to knocking men down to make them mind."

"I am not, Jim, and I don't intend to do it. I am sorry I hit you, but to make amends, I am going to help you build a new house. I have plenty of lumber, so you can begin hauling it whenever you are ready."

"What about this knee, sir? You can't manage it alone. I'll help you get it to the shore in the morning. I must be off now, as Nell will be coming home."

After Jim Weston had left, Mr. Dean stood and looked for a while at the big root lying before him.

"That thing will be trimmed and hewn into its proper shape without much difficulty. How I wish the same could be done with human beings. Jim thinks I am mostly interested in digging roots. He cannot see that I am doing more than cutting ships-knees when I am working here. But it seems almost useless to explain to him that I am after something far more important. Ah, no, he cannot see, for Caliban is too strong within him. It is quite clear that I have more than one Caliban to conquer, but how to do it is the great problem."

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# CHAPTER VI

## THE WRATH OF LONG SOL

The ring of Solomon Jordan's hammer upon the anvil at Creek Corner was always a pleasant sound. The blacksmith shop was on the Shore Road, and here farmers and boatmen came to have their horses shod, chains mended, axes turned, and other work done. It was a favorite place for men to gather, especially on stormy winter afternoons, for the cheerful fire upon the forge was most alluring. It brightened up the smoke-laden walls and rafters, while the sparks flying from beneath the beating hammer fell like showers of fiery meteors upon the dusty floor.

The chief attraction, however, was the blacksmith himself. He was generally known as "Long Sol" to distinguish him from "Little Sol", a cousin, who lived in the same parish. Long Sol was a giant of a man, with great shoulders, long flowing beard, and gray hair. When he stood by the forge with his left arm working the bellows-lever, and his keen blue eyes watching the iron in the fire, he presented a striking appearance. He might have been Tubal-cain of patriarchal days, or the ancient Vulcan himself, so imposing a figure did he make. Then when he drew the white flaming iron from the fire and beat it into shape upon the ringing anvil, the skill and strength of the man became more apparent than ever. As the sparks flew, the watchers would close their eyes and shrink back a little, while conversation would cease until the danger had passed. Long Sol enjoyed this time of excitement, and always did his best to give his audience a real thrill. He was proud of his skill. He could do anything with iron, and under the magic touch of his deft hands wonderful work was produced.

"What I make, lasts," he truthfully boasted. "I never have to do a job over again. That's my motto, and everybody knows it."

Besides being an excellent workman, Long Sol was a most agreeable companion. He liked to hear the latest news, and he generally had something to tell himself, for no matter what took place in the parish it was soon known at Creek Corner.

Though fond of news, Long Sol drew a sharp line at injurious scandal and objectionable conversation. It was well known that he had once knocked a man down because he had refused to respect this rule of the shop. But he never had to do it twice, as that one example was quite sufficient for all who entered the building.

The only one who ever tempted him to do it again was Lank Jukins, son of Bill Jukins, of Storm King Valley. He was a useless and conceited young man who spent most of his time hanging around the Corner store, the blacksmith shop, and at any of the neighbors' houses where his presence would be endured. He could not keep any position, and although he had been given work in the woods in winter and in the shipyards in summer, he only remained a short time. In the woods he always quarrelled with his companions, and made so much trouble that he was discharged. And when he earned some money in the city, he spent it all upon liquor, and returning to the yards in a drunken condition, was dismissed. He had then returned to his home to add to his parents' burdens.

Long Sol had no use for Lank Jukins. But he suffered fools, if not gladly, at least patiently, within certain limits. So on one fine afternoon as he stood at his forge with his arm working the bellows, he listened to Lank seated on a box a short distance away.

"Yes, it's God's truth, fer Joe Burton told me so this mornin'. I saw him on his way to the wharf. Joe stopped a few minutes fer a drink of water at our house."

"I am surprised to hear that," Sol replied, as he turned the iron in the fire. "Maybe Joe wasn't telling the truth."

"Oh, it's true, a'right. Old Rayson's son came up with Joe to serve notice on Peter Horn. He hurt his foot and stayed all night at the Deans."

"Where is he now?"

"Took this mornin's boat to the city. Mr. Dean went to the wharf with him. I saw 'em go by our place. Het was all worked up when I told her about him. She thought he ought to have stopped to see the baby."

"What baby?" Sol asked, looking keenly at the young man.

"Het's, of course. She came from the city last week, an' now she's got a baby."

Sol's arm ceased working the bellows, and the leaping flame died down to a bright glow.

"What has Rayson's son to do with the baby?" he sharply demanded.

"It's hissen, so Het says. Anyway, he gave her a lot of money, so she's well fixed. But she thought he might have stopped to see her an' the brat. She took on mighty bad. But that's the way with them city fellers. They don't care a rap what happens to a girl so long's they git off with their dirty work by payin' money. But that cuss can't do the same up here an' git off with it, let me tell ye that."

"Is he trying to do so, Lank?"

"Looks like it. He stayed the night at the Deans, an' him an' Jacynth seemed mighty thick. They spent the whole evenin' together, and she played the fiddle fer him as he lay stretched out on the sofy. Girls are all alike, I guess, jist waitin' fer a chance to—"

Lank never finished his sentence, for with a bound Long Sol stood before him, laid a strong hand upon his shoulder, and glared into the face of the astonished youth.

"No more of that," he roared. "You've said too much already, and if I hear you repeat such an insinuation about Jacynth Dean again you'll have to reckon with me. Do you hear?"

"Sure I hear," Lank sullenly replied, freeing himself from Sol's grip. "D'ye think I'm deaf? You leave me alone."

"I'll only leave you alone when you keep your dirty tongue still. I won't allow you or anybody else to belittle girls in my shop, and get off with it."

"But s'pose it's true," Lank insisted. "See what that Rayson feller did to Het. He's a bad one, a'right. An' if he ruined one girl, what's to hinder him from ruinin' another."

"It's the girl, Lank. Jacynth is not like Hettie, remember, so that makes all the difference."

"I s'pose it does, Sol. Het was never careful about the company she kept. Yes, she's been a great trouble to Ma. She likes fine clothes an' a good time, an' she wasn't over perticler how she got 'em, either. But she's very pert now, 'cause she's got money. Wish t'goodness I could git hold of some of it."

Sol went back to his forge, and soon the flames were again leaping up the big stone chimney. There was fire, as well, in his heart, for what he had just heard angered him. He had known Hettie Jukins ever since she was a child, and she had often stood and watched him with big wondering eyes as he worked. She was a beautiful girl then, and that fatal gift had been her downfall. He recalled her sweet voice, and he had always listened with pleasure as she sang some simple song or hymn. As he had no children of his own, he had longed to have such a girl as Hettie. Would she have gone astray if she had received proper home training? He could not believe so. Her life was now ruined largely through no fault of her own.

As he thus stood lost in thought, Lank rose suddenly to his feet and turned towards the door. The sound of a horse's hoofs had arrested his attention, and at once Jacynth Dean appeared, mounted upon Midnight. She rode straight to the door, dismounted, and led the horse into the shop. She merely nodded to the now smiling young man, released her hand from the bridle-rein and stepped up to Sol.

"Midnight has a shoe loose, Mr. Jordan. Have you time to fix it?"

"Plenty of time for you, Jacynth," was the reply. "Which shoe is it?"

"The right fore one. It must have become loosened this morning. That road to the wharf is very rough. It should be repaired."

"Indeed it should, my dear," Sol agreed, as he stooped and lifted the horse's foot. "Roads and bridges are all going to pieces in this parish. Most of the men are busy on their farms, while others are boating or working in the shipyards."

"But all are not working, I see," Jacynth replied, glancing towards Lank.

Sol laughed as he drew his shoeing-box towards him, and picked up his hammer.

"Lank is resting this afternoon. His health is not very good, so he has to be careful. He's been that way for some time."

A scowl overspread the young man's face at this thrust. He made no reply, however, but kept his eyes fixed upon Jacynth. The latter knew that he was watching her, and felt annoyed. He was the only one in the whole parish she disliked and feared. Time and time again she had repulsed him when he had become too attentive, but the more she scorned him, the more determined he became, calling upon her so often that her father had to order him from the place. After that Jacynth always took Lad with her when walking along the road or through the woods.

"There, I guess that will do," Sol declared, as he placed Midnight's foot upon the floor. He then stroked the horse's neck. "He's the finest animal that comes into this shop. He's a real thoroughbred, all right, and knows how to behave himself. And you ride him well, Jacynth. You are well matched. When are you coming to see us again?"

"Just as soon as I can, Mr. Jordan, for I want to see the preserves your wife has made. She must have a great supply by now."

"She has more than enough to last us through the winter. She wants to send some to the Westons. They'll need help. Poor souls, they're very unfortunate. What is Jim doing today?"

"He's with father in the woods getting out a big ship-knee. We have a pile of lumber which we are going to let him have to build his house."

"Where are the Westons living now?"

"Jim is fixing up his waggon-shed, so I suppose they will live there for a while."

"Where did Mrs. Weston stay last night?"

"At our house," Lank explained. "She was there helpin' when Het's baby came."

Lank did not notice the startled expression that came into Jacynth's eyes at these words, for he was staring at Long Sol. The blacksmith had seized a hammer in his right hand, lifted it to the hurling point, aimed directly at the young man. Lank knew its meaning, shrank back and sprang towards the door, his face white with fear. He understood Sol's silent action, and knew the nature of the man who held the hammer.

Slowly the blacksmith's arm dropped, and his tense body relaxed. Jacynth watched him in surprise. Her curiosity was aroused, as well. She wondered what had caused Lank's sudden flight.

"Don't get frightened, my dear," Sol remarked, while a slight smile flitted across his face. "I just wanted to see Lank jump. It's the only time he's ever in a hurry when he sees me lift a hammer against him."

"But why did you do it just now, Mr. Jordan?"

"Because Lank has too glib a tongue. I don't want him to be blating about his family affairs in my shop. They're too unhealthy, so the less said about them the better."

"But is it true about Hettie?" the girl asked in a low voice.

"Lank says so, and he should know. But, there, Midnight's all right now. You'll have to excuse me, my dear, as I haven't any more time to talk just now. Don't forget to come to see us soon. Mrs. Jordan will be looking for you."

As Jacynth led her horse out of the shop, Lank was waiting for her. Springing lightly into the saddle, she looked down at the young man.

"I am going to see Hettie," she announced. "I suppose it will be all right for me to go."

"Sure. Het'll be glad to see ye. She likes company. An' you had company, too, last night, hee, hee."

Jacynth's body stiffened, and an angry gleam leaped into her eyes. She looked sternly at the slouching creature at her side.

"What do you mean?" she demanded. "Who told you I had company?"

"Oh, I know, a'right. Nice young fellow from the city. Hurt his foot, hee, hee. Ye made a great fuss over him, too."

Jacynth's cheeks crimsoned at Lank's words, and she felt inclined to lash him with her whip.

"What business is it of yours who stays at our house? I advise you to mind your own affairs, and keep your insulting tongue still."

"Oh, ye talk very big, don't ye? But you an' yer Dad didn't mind insultin' me. I was ordered away from yer place, an' Lank Jukins isn't a man to fergit."

"Man! You a man! Why, you're nothing but a low-down brute, a Caliban."

Lank was about to reply in fiery words, when Long Sol called sharply to him. He turned and saw the blacksmith standing in the door with the hammer in his hand.

"Come here, Lank, I want you."

The young fellow knew enough not to disobey such an imperious order. He hesitated a moment, however, and looked at Jacynth.

"A'right, me lady. Go yer way now. But by God, ye'll hear from me ag'in, so don't fergit it."

For the next five minutes Lank faced the fury of Long Sol's overwhelming wrath. He tried to stand up before the attack, to defend himself. But his efforts were all in vain. As the blacksmith towered above him, flourishing the hammer like a madman, he retreated from corner to corner of the shop. Coming at length to the door, he leaped out into the open, his face blanched with fear, and bounded for the main highway. Here he stopped and looked back. But only for an instant, for seeing Sol with a shotgun in his hand, he gave vent to a yelp of terror and sped along the road, expecting every second to hear the report of the gun, and to feel the shot plowing into his back.

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## CHAPTER VII

### PENNY ROYAL

Jacynth Dean was in a most thoughtful mood as she rode down the Shore Road from Creek Corner. She was in no hurry, for she had much to think about. Midnight champed impatiently at his bit. He longed to be off like the wind, speeding up hill and down with outstretched neck and flowing mane. But he knew now by the touch of his fair rider's hand that she desired a slower pace. He needed no tightened rein to cause him to do his mistress' bidding. It was an unseen and unspoken spirit of understanding, far more effective than the curbing rein or the imperious word of command.

The August afternoon was fair and warm. Scarcely a breath of wind ruffled the river on the left. Farmers were at work in their fields. Haying was over, but oats and buckwheat had to be gathered in, and potatoes dug for market. But busy though they were, every man paused and looked at Jacynth as she rode by. The hearts of the young men, especially, quickened at the sight, and several of them waved their hands to the girl, and received a similar salute in return.

It was the same at the shipyard farther on. Here in a snug cove several river boats were on the stocks. It was a busy place, with men hammering, hewing, sawing and caulking. These workers, too, paused for a few seconds as Midnight clipped by but a few rods away. Jacynth had often stopped here, for she enjoyed watching the building of the ships. The sound of the caulking-hammers, and the ringing blows as some long timber-bolt was being driven home were very pleasant to her ears. She knew all the men by name, for they lived in the parish, and she had often visited their homes where she was always a welcome guest.

This afternoon, however, she did not stop as usual, but kept steadily on her way until she came to the road which branched off from the great main highway and led to Storm King Valley. For the most part this ran through a wooded region. She had come from home one way, and was returning by another as was her usual custom. She always enjoyed the ride along this back road where quietness reigned supreme, and the trees cast their refreshing shade upon the dusty way. Here, too, many blueberries, and luscious blackberries abounded along the ditches, in old fences, and stone piles. Often she had come here to pick the berries for Martha to preserve. But she was not thinking of these this afternoon, so passed them by unheeded. Her mind was upon more serious things.

Rounding at length a sharp bend, she came in sight of a little brook which wound its way through a tangled forest growth, and flowed under a rough pole bridge across the road. It was her usual custom to stop here, bathe her face and view herself in the clear water. She was about to stop as formerly, when Midnight pricked up his ears and gave a slight start. Wondering what had disturbed the horse, Jacynth peered keenly forward, and soon learned the cause. On the upper side of the bridge, and seated upon the bank, was a man with his bare feet in the stream, gazing pensively down at the gently-flowing water. She knew him at once, and as he lifted his head, a smile of welcome overspread his wrinkled, clean-shaven face.

Jacynth reined up her horse on the bridge and looked down upon the little man. And he was well worth observing, for Penny Royal was an unusual character, well known far and wide, and in great demand by farmers and others in need of water. With his hazel divining-rod he travelled from place to place, locating water, and seldom did he fail. Everywhere he was gladly received, for besides being an expert at his profession, he was bubbling over with life, and had always plenty of stories to tell, as well as the latest news of city and country. He was well past middle age, and though small in body, his face was strong, and his eyes shone with the light of youth. He was rather a mystery to most people, for no one seemed to know anything about his past life. He had suddenly appeared years before, and was now accepted as a matter of course. It was reported that he had been a schoolmaster, and this seemed to account for his knowledge, especially of old writers with long and strange names.

Jacynth liked the little man, and on several occasions she had noticed a peculiar expression in his eyes which all his apparent light-heartedness could not conceal. And she caught it again this afternoon as he sat gazing thoughtfully at the flowing water. It vanished in an instant, however, when he saw her, and he was the jolly man as the world knew him.

"I did not expect to find you here, Penny," she accosted. "Midnight saw you first."

"Ah, you never know where you'll find me, my dear. I am here, there, and everywhere, with no certain abiding-place. But you look fine upon that noble horse. You are well matched."



"You flatter me, sir. And if I may return the compliment, you look fine, too, and very comfortable. I should like to be there."

"And why not? If your feet are as hot as mine, you will find this water very soothing. Nothing like nature's simple remedies for tired feet, and—and soul."

"My feet are not tired, Penny. My face is hot, though, so I am going to join you. I want to have a chat with you."

She dismounted, tied Midnight to a tree, and seated herself by the side of the little man. Here she bathed her face, and dried it with a small handkerchief.

"There, I feel better now, and much refreshed. It is very hot today. You have had a long walk, judging by the dust upon your boots."

"Yes, a long way for an old man, my dear. But, then, a profession such as mine means hardships. I am used to them."

"It is a wonderful profession, Penny. You have not many competitors, I suppose?"

"Very few in these parts worthy of the name. There are several who claim to possess my art, but they are frauds. The divining art is a gift. It cannot be acquired. Money will not buy it, and unless it is born with a man, it is useless for him to attempt to practice it."

He picked up a forked hazel twig by his side, and held it up in his hand.

"See this, my dear. It is a simple looking thing, with no power in itself. But when held in my hands it performs wonders, and will detect hidden things in the earth. Water and minerals alike are revealed."

Jacynth took the forked branch from Penny and examined it curiously.

"It is a very common thing, isn't it? I wonder if it would work with me."

"Yes, very common. But the rod Moses held in his hand was only a shepherd's staff, yet it did wonderful things. When thrown down it became a serpent. It opened up the waters of the Red Sea, and when it smote the rock in the wilderness water gushed out. And ever since then divining-rods have been used. We find the art practised by the Greeks and Romans. Even old Cicero in his 'De Officiis' mentions it. I remember his very words, 'If all that is needful for our nourishment and support arrives to us by means of some divine rod, as people say, then each of us, free from all care and trouble, may give himself up to the exclusive pursuit of study and science.' And Ennius alludes to the rod as the agent in discovering hidden treasures in the first book of his 'De Divinatione'. Tacitus tells us that the Germans practised divination by means of rods. And Ammianus Marcellinus says that the Alains employed an osier rod for similar purposes. Why, the fourteenth law of the Frisians ordered that the discovery of murders should be made by means of divining-rods used in Church."

The little man stopped, and a smile overspread his face.

"There, there, I have allowed myself to be carried away. You are not interested in such things. And why should you? They are not in your line."

"But I am interested, Penny, and I like to hear you talk. I had no idea that there is such a history attached to your art. How father would like to hear all this."

"He knows of it, my dear. We have spent hours discussing this very matter. It was he who drew my attention to the use of the divining-rod in the Middle Ages, and how it was of such value in discovering hidden treasures, veins of precious metal, springs of water, thefts and murders."

"And did they all use such a common thing as a hazel twig?"

"They certainly did. Why, Goclenius, in speaking about the virtue of plants, mentions the mystic properties of the hazel rod. And Andreas Libavius undertook a series of experiments upon the hazel divining-rod and decided that there was truth in the popular belief. Another writer, Saint Romain, said, 'Is it not astonishing to see a rod, which is held firmly in the hands, bow itself and turn visibly in the direction of water or metal, with more or less promptitude, according as the

metal or water is near or remote from the surface' But, there, what's the use of talking like this? People care little or nothing about the wonderful history of my art. They are only interested in what it does today. I must not tire you any longer."

"You do not tire me at all, Penny. Father often talks to me about things which interest him in his books, such as Shakespeare's Plays, as well as Grecian and Roman writers. He thinks the air is full of wonderful things which will be used some day for the benefit of mankind. He says that much power, such as electricity, is going to waste because we do not know how to control it. He has great thoughts which are often too deep for me. I have seen him sit a long time without saying a word looking up at the sky and out over Storm King summit. I always wondered what he was thinking about."

"I understand, for I, too, have such thoughts. I look, though, at this little forked hazel twig, and try to fathom what lies back of its influence when held in my hands, and why it works for me and not for others. Ah, this world is full of mystery of which we only catch a glimpse of light now and then. But some day its secrets will be revealed, and then we shall behold wonders of which we now hardly dare to dream."

Penny sighed and again looked down upon the water. Jacynth could not see his eyes, but she knew he was in a most thoughtful mood. She liked him more than ever, and felt quite proud of his confiding talk to her. She had never heard him speak in such a way before. She also wondered who he really was, and what had started him forth upon his roving life. And his strange name, also, had always appealed to her. It was different from any she had ever heard.

"Did any other members of your family possess the divining art?" she asked.

"Not so far as I know. But they were gifted in other ways, especially in the use of herbs. That was the way we got our name. My grandfather nearly lost his life at Salem. He practised the black art, so people believed, because he knew so much about the healing properties of herbs. But he got his knowledge from his grandfather in England, who supplied King Charles the First with an aromatic oil made from the pennyroyal herb of which he was very fond."

The little man paused and chuckled.

"What was funny about that?" Jacynth inquired.

"You could never guess, my dear, no matter how hard you tried. It's a great joke. People thought the king liked the oil because of its scent. But that wasn't it at all. He wanted it to kill fleas."

"Kill fleas!" Jacynth exclaimed in surprise.

"That's just it. You see, it was believed that pennyroyal oil would either drive away or kill those friendly little insects. The king and queen couldn't stand fleas, so they got the oil from my great great grandfather to rid the palace of those pests. So they always called him 'Penny Royal', and he was so proud of the name that he took it instead of his other one. And that was handed down through our family, and it was given to me. Funny, isn't it, how names come?"

"Are you skilled in herbs, too?" Jacynth asked.

"A little, but I don't practise the art much. One noble gift is enough for any man, and mine is far greater. I take this little forked twig in my hands, and through me it works wonders. I can detect water under ground, locate minerals, and find out where money has been buried."

"Have you ever found valuable minerals and hidden treasures, Penny?"

The latter made no immediate reply. He drew his feet from the water and allowed them to dry in the sun. He sat for a while lost in thought.

"I have never found any yet in these parts," he at length replied. "The earth here does not contain gold and silver. It is not the right kind. And I have never found hidden treasures. Now, however, I have a clue, and that is why I am here. I have something in my knapsack which I wish to show to your father. It's a great secret."

"Won't you tell me what it is, Penny?"

"Not now. You will have to wait until I see your father."

"When will that be?"

"To-night, I hope. But there, I must get on my way, as I have to find water for Sam Webster. The spring on his place goes dry in summer, so he wants to dig a well. But I'll be at your place as soon as I can."

"And you will stay with us to-night, Penny?"

"Indeed I will. Your father and I will have a great deal to talk about. We have much in common, and know things that are hidden from others. Yes, we both reach out and lay hold of powers unseen by outward eyes."



## CHAPTER VIII

### FLAUNTING IMPUDENCE

A few rods from the road stood Bill Jukins' house, a rude building, weather-beaten, and unadorned by paint or whitewash. The dooryard was cluttered with chips, sticks of firewood, a broken-down wheel-barrow, a rusty plow, tin cans, and other rubbish. It was a desolate scene, which even nature could not relieve as it struggled to cover the ground with various kinds of weeds. The out-buildings were also in a delapidated condition, the roof of the barn sagging, the doors hanging from broken hinges, while the shed which was made to shelter the waggons, had no roof at all. Everything spoke of neglect, except one little vegetable patch between the barn and the house.

As Jacynth rode into the yard, a lean dog barked furiously, at which Midnight shied nervously. Making the horse fast to a post, she went to the door and found Mrs. Jukins within spreading butter upon a thick slice of bread for a small bare-foot, freckled-faced boy standing by her side. She was a small woman, active of foot, but more so with her tongue. A smile appeared upon her face as she turned and beheld the visitor.

"Come right in, my dear," she invited. "I'm glad to see you. Jist a minute till I git this bread fixed fer Jimmy. He's allus eatin', it seems to me. No sooner is he through with his dinner, than he's back fer something more. There, take that, now, an' don't let me see ye ag'in till supper-time."

The boy seized the bread, took a liberal bite, and fled from the house. Jacynth's eyes twinkled with amusement.

"It must keep you busy feeding such a family," she remarked. "They all seem very healthy."

"Busy! Why, I haven't a minute to myself. I'm on the go from early mornin' till late at night, with no one to help me. An' with that asleep on the floor, there's hardly space to move."

She pointed across the room where her big heavy husband was stretched full length by the stove, fast asleep. Jacynth had often seen him there, so was not surprised.

"He won't sleep anywhere else in the daytime," Mrs. Jukins explained. "He jist sprawls out there every afternoon, no matter what's goin' on. An', dear knows, we've had enough goin' on in this house since Het came home without him layin' there like a log."

"How is Hettie?" Jacynth inquired. "I hope she is doing well."

"She was gittin' along a'right until this mornin'. The baby is a fine bouncin' boy, an' looks jist like his pa, so Het says. But she was terribly cut-up when he went by this mornin' an' never stopped to see her. She took on bad."

"Who?"

"Oh, that Rayson feller who was with yer dad this mornin'."

Startled beyond measure, Jacynth's face became very white, and her body trembled. With a great effort she controlled herself.

"There must be some mistake, Mrs. Jukins," she faltered. "Not that man!"

"It was him, a'right, fer Lank seen him. He knew him, fer he met him twice in the city with Het."

Jacynth made no reply, but stared straight at the woman standing before her. It could not be Kent Rayson, she told herself. The man she had met, and who now meant so much to her, could not be the same one who had ruined Hettie. Yet Lank had seen and recognized him.

"He might have called in fer a few minutes," Mrs. Jukins went on. "But, then, that's the way with sich men. They git girls into trouble an' think no more about 'em. But he gave Het money, which is more'n most of 'em do, so I understand. Het's well fixed, so that's some comfort. Het was shrewd enough to git after him before she left the city. She threatened to expose him if he didn't pay, so he settled there an' then."

Mrs. Jukins' voice had risen as she talked, so excited had she become. It was quite evident to Jacynth that her daughter's shame meant little or nothing to her. The money Hettie had received condoned for everything. As she finished on a high note, Bill Jukins aroused from slumber, lifted his shaggy head and looked sleepily around. He then rose to a sitting position.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" he drawled, peering at Jacynth. "I was wonderin' who Liz was buzzin' to. A feller can't have a minute's peace when she's buzzin'."

"Buzzin'! Buzzin'!" Mrs. Jukins retorted. "It's no wonder I'm buzzin' with all the things that's happenin'. You do nuthin' but eat an' sleep, Bill Jukins, an' you know it."

"But a feller's got to have some rest."

"Go an' sleep under the shade of the trees or the barn, then. I've often told ye to do that, but, no, this kitchen is the only place that'll suit ye."

"I can't sleep out of doors. Too many crawlin' things there which git into me eyes an' ears. An' the flies buzz worse'n you do, Liz."

He paused in the act of putting on his right boot, and looked at Jacynth.

"How's yer pa these days?"

"He's quite well, thank you. But he's busy now getting out some ships-knees."

"Is that so? Purty hot work in the woods these days. Anybody helpin' him?"

"Jim Weston is this afternoon."

"Ah, so that's what Jim's doin'? Should think he'd have enough to 'tend to at home without workin' in the woods. It's a wonder yer pa didn't keep that young Rayson feller to help him. He stayed at yer house last night, so I hear. Went by this mornin' without stoppin' to look in at Het an' the brat he gave her. Ye'd better take warnin', young woman, an' not git too familiar with that young feller or there might be more trouble."

With all the power at her command Jacynth had been struggling to control herself as Bill Jukins drawled forth his insinuating remarks. But with his closing words, she stepped forward, her cheeks flaming with indignation.

"I do not believe what you say," she cried. "It's a lie! There is a mistake somewhere. It was not Kent Rayson who injured Hettie. I won't believe it."

Bill blinked at the challenging girl in amazement. Then his mouth expanded to a grin. This was rich diversion for him.

"H'm, ye've got more spunk than I thought ye had. Standin' up fer old Rayson's son, hee, hee. That's a good one. Taken a shine to him yerself, have ye? Better be keerful, young lady, yaas, ye'd better be keerful."

Jacynth's anger had now reached the point where reason is thrown to the wind. She had no fear of this brute of a man. Her fighting-blood was up. Words, she knew, would be of no avail. Blows alone could make any effect upon such a creature. In her right hand she held her riding-whip. Quickly grasping the lash-end, she was about to lift it aloft to rain heavy blows upon the man before her. Bill saw her movement, and understood her purpose. If a man had thus threatened him, he would have faced him and given blow for blow, for he prided himself upon his fighting ability. But this infuriated girl was a new experience in his life, and his slow-moving mind could not decide how he should act towards her. He could not hit a girl, especially Jacynth Dean, as he would have to reckon with her father of whom he stood in great awe. Retreat was the only way out of this critical situation. He scrambled to his knees, and was about to rise to his feet to escape by the back door which was near, when he saw the girl's body relax, and her partly-lifted arm drop. The cause was at once apparent, for Mrs. Weston had come swiftly into the kitchen and laid a firm hand upon Jacynth's shoulder.

"Come, Hettie wants to see you," she quietly said.

Jacynth hesitated, however. She could not forget the insulting words she had just heard. But presently reason took

command, so with a contemptuous glance towards the cowering man, she turned and followed Mrs. Weston into the adjoining room. Bill watched her until she had disappeared, and then grinned as he looked at his wife.

"Huh, she's a wild-cat, a'right. She took what I said mighty hard, an' was goin' to horsewhip me, ho, ho! She must be in love with that Rayson feller. Guess that's what Het wants to see her about."

"I wish you'd keep a civil tongue in your head, Bill Jukins," his wife retorted, as she confronted him with arms akimbo. "Ye'r allus makin' a mess of things. I'm ashamed of ye fer speakin' as ye did to a girl. Git out of the house, an' fer pity's sake, do something useful."

"What is there to do? Everything's done."

"Yes, ye'r quite right, Bill, everything is done on this place. The house, barn, waggons, fences, and land, all done through your laziness. An' now the wood in that box is done, so git out an' chop some."

"Where's Lank? That's his job. What's the good of havin' a big grown-up son if he doesn't help?"

"Lank! The less ye say about him the better. Ye've brought him up yer own way, an' look how he's turned out, a useless hulk. An' it'll be the same with the rest of the children. They'll be a burden to us as long as we live."

"But Het isn't, Liz. She's got money, an' that'll keep us fer some time."

"Don't be too sure of that, Bill. Hettie'll not stay here long, I'm thinkin'. This place is too quiet fer her. She'll make off to the city ag'in as soon as she gits well."

"An' leave her brat fer us to bring up? H'm, I won't stand fer that unless Het pays fer its keep."

"Mebbe she'll put it in the Orphans' Home. I hope she will, fer I don't want to look after it."

"But the money'll come in handy, Liz. I don't care how many babies she brings home so long as she forks out the money fer their keep. I wouldn't have to work so hard then."

"An' what about me? You wouldn't mind if I slaved myself to death so long as you have an easy time. But git along an' cut that wood. I've got to do some cookin'."

Jacynth was in no mood to see Hettie just then. She longed to leave the house and speed away as fast as Midnight could carry her on a wild ride out through the country. But she could not very well refuse the sick girl's request. So following Mrs. Weston, she passed through the parlor and entered the bedroom adjoining. Hettie's face was very white, whiter than the pillow upon which her head rested, forming a startling contrast to her wealth of jet-black hair falling loosely over her cheeks and shoulders. Her face, thinner now than usual, possessed a certain wild beauty, and her eyes were bold and daring. Her lips were thick, and her slightly-tilted nose was expressive of sauciness. She smiled as Jacynth approached, and held out her hand.

"I'm glad to see you. I knew you would come. Haven't I got into an awful mess? Look." She moved the blanket a little and exposed the face of the baby. "This is the trouble."

As Jacynth's eyes fell upon the infant, a great pity came into her heart. She dropped upon her knees by the bed and viewed the little unwanted child.

"What a beautiful baby!" she exclaimed. "And how plump it is."

"He looks just like his father," Hettie replied. "I wish he'd stopped this morning to see it. But, no, he went right by. He stayed at your house last night, so Lank said."

"Who?" Jacynth asked in a low voice.

"Matt Rayson, of course. He's the baby's father."

Impulsively Jacynth laid her right hand upon Hettie's arm. A great weight had been suddenly lifted from her heart.

"He didn't stay with us last night, Hettie. You are mistaken."

"Don't tell me that," the invalid fiercely replied, while the light of anger flashed from her eyes. "Lank saw him there, a'right, and you can't deny it."

"But I do, Hettie. Kent Rayson stayed with us. He is Matt's brother, so he said."

The gleam of anger faded from Hettie's eyes, and in its stead appeared an expression of surprise.

"Kent Rayson! I never heard of him before." She then laughed in derision. "Oh, you innocent girl. He was only deceiving you. He was lying, and made you think he was not Matt. Men do that."

"I don't believe you," Jacynth stoutly defended. "I know he told me the truth. He is Matt's twin brother, and he came to the city but a short time ago."

Hettie made no immediate reply, but remained very still staring straight before her. Then her eyes became moist, and she gave a sigh of relief.

"Maybe it's true what he told you, Jacynth. I'm glad now that it wasn't Matt. I felt bad when I thought he went by and didn't stop. But if it was his brother, that's different. Does Kent look like Matt?"

"Kent told me that strangers can't tell them apart. Anyway, I am sure that Kent is a different man, and would not do what his brother has done to you."

A slight flush overspread Hettie's pale face, and an angry expression again came into her eyes.

"Oh, don't be too sure of that. All men are alike when they have the chance. And girls are, too, for that matter. They would do as I have done if they had the courage. They are afraid of what people might say. And you are, too, Jacynth. But I don't care a rap. I am independent, and all the bugaboos of religion and gossip can't frighten me. Bah! I'm sick of such twaddle. I'm going to live my own life and have a good time while I'm young. And Matt believes as I do."

Greatly surprised at this wild outburst, Jacynth merely stared at the excited girl, not knowing what to say. And just then Mrs. Weston touched her arm.

"Come, Jacynth," she said, "We must not disturb Hettie any longer. She is very weak and needs rest. I shall go with you."

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# CHAPTER IX

## 'STOP-AN'-SNEEZE' PHILOSOPHY

Twilight was creeping slowly over Storm King Valley as Prosper Dean sat at the front window of his study. The house was very quiet. Jacynth had gone with Midnight and Lad over to the Westons. Martha was busy in the kitchen, so there was no one to disturb his meditation. And he was glad, for he had much to think about, and his mind was more disturbed than it had been for a long time. He had visited the Horns during the afternoon, had read the letter they had received from Timothy Rayson, had listened to what they said, and watched with sympathy the distress expressed in their honest eyes. He had said what he could to comfort the aged couple, but as he left their house and rode slowly homeward, a burning anger filled his heart against the man who was planning to ruin such worthy people.

He had also visited the Westons, and had heard more about Hettie Jukins and the unwanted baby. And it was Old Thistle's son who had caused the girl's downfall! What else could be expected from the seed of such a man?

He thought over all these things upon his return home. He did not feel so sure of himself now. Prospero of old was able to control both the elements and the unruly spirits of men by his magical power. But that was only a fairy-tale, which he had fancied could be applied to real life. He had been lured by this will-o'-the-wisp to think that he could do the same. It had been an attractive idea. Now, however, he had serious doubts about its application to practical affairs of life. He had no Ariel sprite to do his bidding, and the Calibans were many and could not be easily subdued to his will.

As he thought of these things, he at length reached out and took down a book from his well-filled shelves nearby. It was not *The Tempest* he desired now, but *Faust*, that he might read about the cunning wiles of Mephistopheles. The *Tempest* might be mere fancy, but *Faust* was not, for the devil was as real and active as ever. Although the story was most familiar to him, and he had thought over it a great deal, he turned to that part where *Faust*, under the influence of the evil one, betrayed and ruined the innocent girl. The prison scene stirred him as it had never done before, Margaret lying there, doomed, demented and babbling wild, strange things. And there were many such girls in the world undergoing similar sufferings, and all because of devil-possessed human brutes. Suppose such a thing should happen to his own daughter!

The book dropped from his hand upon the floor, he rose to his feet and paced rapidly up and down the room. Was Kent Rayson another *Faust* who had come to lead Jacynth astray? He seemed like a noble and worthy young man from what he had seen of him. But he was Tim Rayson's son, and his brother had brought trouble upon Hettie Jukins. Perhaps Kent and Matt were both alike.

He stepped to the window and gazed out across the valley to the wooded hills beyond. His brain was in a tumult, and his hands were clenched behind his back. Jacynth, his only daughter, dearer to him than life itself, was in danger. Another *Faust* had come and fascinated her by his wiles and charming manner.

And as he stood there, Penny Royal appeared at the door. He stopped and looked curiously at Prosper Dean. He knew at once that something unusual was disturbing him.

"Good evening, sir," he began. "Admiring the scene, eh? It's very fine."

Mr. Dean wheeled suddenly around and stared at the little man in an absent-minded manner. He then smiled.

"Oh, it's you, Penny? I was lost in thought, so did not hear you enter. Come in and rest. You look tired. Let me get you something to drink."

Penny's eyes sparkled as he glanced towards a small cupboard on the right. He knew from past experience what it contained, for Mr. Dean never failed to treat him to a glass of choice wine whenever he visited him. He laid his knapsack aside, and crossed the room to a chair, when he noticed the book lying upon the floor. Picking it up, he looked at the title.

"Ah, so you've been reading *Faust*, I see. It's a great story, but it gives me the creeps. There's too much about the devil in it to suit me."

"That is why I have been reading it," Mr. Dean explained as he handed Penny a glass of wine. "I'm in the right mood for



it to-night."

Penny sat down, tasted the wine, and smacked his lips.

"That's great, sir! It puts new life into one. But not too much of it, ah, no, for the devil's in it like in Faust. But used in moderation it is stimulating. 'Take a little wine for your stomach's sake,' so the Bible says. But are you not going to drink with me, sir?"

"Not to-night, Penny. I have too much of the devil in me, as I just told you."

"Is that so? What's the matter? Every man needs a little of the devil in him at times, especially these days when there are so many evil things to fight. But you have no enemies, so what's troubling you?"

"I thought so, too, until recently. You have heard about poor Hettie Jukins' trouble, I suppose?"

"I have, indeed, and it's sad. But why should that worry you? It's not your affair."

"Perhaps not," and Mr. Dean sighed as he sat down by his guest's side. "But the young man who got that girl into trouble is Timothy Rayson's son."

Penny lowered his partly-raised glass and stared at Mr. Dean.

"That's news to me. Old Thistle's son! My, my! Like father, like son, eh?"

"It seems so. And to make matters worse, my daughter is in love with that son's twin brother. You didn't know that, I suppose?"

"Never heard a word of it. It makes me feel sorry for you. Jacynth is too fine a girl to give herself to any of Old Thistle's breed. Nothing but a scalawag could come from that stock. Have you warned her?"

"Not yet, and I don't like to do it. She is so happy, and I know it would break her heart if I forbade young Rayson to come here."

"Don't think that, sir. She's a sensible girl, and when she knows the truth, she'll be reasonable. She'll feel bad for a time, but she'll listen to you, and soon forget her love-fever."

"I am not so sure of that, Penny. You do not know Jacynth as well as I do. This is her first love-affair. And besides, I like young Kent Rayson. He is an artist, and his mind seems to be set on things that are noble and beautiful. He resembles his mother, so he told me. I knew her well. She was a remarkable woman, unequally yoked to a man far her inferior, and who treated her disgracefully. If Kent is like his mother, I shall be satisfied."

"Perhaps he is, sir, so I would not worry too much. Jacynth will soon find out what kind of a fellow he is. She'll not put up with any nonsense."

"But love is blind, Penny. It may be impossible to make her see. I don't want her to ruin her life without doing something to stay her. She is very dear to me, all I have in the world, and should anything happen to her—"

He paused abruptly, overcome by his emotion. Penny, seeing his agitation, rose to his feet.

"Come, come, Mr. Dean, you're not going to lose her. I have such faith in Jacynth that I'd stake my life on her judgment and good common sense. You are harming yourself sitting here brooding over Faust and Mephistopheles. You need a dose of Old Stop-an'-Sneeze to cheer you up. He's the best cure I know for the dumps."

"I believe you are right, Penny," and a smile overspread Mr. Dean's face. "Aristophanes was a great humorist, and you have often quoted him to me. You read him a great deal, do you not?"

"Indeed I do, sir. I always carry a copy of his plays with me, and I have read them so often that I know some of them by heart. Years ago a man showed me my name in one of his plays, and that so interested me that I bought a copy myself. Yes, sir, it's there, all right, 'Penny Royal', without any doubt. It's all in English, of course, although Old Stop-an'-Sneeze wrote in Greek."

"Why do you call him such a queer name, Penny?"

"I've told you the reason, sir, haven't I?"

"Perhaps so, but I have forgotten."

"Most likely you have. But I've been calling him that for a long time. You see, I quote him so often, that if I said 'Aristophanes' people would think I'm stuck up, and trying to show off my knowledge. But 'Stop-an'-Sneeze' sounds quite commonplace, and everybody laughs when I mention it."

Mr. Dean smiled. He was really feeling better, and enjoying his companion's talk.

"You have helped me a great deal, Penny, and I do not feel so depressed now."

"That is good, sir. Keep it up and everything will come out right. Whenever I feel a gloomy mood coming upon me, I think of Old Stop-an'-Sneeze, and it may surprise you, but I really do stop and have a good hearty sneeze. That shakes all my timbers from head to foot and makes me feel like a new man. Why not try it. You'll find it works better than Faust or Old Prospero."

Mr. Dean looked at Penny's honest wrinkled face, and felt rebuked. Here was a man, a lonely wanderer, with no settled abiding-place, bent with age, yet facing the world with a brave spirit, bringing sunshine wherever he went, and a friend to all. He laid a hand upon the little man's arm.

"I thank you for your words of encouragement, Penny. You have tested your philosophy of life and it has helped you through many trials. Mine, too, has supported me, though now it seems all in vain. We have come through hard schools of discipline, so we understand each other, do we not?"

"Ay, ay, we do, sir. But the discipline has been good for us. Old Stop-an'-Sneeze expressed it in his great play, The Clouds, when speaking of the hard training of the Spartan youth, he said,

Yet so were trained the heroes, that imbru'd  
The field of Marathon with hostile blood;  
This discipline it was that braced their nerves  
And fitted them for conquest.

And so have we been fitted to face whatever comes, and win."

"They are noble words," Mr. Dean replied. "Show me where they are to be found, that I may learn them by heart."

"Not now, sir," and Penny stooped to pick up his pack lying on the floor. "We have talked too long already. This is the night, remember, that you promised to go with me up the brook to the site of that old house."

"So it is! I had forgotten all about it, being so much concerned with other things. Have you the chart to guide us?"

"It's in my pack. But I do not need it, as I have it all in my mind, as well as the instructions. You know the way to the place, and when once there, I shall do the rest."

"It may be all a hoax, Penny, and our labor will be in vain."

"It may be, but that old dying sailor said he got the chart in some foreign country. He was terribly disappointed not to find the treasure when he believed he was near to it. He had gone to different parts of the world in his search, and at last came here. The chart tells of a creek on the right side of a large river about twenty-five miles from the mouth. Into the creek flows a brook, and about two miles up this is a smaller brook, which is generally dry in summer. About five hundred yards farther up are the stone ruins of an old house, near which the treasure will be found. The detailed directions are all on the chart, so we should have no difficulty in locating the spot."

"You have told me all about this before, Penny," Mr. Dean replied. "But I have been thinking it over and wondering how that old sailor came at last to this province in his search."

"He explained all that, sir. When he had failed in other places, he was one day studying the chart, when he happened to

notice what looked like letters in one corner, but so small and faded he could not read them. Getting a powerful magnifying-glass, he made out the letters, 'St.J.R.N.B.' He had been here on a ship, and so at once decided that the letters meant, 'St. John River, New Brunswick.' It is too bad the poor old fellow did not live to see what would come of his discovery. But as he didn't, we must try, and to-night."

"All right, Penny, we shall go, although I have little hope of finding anything. Wait for me in front of the house while I get the lantern, and leave word with Martha to tell Jacynth that we may be late coming home."



# CHAPTER X

## NIGHT ALARM

Trees lined both sides of Storm King brook, and crowded close to the water. Through these Prosper Dean and Penny Royal made their way. Although the shades of night clothed the forest in sombre gloom, they could see quite plainly, so it was unnecessary to light the lantern. A steep hill rose on their right, and after a while they came to a place where the ground was level, and the trees farther apart. Mr. Dean paused to rest, and looked around.

"I come here quite often," he remarked, "for I am very fond of this spot. I can imagine that Shakespeare had something like this in his mind when he wrote his fairy plays. One can almost picture him strolling around or standing still thinking of the little beings which his fancy created. What a remarkable man he was, and how much pleasure he gave to the world."

"You're quite right, sir," Penny replied. "And so did Old Stop-an'-Sneeze see wonderful things when he wrote his plays. Why, he made the frogs, birds, wasps, and clouds talk and sing just like human beings. And he named his plays after them, too. Although he lived five hundred years before the Christian era, yet he had an eye for the things of nature. Perhaps those old fellows knew more than we do today. Where can you find writers now equal to Shakespeare and Old Stop-an'-Sneeze? If there are any, I do not know of them."

"Yes, I guess they knew, Penny, and they were able to tell what they saw and felt. I wish I could do the same. It must be great to express in strong and beautiful language the thoughts which come to one's mind, especially in a place like this. I sometimes think that I should like to live here all the time."

"You would get tired of it after a while, Mr. Dean. It would be all right for a change, but one needs human beings for company. I know that I do, anyway."

"Perhaps you are right, Penny. I want my daughter and a few tested friends to make me satisfied with a life here in the woods."

"With the world's cares and evils shut out, eh?"

"Yes, that would be my ideal."

"It could not be, sir. Sooner or later the world would find you out, while cares and enemies would come as well, especially if you had such a beautiful daughter as Jacynth with you."

"Yes, yes, I suppose that is so, Penny. But let us go on, for the mention of Jacynth makes me anxious to get back to her."

Continuing on their way, they came at length to the place which Penny declared corresponded to the directions given on the chart.

"This is where the old house stood, is it not, sir? These stones must have formed part of the foundation, and this hole was evidently the cellar. What a strange place for a man to live. He must have had some grievance against the world to bury himself here in the wilderness."

"There are several stories about him, Penny, so I do not know which to believe. One is that he was a pirate, who came here with his ill-gotten gains. Another is, that he killed a man, and fled to this place. But no one knows for sure, as it was a long time ago before the memory of any living man. There may be no truth at all in any of the stories. Several times I have tried to trace some resemblance between this hole and stones and a dwelling-place, but always had to use my wildest imagination. My opinion is that what seems like a foundation is nothing more than the work of nature. However, as we are here, and you have the chart, I shall do all I can to help you."

Penny paid no attention to these words, as he was looking around for the right corner as mentioned in the chart. It was growing quite dark now, and as Mr. Dean lighted the lantern, Penny turned towards him with a smile of satisfaction.

"This is the place, sir. It's as clear as day. From this point ten paces to the left towards the brook. You do the pacing, as your legs are longer than mine."

Mr. Dean was much amused at this request. The whole affair was assuming a humorous aspect to him now, and he was enjoying the adventure.

"How do you know my legs are the right length?" he asked.

"Because I believe the man was tall. Anyway, you pace first, and if you do not hit the spot, I shall try."

To humor his companion, Mr. Dean did as he was requested. Ten long steps he made and stopped near a big fir tree. Penny followed, his eyes fixed intently upon the ground.

"I think this is the place, sir. Now, you stand right where you are, and don't move a step."

Dropping his pack at his feet, he opened it and brought forth a large hunting-knife.

"I should really have a sword," he explained, "for all the directions I have ever read about finding hidden treasures mention a sword. But I guess this will do as well. Here, you hold this," and he handed to Mr. Dean the hazel twig. "Don't move, or you will spoil everything."

With knife in hand, Penny stooped, drove the point of the blade into the ground, and then cut a circle which completely enclosed the two men. He next straightened himself up and took the rod from Mr. Dean.

"Hold the light a little lower, and don't step outside the circle," he ordered. "If you do, you will break the charm, and will spoil everything."

Grasping the handle of the rod, he held it out before him, muttering words which Mr. Dean could not understand. It was evidently some form of enchantment in which Penny firmly believed. His manner showed his excitement. His body quivered, his eyes glowed with a strange light, and the hands which held the prongs were tense. The rod inclined first to the left and then to the right in a feeble manner which did not satisfy him. His words became more emphatic, ending in what seemed to Mr. Dean like an appeal to some unseen power for help. Then suddenly the rod pointed strongly to the ground close to where the knife had first cut the soil.

"Ah!" Penny excitedly exclaimed. "There's the place, at the root of this tree. Hold the lantern lower. The treasure is right here."

Just as he ceased, the report of a gun sounded among the trees, and instantly the glass in the lantern was shattered and the light went out. With a shriek of terror, Penny dropped the rod and stared in the direction from which the shot had come. Then upon the still night air came a cry as of some creature in distress, ending in a long-drawn-out wail of despair.

Brave man though he was, a sense of fear came into Mr. Dean's heart. What was the meaning of that shot, and the wild cry? Who could be lurking there among the trees with evil intent? He spoke in a low whisper to his companion.

"It's an evil spirit," Penny replied. His teeth were chattering, and his body trembling. "It must be the ghost of the man who buried the treasure here. It's a warning to us not to meddle with it. Let's go away before something terrible happens. I shall never come here again."

"It is no ghost," Mr. Dean declared. "Did you ever hear of a ghost carrying a gun? It is some human being. Suppose we try to catch him."

"No, no! Let us go away at once or we shall be killed. Ghosts can do anything, even shoot people when they want to. But we must be very quiet and not talk too loud, or it might shoot again."

Although Mr. Dean had no superstitious fear about ghosts, he knew that it was advisable for them to go away as quietly as possible, for the unseen enemy might shoot again. He took Penny by the arm.

"Come, it's no use for us to stay here now. You are no longer interested in the buried treasure, are you?"

"I'm not, sir, and I never want to come here again. I shall be thankful if we get out of this horrible place alive. An evil spirit is in the woods, and I wish you'd use some of Prospero's magic to control it."

"And why do you not stop and sneeze, Penny?"

"I can't, and it's no use trying. Old Stop-an'-Sneeze was never in a fix like this. Hark! what's that? I heard something. Over there!"

He was shaking with fear, and he grasped his companion by the arm.

"I didn't hear anything," Mr. Dean replied.

"But I did, and it sounded like something running. Come, let's go."

With difficulty they travelled back along the brook. It was dark, and they stumbled over roots and stones. Penny often glanced fearfully behind, certain that the evil spirit was pursuing them. With no light to direct their steps, it took them a long time to thread their way among the trees and reach the shelter of the house. Both were tired, their hands and faces scratched, and their clothes torn. Penny was about exhausted, and when within the house he sank upon the floor a pitiable object of distress. Jacynth was at home, and coming into the room, she was amazed beyond description at the appearance of the two men.

"What has happened?" she asked.

"I shall explain later," her father replied. "Call Martha at once. Penny is not very well, but I think a glass of wine will restore him."

A little later he was resting comfortably on the sofa. He was still weak, and the fear had not altogether vanished from his eyes. At length, however, a drowsiness came upon him, and he slept.

Mr. Dean explained to Jacynth what had happened up the brook.

"I cannot understand the meaning of that shot," he said. "Penny believes it was a ghost, but that is all nonsense. It was some human being. But why he should shoot at us is a mystery to me. And what about that blood-curdling shriek? It sounded like a madman, although I have not heard of one around these parts."

"But there is one, father," Jacynth replied. "I believe it was Peter Horn."

"Peter Horn! What do you mean? He is not a madman."

"If he is not, he acts like one, so his wife told me to-night. He is taking the loss of his place so much to heart that she is afraid he will go out of his mind. He roams the woods day and night, with his gun, and threatens to shoot any one who comes to take his trees. Yes, it must have been Peter who frightened you."

"I believe you are right, Jacynth. My, my! this is becoming very serious. Poor Peter! I must go to see him, and try to reason with him, although I fear it will be of little use."

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# CHAPTER XI

## A DAY OF GLADNESS

The last hymn had just begun at the morning service in the little church near the river. The day was fine, and the gentle breeze drifting in through the open windows was redolent with perfumes from fields and gardens. Birds twittered in the trees outside, and the slightly-swaying branches of the great elms formed quivering traceries upon the large upper panes of glass.

Jacynth was standing by her father's side, hymn book in hand. She had enjoyed the service this day more than usual, for the white-haired clergyman's words appealed to her. He had spoken about love, and the great need for more of it in the world. Duty had its place, so he said, but when love was in the heart, duty was forgotten. A nurse might consider the care of the sick as mere duty to be performed for so many hours during the day or night. But a mother would never think of duty as she watched by the side of her sick child. Love drove out duty, and kept her ever watchful. He then mentioned young lovers. Love alone ruled their hearts and all that they did. It was not duty which brought them together, but love, and all they did for each other was inspired by an over-mastering heart passion.

Jacynth did not follow him after that in his application to spiritual things. Her mind wandered, and she thought of the little brook which flowed through Storm King Valley, and a young man standing upon the bank. It was a beautiful picture she beheld, which brought a glow to her cheeks and a thrill to her heart.

She was aroused from her reverie by the sound of a strong manly voice joining in the third verse of the hymn. Sitting up in front of the church, she did not like to look around. But she knew the singer, and longed to see him. But for the present she would have to be satisfied with listening. Service would soon be over, and then she would meet him.

When at length she rose from her knees at the close of the benediction, a feeling of embarrassment came upon her. Her greatest desire was to meet Kent Rayson, but not in the presence of so many people. How could she conceal her eagerness? All would be watching her, especially the girls. It was, therefore, necessary that she should control herself and appear to be indifferent to the young man's presence.

As she and her father turned and walked down the aisle, Kent was nowhere to be seen. For that she was thankful. But when out in the open, she saw him standing by a horse, as fine as Midnight, black, restive, with noble arching neck and glossy hide. The sight of Kent banished her embarrassment and she hastened forward with no thought of what the watching people might say. Her eyes glowed with pleasure, and her face was alight with happiness as she held out her hand.

"You have given me a great surprise," she began. "But you were late, and missed a grand sermon."

"I am sorry, Jacynth, but I could not help it. I went to the Valley where Martha told me you were at church. I then came here like the wind. How do you like my horse?"

"Great! Is he your own?"

"He is. I had some trouble, though, in finding one to match yours. Shall we test their speed?"

"Not today. It would not be proper to race now. And, besides, I have on my Sunday clothes, you see, and ride as every woman is supposed to ride, on a side-saddle. Just wait until I am dressed in my usual week-day clothes and ride like a man. Then you will see what Midnight can do. What is your horse's name?"

"Blackbird. He hasn't wings, but that makes no difference. There is nothing swifter that can bring me from the city to Storm King Valley. You should have seen the way he travelled today. Why, he seemed to skim the ground."

"And how is your foot?"

"Almost well. It was not a bad sprain, the doctor said. It does not trouble me much when I walk. I am anxious to visit with you that beautiful place by the brook where we first met. And I must get a picture of you there."

Jacynth smiled, but made no reply, for her father was at her side greeting the young man. Her heart was full of happiness.

How noble Kent looked to her this morning, so straight and tall, the very embodiment of health and manly strength.

Prosper Dean followed them on Camilla as they rode a little ahead up the narrow lane leading to the main highway. He was in a most thoughtful mood. He was pleased to see Jacynth so happy, and if the youth riding by her side had been any other than Tim Rayson's son, he, too, would be ready to rejoice with her. But how could he bring himself to give his daughter to such a man? His pleasant and gentlemanly manner might be merely superficial, a covering to win the girl who had attracted his attention. Perhaps he had fascinated other girls, for all he knew. He might be like his brother Matt who had brought trouble upon poor Hettie Jukins.

These and other thoughts passed through his mind as he moved on his way. But when they reached the main road, the horses ahead increased their speed which soon developed into a sharp canter. Up hill and down they sped, with Camilla following close behind. Then when Creek Corner had been reached, they left the main highway and entered upon the narrow Storm King Valley road. This was rougher, so caution had to be used, and their speed slackened to a gentle trot, and at length to a walk up a steep hill.

Kent looked with admiration at Jacynth as she checked Midnight in his eagerness to surge ahead of the strange horse by his side. He was also anxious to get home to the hay and oats awaiting him there. But his mistress was not concerned about his welfare now. She was in no hurry to reach home. She was enjoying every moment of this ride, and wished to prolong it as much as possible.

"My, what a great run!" Kent exclaimed. "I am proud of Blackbird. After his fast trip from the city this morning he is as fresh as ever."

"He is very hot, though," Jacynth reminded.

"Oh, he'll soon cool off, and be ready for the return journey this evening."

"Must you leave so soon? I was hoping you would remain a day or two."

"Nothing would suit me better, but there is much to do, or father seems to think there is, so he keeps me in the office from morning till night. He has no mercy on me, while he lets Matt do as he pleases. It is not fair. In another year, however, I shall be my own master."

"And then?" Jacynth queried.

"That remains to be seen. Build a great ship, maybe, paint a master-piece, or build a house in the woods. I may even do some desperate deed, such as marrying a nice girl, providing she will have me, and be under her thumb for the rest of my life. So you see, it is hard to tell what I shall do when I get my freedom."

Jacynth's ringing laugh was pleasant to Kent. He had no doubt about the girl he desired as his wife. And he believed that they would be very happy no matter where they lived. Having each other would be all-sufficient whether in the city or in some cabin in the forest. Love would make everything beautiful.

For some distance their way led through a wooded region, and at length came out to Jim Weston's farm. And over in front of his house was the owner himself, seated upon a log. As they came nearer, Jacynth waved her hand, and Jim was about to return her greeting in a similar manner. His partly-lifted arm dropped suddenly, and he straightened himself with a jerk. This action was not noticed by the young people, but Prosper Dean saw and understood its meaning. It troubled him. He knew that Jim had recognized Kent Rayson, so there was no telling what he might do now that the son of his great enemy was in the Valley. The sudden drop of that half-lifted arm, and the quick upward jerk of his body told their own tale. What would happen should he meet Kent? Such a man who had been nourishing his wrath for years might go to any extremes. He recalled the expression upon his face that day when they were getting out the ship-knee. He had been able to check Jim then, but could he do so now? This was what worried him. And Kent Rayson knew nothing of his danger. Should he be warned? It might frighten him and keep him away from the Valley. But he himself was the only one who could tell him, and to do such a thing would mean tearing away the veil from the past and revealing to him his father's deeds of shame and infamy. That was so foreign to Prosper Dean's generous nature that he at once banished the temptation from his mind. No, he felt he could not do that at present. He would try to see Jim, to check him, if possible, from any act of rashness.

Martha had dinner ready, so while the men were stabling the horses, Jacynth went to her own room to change her dress.



She delayed longer than usual, and several times she glanced at herself in the mirror. There was no doubt about her happiness, and this her father noted when she at length came downstairs. Kent's heart quickened as he saw her. To him she was a vision of grace and beauty, with her soft white dress, the delicate chain of gold about her neck, her animated face, and luxuriant, wavy hair, caught and held in place by a single silver pin.

And she was in perfect harmony with her surroundings, the sun pouring in through the large partly-opened windows, caused the spotless table-linen, dishes and silver to gleam with a dazzling radiance. It lighted up the pictures on the walls and some rare prints of old masters. But best of all to Kent was to see it falling upon Jacynth's head and shoulders as she sat opposite to him. The slight movements of the leafy branches outside the windows made the flickering sunlight to dance upon her hair, and to play hide-and-seek with the silver hair-pin.

"It is wonderful to be here," he declared. "This room is a perfect haven of peace."

"We try to make it one," Mr. Dean replied, as he prepared to carve the roast of lamb Martha had just placed before him. "But true peace consists not in outward things alone, but is a condition of the heart and mind."

"I acknowledge that, sir, but it is comforting to have a retreat such as this from the bustling and wrangling affairs of the world. I have a small den of my own in the city, but it is nothing like this."

"You live with your father and brother, I suppose?"

"Oh, no. They have a housekeeper to look after them, while I board. We tried living together for a time, but it didn't work. It was my fault, perhaps. We have nothing in common. I was willing to toil in the office all day, but I could not bear to hear nothing but business talk, and often sharp wrangling at every meal and during the evening. I needed something to satisfy my soul."

"Your painting, eh?"

"Yes, painting and reading. Life should be more than a constant grind to make money. Father thinks only of that, and Matt is about the same, although he is different in many ways. But, there, I want to forget all that, and enjoy the present."

There were several questions which Mr. Dean desired to ask, but decided to wait until he and the young man were alone together. He contented himself now in listening to Jacynth and Kent as their talk drifted off to horses, music, painting, and other subjects, flitting from one thing to another like humming birds from flower to flower. He knew that they were happy, for love had woven its magic spell about their hearts, and they were living in a world he could not enter.

When the meal was over, he left them and went upstairs to his study for his usual after-dinner nap. Every Sunday afternoon when the day was fine Jacynth had always gone with him for a ride or a ramble through the woods. At times their walk took them up the brook to the great rock which lifted itself out of the bed of the stream like a huge monolith among a mass of smaller rocks. It seemed as if some ancient titan had cut and squared and left it as an altar to the god of the water-ways. Jacynth had always liked this spot, where mounted upon the rock, shaded by an over-arching tree, she would sometimes imagine herself a queen upon her throne surrounded by her many admiring subjects. It was always pleasant for her father to watch her on such occasions standing there, graceful as a lily, face animated, eyes sparkling, while a few stray sunbeams flickering down through the branches overhead glinted gently upon her soft wavy hair. His heart then was full of pride as he studied her, and he felt himself a fortunate man in having such a daughter to give him so much happiness.

As he lay upon his study couch he thought of the last time they had been up the brook together. Later they had gone over to visit the Horns, and had come home in time for supper. But Jacynth did not need him now. She had found another who had taken his place. It was only natural, he well knew, although it was hard for him to become reconciled to the change. Jacynth meant so much to him, everything, in fact, and he was about to lose her.

Occasionally the sound of laughter came from downstairs, and he knew that the young people were enjoying themselves in each other's company. Ere long he heard the sweet strains of Jacynth's violin. It was quite easy for him to picture the scene, the girl standing with curved graceful arm, drawing the bow across the obedient strings, while before her sat Kent with eyes full of love and admiration fixed upon her radiant face. Yes, he could see it all as if present with them.

Soon the room changed to a forest, where among the great trees he saw Jacynth hurrying as if frightened. Then he saw Kent pursuing, while just behind was Old Thistle reaching out and trying to clutch his son. A great fear came into

Prosper Dean's heart. His daughter was in danger, and as he was about to spring to her rescue, he woke with a start, and looked around in a bewildered manner. He then smiled, although he could not rid himself of the vision. He listened, but no sound came from below. The music had ceased, and the house was very quiet. Going at once downstairs, he met Martha.

"Where are the young people?" he asked.

"They have gone to see the Horns, sir. I feel quite anxious about them."

"Why?"

"Because Jim Weston has gone the same way. He went by shortly after dinner while I was washing the dishes. I did not like to disturb your sleep, sir."

Mr. Dean looked keenly at his housekeeper.

"So you understand, I see. You think that Jim is after Kent Rayson?"

"I am sure of it from the way he was skulking along the edge of the woods, keeping hidden as much as possible."

Mr. Dean stood for a few seconds lost in thought.

"I believe you are right, Martha. Jim evidently means trouble, I must go at once, for it is hard to tell what that man might do."

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## CHAPTER XII

### MASTER ONCE MORE

Seated near the door of his humble abode, Jim Weston whittled off several slices from a plug of tobacco, rubbed them between the palms of his hands, and slowly filled his pipe. His wife was clearing away the dinner dishes, and he could hear her quick step about the kitchen. He never went to church, for a heart such as his was not in harmony with religion. And, besides, he did not wish to mingle with people who shrugged their shoulders at a jail-bird. Not all, of course, but too many for his comfort, so he preferred to stay away altogether.

He was about to light his pipe, when he caught sight of three riders coming along the road. He had not noticed them as they emerged from the woods until they were almost opposite his house. He was on the point of responding to Jacynth's uplifted hand when he recognized the young man by her side. Then his own hand dropped, and his body stiffened to a quick upright position. His face darkened, and his eyes gleamed with anger. He watched until they were out of sight beyond a bend in the road. Then his tense body relaxed, and he slumped down upon the log. Again he looked in the direction the riders had gone, and as he did so, his eyes rested upon the banner of red, white and blue floating in the gentle breeze above the great pine. He knew its meaning, and why it had been placed there. It fascinated him by its silent appeal to the passion in his heart. Several times in the past he had been tempted to tear down that piece of cloth as it waved a rebuke to his fury. And the desire came upon him now. He crushed it down, however, rose to his feet and walked to the door of his house. He stood there for a minute looking out towards the little brook and the forest beyond. The dark trees seemed to allure him, as if he longed to enter their quiet depths. Those great firs and pines were his friends. They would shelter him and tell no tales.

And standing there, he suddenly caught sight of a form moving swiftly and cautiously along the border of the woods within the shade of the over-hanging branches. He recognized him at once. It was Lank Jukins, and he was carrying a gun under his arm. Jim needed no one to tell him where he was going, and the purpose of his speed up Storm King Valley.

"The fool!" he muttered. "And toting a gun, too!"

He turned and entered the kitchen. His wife, seeing the expression in his eyes, clutched him by the arm.

"Jim, don't look that way! Be careful what you do."

"What do you mean, Nell?"

"Oh, I understand, for I saw young Rayson go by with the Deans, so know what is in your mind."

"Maybe you do. But did you see Lank Jukins hurrying up the brook with a gun in his hand?"

"Why, no!"

"I did, and know what he is planning to do."

"Shoot young Rayson?"

"Most likely. Lank's liable to do anything when he's mad with jealousy. I must find out what he's about."

"Be careful, Jim, or he might shoot you."

"Yes, he might, and Jacynth, too."

"Oh!" Mrs. Weston's face grew pale as she looked at her husband. "You must hurry, then, and stop him."

"I shall try, Nell. But you know as well as I do that Lank is an ugly customer when he's on the rampage, and half drunk with rotten liquor."

"I know it, Jim, and that's what makes me afraid. Lank might turn on you."

"He might, although I don't think he will. He tried his tricks upon me once, but he got such a lesson that he's been afraid of me ever since. And I intend to keep him frightened, for it's the only way to handle such a cur."

"But it might be different now, Jim, when he has his gun, and has been drinking."

"Maybe so, Nell. But I think I can manage him. Anyway, I'm going to try."

As Jim made his way across the field and up the brook, he was quite puzzled at himself. The black cloud that had swept upon his heart but a short time before had vanished. In its stead had come a new feeling, a desire to save two unsuspecting ones from a revengeful pursuer. But most of all it was of Jacynth he was thinking. Suppose Lank in his wild rage should shoot her! The thought caused him to quicken his steps, until at last he was running through the woods, leaping across fallen trees and stones in his eagerness. He did not seem to be the same man who had sat so sullenly near his house but a short while before watching the riders go by.

Coming at length to the road in front of Val Haven, he stopped by the brook which gurgled on its way to the left. This was the end of an old abandoned winter lumber road, now partly overgrown with bushes. Sheltered here, he looked out across the field beyond, and at the Dean house on his left. But no sign could he see of Lank Jukins.

Seating himself upon an old log, he wiped the perspiration from his face, for not a breath of wind reached him among the trees. His heart was hot, as well, for but a short distance away was the son of the man who had ruined his life. Forgotten now was Lank as memory of the wrong and injustice that had been done to him swept upon him like a flood. And just over there was his enemy's son! Why had he come here, of all places, to make love to such a girl as Jacynth Dean?

His hands clenched hard as he thought of this. In fact, so vehement was his emotion that he partly rose from the log with the intention of going to the house and meeting the young man face to face. But at that instant he heard the crack of a dry twig among the trees. Startled, he glanced to the right, and there coming slowly and cautiously along the lumber road he beheld Lank Jukins. Jim rose to his feet as he approached. Here was one who would help him, and he would use his hatred to obtain revenge. But as Lank drew nearer, he noticed that he was walking in a peculiar manner, glancing fearfully from side to side. Then when he saw Jim standing before him, his face brightened a little, and his steps quickened.

"What are ye doin' here, Jim?" he asked.

"What do you think I am doing, Lank?"

"Huntin' fer that Rayson cuss, eh? Ye'r after him, too, same as me?"

"Why have you brought that gun?" Jim sternly asked. "You don't intend to shoot him?"

"I did, but I can't now."

"Why?"

"'Cause I saw a black cat back there. It crossed me path, an that's bad luck."

"Nonsense! A black cat can't harm you."

"But it kin, Jim. Pop was huntin' once in the woods when he saw a black cat, an' that very day his gun bust an' tore his hand. Pop lost two fingers. He said it was the black cat that done it. Here, you take the gun, fer I don't dare to shoot now."

"What do you want me to do with it, Lank?"

"Shoot that cuss on sight. You hate him as much as I do. My hand'll shake too much, so I'll miss him. D— that black cat!"

As Jim looked at the miserable superstitious youth before him, a feeling of intense disgust came into his heart. And at once there rose before him Prosper Dean and his daughter. What a contrast! And something else came into his mind, startling in its strangeness.

"Go home, Lank," he said in a voice that was almost fatherly. "If you shoot a man you know what the result will be."

"You shoot him fer me, then, Jim. Nobody'll ever know who done it."

"No! Take your gun and go home."

"H— if I will. If you won't shoot him, I'll do it myself."

At this threat Jim became once more the master of the *Ocean Belle*, where his word was law. He knew how to deal with such a creature as Lank Jukins. His eyes glowed with a dangerous light as he reached out his right hand.

"Give me the gun. It's safer with me."

"No."

"Give it to me, I say."

Jim's hand was on the weapon now, and the next instant he had wrenched it from Lank's grasp. The latter shrank back, terrified at the look in the captain's eyes. Lifting it above his head, Jim brought it down with a smashing blow across the log upon which he had been sitting. The gun broke in two like a pipe-stem, the stock falling to the ground, with the barrel remaining gripped in Jim's hands.

With a cry of rage Lank leaped forward. He stopped, however, when he saw the gun-barrel uplifted ready to strike him down.

"Get out of this," Jim roared. "There'll be murder here if you don't hustle."

Lank hesitated for a second, when seeing the weapon descending, he gave a yell of terror, leaped aside, and disappeared among the trees.

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# CHAPTER XIII

## UNDER THE BIG TREE

With the gun-barrel firmly grasped in his hands, Jim Weston stared in the direction Lank had gone. His body then relaxed, and he sat down upon the log nearby.

"What a fool I am," he muttered. "Why didn't I let that thing do his devilish deed? He would have made away with Old Thistle's whelp, and the hangman's noose would have finished Lank. Thus a good riddance would have been made of both. What came over me, anyway, that I tried to reason with a beast like that? I never did it at sea, so why have I done it on land?"

Again he was skipper of the *Ocean Belle*, and the master-spirit was strong within him. He saw his vessel reeling as she plowed through the surging waves, heard the gale howling among the rigging, and the booming of the mighty sails. And he was in command, with every man leaping at his stern orders. He sighed as he thought of those days and the changes that had taken place since then. Now he was marked as a jail-bird, and foolish enough to try to reason with a craven brute lower than the lowest of his crew. But he would never do such a thing again. No. He would be master on land as well as at sea. He could handle a surly crew then, for they feared him. And he would do the same now and show people that he was still Captain Jim Weston, the most daring skipper that ever drove a clipper-ship from his own home port. If hand and tongue of a cowardly rabble were turned against him, he would show his mettle, and rejoice at their confusion. He would put up with no more nonsense. Lank Jukins had fled from him in terror, and so would all the others. Yes, he would teach them a lesson. If they considered him an outcast, they would henceforth have full reason for their belief. Oh, he would show them what he could do.

Suddenly there flashed into his mind the feeling that had come over him when he had first seen Lank coming towards him along the lumber-road. It was startling, and caused him to rise from the log. He was in no mood for such a feeling now. It was revenge he wanted, to strike at his enemies, to make them fear and cower before him as their master.

Flinging the gun-barrel far off among the trees, he started forth, crossed the main road, and entered upon a cleared field beyond. He walked fast, and soon came to a knoll crowned with a clump of pine trees and bushes. From here he could see Val Haven, and a considerable portion of the road in front of the house, and for some distance where it led to the back settlement. Here he could watch unobserved whatever might take place. It was a cool spot, so he sat down under the shade of a big tree and leaned back against the trunk. He was glad to be alone in this quiet place, for he wished to think and plan about his future course.

As he brooded upon his life, and how different his position would now be but for the injury that had been meted out to him, his heart again became filled with anger. Instead of being in command of a great ship, living the free, daring life for which his soul yearned, he was nothing but a despised worm of a man, grubbing a stubborn soil, and his name a byword of contempt. And the one responsible for it all was looked up to in the business world as a man of success. Why should that be allowed? Where was the justice of it? The law had failed him, and when he had come forth from prison he had been shunned as an outcast. But the Deans were his friends, and that meant a great deal. This was a soothing thought, and somewhat calmed his wrath. Yes, they believed in him. And so did his wife. Nell had never considered him guilty. He recalled her as she had knelt by the side of the cradle the day his house had burned. He had seen her do that many times before over the same cradle comforting a little child who was with them no longer. The face, form and smile of pretty Annie came to him now, and a softer light appeared in his eyes. Then through his mind flashed a verse of a familiar song,

They have laid her in the grave, little Annie,  
But just bursting into bloom as she fell,  
Care and watching could not save little Annie,  
Angel child that we all loved so well.

Little Annie! He saw her again, the joy of their home for such a short time. And she had been taken from them when they needed her so much. Why was that? He gazed out over the field and the woods beyond. Ere long a drowsiness came upon him, and he slept.

He awoke with a start, looked around, and at once his eyes rested upon Prosper Dean standing before him. He smiled,

and started to rise.

"You've caught me this time, sir," he said. "I did not intend to sleep."

"It is too bad to disturb you, Jim," Mr. Dean replied. "But don't get up. I shall sit by your side. It is nice and cool here."

"It is, and that's why I dozed. What time of the day is it?"

"A little after three."

"Is it! Why, I must have been sleeping quite a while. I wonder—"

He paused suddenly and looked out towards the road. Mr. Dean surmised what was passing through his mind.

"It is all right, Jim. The young people have gone to see the Horns. They will be back before long."

"But where is Lank? Have you seen him? He's prowling around somewhere, I am sure."

"What makes you think that?"

"Because I met him and smashed his gun."

"What's that you say? Smashed his gun?"

"I did. Lank was after young Rayson when I happened to meet him."

"But surely he did not intend to shoot that young man! I cannot believe that he would do such a thing."

"You may not believe it, but that was what Lank was planning to do. He is bad enough to do anything."

"I know it, yes, I know it. My, my, this is terrible! Something must be done. The fellow must be crazy."

"He is crazy with jealousy, and with too much rotten rum on board, he is ready for anything."

"So he was drunk, was he?"

"Not drunk, but he had taken enough to make him nasty and reckless. He was terribly frightened, though, when a black cat crossed his path. Ho, ho, he was scared to death. That is what superstition does. Yes, jealousy and rum went down before the devil of superstition."

"A bad mixture, Jim," Mr. Dean quietly remarked. "But I am glad you stopped him. And you broke his gun?"

"I did, fool that I was. Why did I stop him, smash his gun, and drive him away in a rage?"

"Because you are a man, Jim, and not a brute."

"H— of a man I am, sir. You know very well that I want to do just what I kept Lank from doing."

"Yes, I know. And I know, too, that when you met Lank, the beast that you saw in him repelled you. Wasn't that it?"

"Maybe you're right. I did feel a sharp disgust at that thing slinking along, and I thought for a moment that I was again skipper of the *Ocean Belle*. Ah, those were great days when my ship plowed the waves and I was in command. Now I have to steer nothing but a mean plow for my living. What a come-down!"

"It must have been a fine feeling, Jim, to be master of a great ship. I have often longed to go to sea, but never had the chance. You had difficulty at times in controlling your men, I suppose?"

"H'm, I handled them, all right. They didn't dare to call their souls their own when I gave orders. Many a man I knocked stiff. Your Old Prospero stunt wouldn't work there, let me tell you that. Sailors such as I had to manage were all Calibans in the raw."

"And you never lowered yourself to their level, did you, Jim?"

"I should say not. I kept my place, and saw to it that they kept theirs."

"And so did Prospero. He controlled Caliban without losing his own manhood, and never lowered himself to the brute level. 'Caliban' is a word of reproach, and a symbol of the beast nature. How would you like to sink to his level, Jim, and be one of his kind?"

"It would be terrible, sir. It would be—"

Jim paused abruptly, turned and looked at his companion. The thought that had come to him at the sight of Lank Jukins entered his mind. A slight smile lurked about the corners of Mr. Dean's mouth.

"You understand my meaning, I see. That is good, so be careful. You know what happened to Faust when he gave himself up to the devil. It would be a pity if you should do anything like that."

"But I'm not doing that. Faust was very friendly with the devil, and obeyed his orders. I'm going to fight him, and knock him out. That's what I always did on board the *Ocean Belle* when the devil entered into my men to make trouble. Your Prospero stuff won't work when that cuss is around. You've got to fight him with his own weapons, and that's what I intend to do with Old Thistle, Lank Jukins, and others possessed with the devil."

"Well, go ahead, Jim. I see you are bound to have your own way. I was hoping, though, that you might come to see eye to eye with me."

The tone of Mr. Dean's voice caused Jim to shift uneasily. He picked up a small twig from the ground and broke it into little bits.

"You and I are different, sir," he at length replied. "Your nature is not like mine. I have lived a hard life among rough men, while you are—"

"A dreamer. Is that what you mean?" Mr. Dean queried as Jim paused.

"Yes, I guess that's the word, though I couldn't think of it. You read and study books which give you queer notions that won't work in life."

"Ideals, eh?"

"Call them that, if you like. It doesn't matter to me. But they make you dream things which you can't put over with the devils."

"But they give me considerable peace of mind, Jim, especially when I remember the Great Dreamer of all who had such grand ideals for the welfare of mankind. He came to bring peace on earth, goodwill to men. And if people had only followed His teaching and example, the devil would have been defeated long ago."

"Oh, you're getting on religion, I see. Mighty little good it's done to folks in this parish. Look how they treat me. Why, I'm nothing but a miserable outcast to them. All but you, Jacynth, and a few others, of course."

"And if they had treated you differently, Jim, had made you feel at home among them, and sympathized with you in your troubles, what then?"

"Why, sir, it would have made a new man of me. I should have picked up courage, lifted my head, and started all over again."

"But because they didn't, and neglected true Christian charity, the devil has been stirred up within you, and you are planning to hit back at them? Isn't that so?"

"It is, and I intend to hit hard."

Mr. Dean rose to his feet and looked down at the sullen man.

"Jim, I am surprised at you for your stupidity. Didn't you just say that if people had treated you kindly it would have made a new man of you? But instead of following that noble ideal, you are seeking revenge. Isn't that the truth?"

Jim made no reply, but sat lost in thought, looking out across the field to the winding road beyond. He knew that Mr. Dean was right, but he did not wish to acknowledge it.



"I have tried to follow an ideal, Jim," Mr. Dean continued. "And that I might not forget, I keep that banner always above that great pine where it can be plainly seen. I have told you its meaning, have I not?"

"Oh, yes, too often, sir, for my comfort. The red, white and blue on that flag may mean courage, purity and vision to you, all right. But when I look at that red I see only blood, and the only vision I have is the sight of a white-livered scoundrel and the chalk-whiteness of his face when I get my hands on him. That's what your colors mean to me."

He was still looking out towards the road as he uttered these words. The tone of his voice, as well as his listless attitude, told of the bitterness of his heart. Mr. Dean knew that further reasoning was useless. He had done all he could, but in vain. While that banner above the trees was a reminder and an inspiration to him it gave altogether different feelings to Jim. He sighed, and was about to leave the place and go home, when Jim sprang suddenly to his feet, and clutched him by the arm.

"They're coming!" he whispered. "Look! Over there! Jacynth and young Rayson!"

"I see them," Mr. Dean quietly replied. "But what makes you so excited?"

"I can't help it. The sight of that young fellow stirs the devil within me. He's Old Thistle's son, and that's enough to make me crazy."

"Don't be a fool, Jim. I thought you had some sense left."

At that instant a man sprang out of the woods, and started up the road. Jim stepped forward to obtain a better view.

"It's Lank," he declared. "Something's going to happen soon, and I'd like to be there to see the fun."

"Whose, Jim?"

"Lank's, of course. Just wait and see what he does to that city dude."

"That's what I intend to do."

Jacynth and Kent were walking slowly when they met Lank. They stopped and seemed to be talking, though what they said the watchers could not hear. But when Lank suddenly aimed a savage blow with his fist at Kent's head, they understood its meaning. Kent staggered back, and then recovering himself, leaped forward and drove a blow straight at Lank's jaw. The latter wavered, threw out his arms and toppled to the ground. Kent stood on guard, waiting for him to rise.

"Why doesn't he knock the stuffin' out of him?" Jim muttered. "He's got the chance of his life now."

"Would you hit a man when he's down?" Mr. Dean queried.

"I'd hit Lank Jukins up or down, for he's not a man."

"So you are not sorry, then, that he's been beaten?"

"I'm glad. It's been coming to him for a long time."

Ere long they saw Lank rise slowly from the ground. He seemed dazed at first, and looked around as if bewildered. Then he left the road, and vanished among the trees.

"Young Rayson will have to be on his watch now," Jim declared. "Lank's a dangerous cur, and there's no telling what underhand thing he will do to have revenge."

"I believe you are right," Mr. Dean agreed. "Let us go home. We've had enough excitement for one day."

"That wasn't the way Old Prospero handled Caliban, was it, sir? He didn't knock the brute down, did he?"

"Perhaps not. But he had to be very severe with him, though, to bring him under control. And, besides, he possessed unusual power."

"And do you think you have it, sir?"

"I am afraid not, as I am no magician like Prospero. But I still believe there is much truth in that old tale which can be applied to life, although not under all circumstances. But we shall see, yes, we shall see some day. I have not given up hope."



# CHAPTER XIV

## BONDAGE OF FEAR

In the deepening twilight Prosper Dean sat alone in his study. His favorite books remained untouched, for his mind was intent upon other things. Jacynth had gone part way to the shore with Kent, and he knew that she would not be back for an hour or more. So happy would they be together that time would mean nothing to them. He thought of the change that had taken place in his life. Formerly Jacynth had generally been with him on Sunday nights. As a rule they had gone for long rides, with Lad bounding on ahead. But on wet evenings they had remained at home, enjoying their books and music, rejoicing in each other's company. Now, however, Jacynth's heart was given to another, so her father had to retreat into the background. Although reason told him that this was but natural, and that he should not expect anything else, it was hard, nevertheless. He had been so accustomed to having her always with him, that the loss of her inspiring presence was difficult to endure. And the one who had caused this change was Tim Rayson's son!

He rose to his feet and paced rapidly up and down the room. Once he stopped before a picture above the mantel-piece, showing the face of a young woman of outstanding beauty. Her eyes seemed to look into his with loving sympathy.

"Marion! Marion!" he murmured, "how much I need you now! What a comfort it would be to have you by my side to-night. Why were you taken from me? Do you know how lonely I am? Are you near me, and understand? Oh, if those lips could only speak! If I could but hear the music of your voice as in days of old! But you were taken from me, and it was Rayson who did it. You were not strong then, and the trouble was too much for your sensitive soul. Yes, Tim Rayson did it, and his son has come here to take away our child! Marion, my wife, shield her with your presence and keep her from harm."

He ceased, but continued his pacing. His mind was greatly disturbed. Kent was not like his father, he tried to believe, and yet he was not satisfied. Perhaps his pleasing manner was but an outward veneer, a mere pretence. Even Satan himself could appear as an angel of light. He walked to the window and looked out over the valley to the hills beyond. The room seemed to stifle him. He must get into the open where he could breathe more freely. A ride would do him good. Where, he did not know, but anywhere was better than here.

Acting upon this impulse, he turned, and as he did so he heard heavy steps coming up the stairs. He waited, and in another minute Peter Horn stood in the doorway. Mr. Dean gave a slight start as he looked at the visitor. His unkempt hair and beard, his haggard face, wild blood-shot eyes and trembling form, told of his distress. For a few seconds he stared at Mr. Dean, and then stretching out his hands in a mute appeal, he advanced slowly towards him.

"Peter, Peter, what is the matter?" Mr. Dean demanded. "Are you sick?"

These words caused the agitated man to stop and look around. He then stepped back, closed the door, and again advanced.

"Hush!" he whispered. "They don't know I'm here. Let me stay with you. Don't let them catch me!"

Seeing that something was seriously wrong, Mr. Dean took the unhappy man by the arm and led him to a comfortable chair.

"Stay there," he ordered. "I shall be back in a few minutes."

Peter, however, objected, and attempted to resist.

"I can't sit down," he cried. "I must stand up so they can't catch me."

But Mr. Dean was firm, and when he had Peter at last settled down in the chair, he left the room. He was not gone long, and when he returned, he was holding a glass in his hand which he gave to Peter.

"Drink this. It will help you."

Peter looked up, seized the glass and placed it to his lips. He sipped twice and then drank it to the last drop.

"Brandy!" he murmured. "Nothing like it for bad nerves."

Mr. Dean took the glass and placed it upon the table. He then turned to his visitor.

"What is troubling you, Peter? You are not yourself to-night."

"You are right, sir. I am not myself, and never will be again. Listen." He paused, looked nervously around, and lowered his voice. "I am a murderer, and will be hung! Oh, it's terrible!"

"A murderer, Peter! You a murderer! I cannot believe it."

"But I am, and the law will get me. It will hang me by the neck until I'm dead! Oh, oh! What am I to do? And the Bible says murderers will be damned to everlasting fire and brimstone."

In his excitement he started to rise to his feet, but Mr. Dean pressed him gently back. He then drew a chair up to his side and sat down.

"Look here, Peter, tell me what is troubling you. Why do you think you are a murderer?"

"Because I killed a man, and maybe two. Doesn't that make me a murderer?"

"When did you kill a man? Why, you are the last person in the world to do such a thing."

"Ah, you may think that, sir. But you do not know me. My heart is bad, and it was worse than ever the night I shot that man."

"Who was it? Where did you shoot him? Tell me all about it."

"And you won't hand me over to the law, Mr. Dean? You won't give me up to be hung? You have always been my friend, so that's why I've come to you now."

"I shall do what I can for you, Peter. But tell me first what is troubling you."

"Yes, I suppose I must tell you, for it will relieve my mind. Even my wife doesn't know about it. I haven't told her, for it would kill her to know I'm a murderer. She never suspected that when I went out Saturday night with my gun that I'd shoot a man before I went back."

"Saturday night, you say?" Mr. Dean queried, as light began to dawn upon his mind. "Where was it?"

"Up the brook by that big rock. I was out protecting my place from Old Thistle who wants to steal all I own. I was crazy, I guess, so when I heard men there that night I went mad and did the deed."

"But are you sure you killed any one, Peter? Did you go to find out?"

"Oh, no. I heard a cry of pain, and then all was still. I didn't wait, but hurried away."

"Were you satisfied, Peter?"

"Satisfied! I was for a while until my senses returned, and then—oh, Lord! I was in hell, and have been there ever since."

The unhappy man staggered to his feet, and reached out trembling hands.

"Save me, sir! Oh, save me! You know I wouldn't do a thing like that unless I was crazy. You've known me a long time, and I've always been quiet and harmless. But Rayson drove me mad. No one will believe me if I tell the truth. But if you speak for me it will make a difference. You can explain, and people will listen to you."

Mr. Dean was deeply moved by the old man's distress. At the same time he felt a certain sense of triumph in the thought that he had only to speak and Peter's grief would be turned into joy. He had it in his own power to work this transformation. It was a thrilling idea, and he was something like Prospero of old. He could understand the satisfaction that magician must have had when he made everything obey his will. Merely to speak the word and storms would rage or cease, creatures of the air would speed at his command, and Caliban would grovel at his feet. Oh, it was wonderful to have such power!

"Sit down, Peter," he ordered. "I have something to tell you."

"Don't say you won't help me, sir," the trembling man pleaded. "You are my only hope now."

Mr. Dean laid a firm hand upon his visitor's shoulder.

"Come, I want you to brace up, Peter. You think you are a doomed murderer, but you are not. You certainly were not yourself the night you fired that shot. But you killed no one, for Penny Royal and I are both alive and well."

Peter gave a great start, and looked keenly into Mr. Dean's eyes.

"What do you mean about you and Penny Royal? Were you up the brook Saturday night?"

"We were, and although your bullet smashed our lantern, no other harm was done."

Like a man who has suddenly had his death sentence remitted, Peter stood dazed, and uncertain whether to believe the good news or not. Then a weakness came upon him, and he sank down in the chair.

"Thank God! Oh, thank God!" he feebly murmured. "I am not a murderer! I will not be tried and hung!"

So great was his relief, that tears came to his eyes. But they were tears of joy instead of grief. Mr. Dean left him and walked over to the window. It was a great moment for him. He had brought comfort to an old man's heart, and released him from the bondage of fear. Yes, he had done that, and it gave him a feeling of great peace and happiness.



# CHAPTER XV

## A CHILD IN THE MIDST

With arching neck Midnight clipped along the road towards Creek Corner. Lad raced on ahead, and Jacynth smiled as she watched him chasing birds and squirrels. The horse longed to be after him, and several times he had to be checked in his impatience.

Jacynth was on her way for the mail which arrived only three times a week. Although few letters came for her father, he received the weekly newspaper, magazines, and an occasional book of special interest he had ordered. Today Jacynth was hoping that there might be a letter for her from Kent. She wondered if he was thinking about her and anxious to see her again. Life seemed lonely to her since he left, and the Valley had lost much of its attractiveness without his presence. Hitherto she had been perfectly contented with her surroundings, and the even tenor of her life. But since love had entered her heart all had changed. She was no longer the Jacynth Dean of a month ago, but a girl filled with new hopes, and a noble passion which comes to youth in the sweet morning of life. It was her first great love, and it had swept upon her so suddenly that it had transported her into that enchanted realm where life becomes entirely suffused with the mystic glory of romance. A sacred and a wonderful thing was that which had happened to her, and fortunate was the young man who could thus win the deep, true affection of this maiden of Storm King Valley.

Coming at length in sight of the store, Jacynth noticed a light carriage before the door, with two fine horses champing impatiently at the reins in the hands of a man holding them in check. When near enough to see better, her heart quickened, for she was certain it was Kent Rayson seated in the carriage. Her eyes brightened and her hands trembled with eagerness as she gave Midnight free rein. The man was watching her now, and their eyes met.

At once Jacynth realized her mistake. It was not Kent, after all, but some one who resembled him in form and features. The flush of joy faded from her face, and the glow of pleasure in her eyes was replaced by an expression of disappointment. The young man noticed this, and wondered. He gazed with undisguised admiration at the fair rider. Her erect body, the proud poise of her head, and her beauty, plainly told him that she was no ordinary girl who had suddenly appeared before him. He was eager to know who she was, where she had come from, and to make her acquaintance. Jacynth, however, gave him no opportunity. She dismounted, tied Midnight to a post, and entered the store without again glancing at the staring driver.

She found Samuel Reid behind the counter waiting upon a young man, a stranger to her. He was of medium height, well-dressed, and evidently a companion of the man in the carriage she believed to be Matt Rayson. He was buying cigars, and when he had paid for them he seemed in no hurry to leave. In fact, it was the girl who caused him to delay. He watched her closely as she asked Samuel for the mail. He longed to speak to her, but Jacynth paid no attention to him after her first swift glance. This nettled him. He was always pleased to have girls look at him, as if to attract his attention. So why should not this country girl do the same? He was fop enough to imagine that he was irresistible to the fair sex, especially the young and beautiful.

As Jacynth was waiting for Samuel to serve her, the stranger stepped to her side.

"Pardon me, Miss, but I believe I have met you somewhere before. Your face is quite familiar."

So apparent was this lie, and resenting the man's boldness, that Jacynth turned, stepped back, and looked him full in the eyes.

"Where?" she demanded in a cool voice.

"Oh, I don't exactly know, but—"

"Neither do I," Jacynth interrupted. "My mail, please, Mr. Reid," and she turned her attention again to the store-keeper. "Some letters, I hope?"

"Yes, and there's one for Jim Weston. But you look hot, Jacynth. Come in and rest a while. Mrs. Reid is alone, and will be pleased to see you."

"Not today, thank you. Father is always anxious to get his mail as soon as possible. I shall call to see your wife another

time."

Jacynth was eager now to be away from the store, as one of the letters was for her, and she knew the handwriting. She wished to be alone, out upon the road where she could read it away from all prying eyes. Matt Rayson and his companion were forgotten as she rode from the Creek, her eyes fixed upon what Kent had written, and drinking in every word. It was not a long letter, but it satisfied her. Kent would be with her in a few days, so he said.

I am so anxious to be with you once more in your beautiful Valley home. Now I am tied to the office trying to attend to father's affairs. But the hours drag heavily, and my only comfort is in thinking of you, and the hope of seeing you again in a short time. Matt is off some where with Jerry Harkins on a business trip, so he says, and I have to do his work. I have touched up a picture of you standing by Midnight under that big tree. I shall take it with me, and I hope you will like it. Oh, for the charm of Storm King Valley, and the sight of one who is ever in my heart and mind.

Over and over again Jacynth read these words until she knew them by heart. How precious they were to her, and she was certain now that Kent loved her as she loved him. Any doubt was dispelled by the burning expression the letter contained.

So absorbed was she with her thoughts, that she was surprised when she came in sight of Jim Weston's house. Never had the journey from Creek Corner seemed so short, and for once she had paid no attention to Lad and his antics. She had been oblivious to everything except the letter she had received.

Coming to the road leading to the Westons' house, she remembered that the store-keeper had given her a letter for Jim. Taking it from the knapsack at her side, she noticed the name of Merton & Bond, a prominent legal firm, on the upper left hand corner of the envelope. Had it anything to do with the fire? she wondered. Then she recalled that there had been no insurance upon the burnt house, so no one could be taking action against the owner for setting the fire. She thought also of Jim's former trouble. Had the letter anything to do with that?

Thinking thus, she came to the house and found the Westons at supper, and with them was Penny Royal. Jacynth received a hearty welcome, and Penny smiled as he looked at the girl.

"My, you have a fine color in your cheeks, my dear," he complimented. "Nothing like the fresh country air, sun and wind to do such painting. Better far than the stuff too many city girls put on their cheeks."

Jacynth smiled at the little man, as she handed Jim the letter.

"Mr. Reid asked me to give this to you. It is the first letter I have ever brought for you."

As Jim's eyes rested upon the legal name, a serious expression came upon his face. He did not like lawyers, as his experience with them in the past had not been altogether pleasant. When he had opened it and read the contents, he handed it to his wife.

"I'm wanted in the city, Nell. It's a matter of much importance, so it seems. I shall have to go down in the morning."

"Oh, I hope it doesn't mean trouble, Jim," his wife replied as she read the brief message. "I well remember the last time you had a lawyer's letter, and you know what that meant."

"I certainly do, Nell. I shall never forget that."

"You might as well, Jim," Penny advised as he helped himself to another piece of bread. "Now, if I worried over the past, I'd go crazy. I try to keep my face to the future, and think about Old Stop-an'-Sneeze. Hey, Jacynth, isn't that the best thing to do?"

"I believe you are right," the girl smilingly replied. "You do so, anyway, and bring brightness wherever you go. I wish there were more like you in the world."

"It was a hard struggle, though, for Penny Royal was a tough problem to handle. And he isn't altogether curbed yet, for he does break out sometimes. But, hallo, who's this coming?" he asked looking out of the window in front of him.

All turned, and at once they saw a woman hurrying towards the house, carrying a bundle in her arms.

"Why, it's Hettie Jukins!" Mrs. Weston exclaimed. "I believe she is bringing her baby here. There must be trouble at her home."

In another minute Hettie was at the open door, and the expression upon her face told of her intense anger. She entered the room, and held forth the bundle.

"Will you take it and keep it, Mrs. Weston?" she asked in a voice trembling with emotion. "I have been turned out with my baby. Mother and Dad ordered me to leave with my brat. That's what they called it, a brat, and said terrible things about me. And Dad threatened to hit me, the devil!"

"Hush, Hettie," Mrs. Weston reproved. "Don't talk that way. Let me have the baby while you sit down and rest. You are excited, and will make yourself ill if you are not careful."

"I don't care a snap about myself," the unhappy girl cried. "I want to die, and the sooner the better. But I love my baby, and want him to be cared for. I know you will keep him, Mrs. Weston. Please do, and the Lord will bless you."

Tears were now streaming down Hettie's cheeks as she stood there making her appeal on behalf of the child. She was a tragic picture of despair, and Jacynth's heart was deeply stirred. Stepping quickly forward, she placed her arms around the sobbing girl.

"There, there, Hettie, calm yourself. We shall take care of your baby, won't we, Jim?"

The latter, however, did not at once reply. He was staring at the child, and there was a peculiar expression in his eyes. His wife watched him closely, and partly surmised what was passing through his mind. Presently he turned and glanced at the little cradle in a corner of the room.

"Put the baby there," he ordered. "We must do something for it. That cradle's been empty for some time."

He ceased abruptly and looked at Hettie.

"Why were you turned out?"

"Because I wouldn't hand over all my money," was the low reply. "I offered to pay for the baby's keep, but Mother and Dad demanded all I got. They said it was that or nothing. When I refused, they told me to go. That is God's truth."

"H'm, I see," Jim quietly remarked. "I'm not surprised, Hettie. So you want us to keep the child?"

"I do, and I'll pay you."

"Where are you going?"

"Back to the city to work for my baby. I'll send you the money I earn each month. I'm going to keep what money I have to educate my baby when he grows up. I want him to be different from me."

"Shall we keep the child, Nell?" Jim asked as he turned to his wife. "It's up to you, for you'll have the care of it."

"Yes, let us keep it, Jim, but only on one condition."

"What is that?"

"That Hettie does not pay us. I could not look after a child for money. I want to love it as my own, and maybe it will somewhat take our little Annie's place."

Jim looked at his wife, and then at the cradle.

"Have your own way, Nell. Yes, do as you like."

He turned and walked out of the house, closely followed by Penny. Seating himself upon a log, he filled and lighted his pipe. As the wreathes of smoke encircled his head, Penny sniffed the air.

"That smells good, Jim."



"Did you ever smoke, Penny?"

"Once I did, but now I get it second-hand, and that satisfies me."

"That wouldn't satisfy me," Jim replied. "I want the real thing. The smell of dinner would not be enough, would it? But we have to take many things in life second-hand, I suppose."

He sighed, and gazed out over the field.

"Are you thinking of that baby, Jim?"

"I am. We may become fond of it, but it's not like our own."

"Little Annie?"

"Yes, little Annie. And not only her, but this life of mine. The real life to me is upon the sea, master of a grand ship. That's first-hand life. But this!"

He rose to his feet and stood very erect, towering over the little man at his side.

"I have terrible thoughts in my heart, Penny, and can't help it. When I think of how I have been treated, and I think about it all the time, I am very bitter. Why did God take away our only child when we needed her so much? Tell me that. And why was Old Thistle, that devil, allowed to ruin me? There is no justice anywhere in the world. God and man are alike, injuring innocent and hard-working people. And then there is Bill Jukins, that lazy, ugly cuss, driving his daughter and her baby from home. And the Parson talks about love and mercy. Bah! It's all moonshine."

Penny was surprised at this furious outburst, as he had never before heard such words from this usually taciturn man. He hardly knew what to say.

"Maybe you are right, Jim," he at length replied. "I can't explain why God took your little Annie, for that's beyond me. But there is one thing for which you can be thankful."

"What's that?"

"That he didn't make you like Old Thistle or Bill Jukins. But you will be like them if you're not careful, and worse, perhaps. But I must go now. I'm coming back, though, to see the baby as soon as I can."

Jim watched Penny as he walked away. He then slumped down upon the log, and remained there for some time lost in thought.

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## CHAPTER XVI

### JACYNTH IS ASTONISHED

Jacynth did not remain long, as she knew her father would be waiting for his mail. After she had seen the baby comfortably settled in the cradle, she told Mrs. Weston that she would be back that evening to help her in any way she could.

"What are you going to call the baby?" she asked Hettie who was seated at the table.

"I was going to call him David, for I like that name. But I've changed me mind, so it will be Ishmael instead. When I went to Sunday School I always liked that story in the Bible where Ishmael and his mother were driven from home. Yes, that'll be his name, and I'm Hagar his mother."

"But I shall call him David," Mrs. Weston replied. "He can have two names, David Ishmael, so you can call him one if you like, while I call him the other."

"A'right, it makes no difference to me," and Hettie gave a deep sigh.

She then rose to her feet, crossed the room and clutched Mrs. Weston by the arm.

"Don't let Dad and Mother come here an' take the baby," she fiercely cried. "Tell them they have nothing to do with him now, as I have given him to you. Tell them I'll set the law on 'em if they bother you. Dad's awful frightened of the law, an' he's good reason to be fer what he's done. He's been warned that if he's ever arrested again, he'll go to jail fer his deviltry."

"You need not worry, Hettie. We will know what to do if your parents make any fuss. And Jim won't bother with the law, for he'll be his own lawyer, judge and jury. But I hope it won't come to that, or it might be hard on us."

Jacynth walked thoughtfully from the house to where Midnight was tied. She wanted to get away, to think over all that had taken place. Poor Hettie, how she pitied her. And it was Matt Rayson who had caused the trouble, the man she had seen in the carriage that afternoon. And he was Kent's twin-brother!

As Midnight reached the highway, he gave a sudden start and shied to the left. The cause of his fright was Bill Jukins who was standing near a thick clump of bushes.

"Oh, it's you Bill, is it?" Jacynth accosted. "You surprised us."

"Yaas, it's me, a'right," was the drawling reply, as the man lurched forward. "I scared ye, eh? But, by G—, I'll scare more'n you an' yer horse before the day's out. I've come fer Het. She's in there, isn't she?"

"She was a few minutes ago."

"An' she's got her brat with her?"

"You mean the baby, Bill? Yes, it's there, too. Mr. and Mrs. Weston are to keep it, so Hettie says."

"Is that so? Well, I'll see 'bout that. It'll not stay there long, if I know anything."

"What are you going to do?"

"Take the brat, of course."

"But you don't want it. You turned it and Hettie out."

"Yaas, that's true. But I want Het's money fer keepin' the brat. An' I intend to git it, too."

"You will have to settle that among yourselves, Bill. I don't want to get mixed up with family affairs. But my advice is to leave the baby with the Westons. Hettie is a determined girl, as you should well know."

"Ye needn't tell me that, Jacynth. But it makes no difference to me. I'm goin' to have that brat an' the money, too."

The girl looked with disgust upon this creature standing by her side. Lazy, impudent, self-conceited and quarrelsome, he had been a menace to the community for years. His neighbors had left him alone as much as they could and put up generally with his misdeeds, fearful lest he should do them some harm, such as setting fire to their buildings, or injuring them in some other underhand manner.

Bill saw the look of disgust on the girl's face, and frowned.

"So ye don't want to git mixed up with family troubles, eh?"

"Not with yours, Bill. You and Hettie will have to settle your own dispute."

"Is that so? But I guess ye'r in a fair way now to git linked up with us, from what I hear."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, you should know, a'right, without me tellin' ye. Doesn't that young Rayson feller come to see ye? An' he's Old Thistle's son, hee, hee. A chip off the old block, most likely. His brother Matt is Het's friend, an' ye know what come of that."

Jacynth's face flushed a deep crimson at this insinuation, and her hands trembled.

"You mean Kent Rayson, I suppose?"

"Yaas, that's him, I guess, the feller that hurt his foot, an' who's been hangin' around after ye ever since."

"But do you think he is like his brother?" Jacynth demanded. "All men are not bad, remember."

"Mebbe not. Mebbe not. But nothin' kin come from Old Thistle an' not be tainted with his make-up. Ask yer Dad an' he'll tell ye what he done to him. Oh, yaas, he knows all about that skunk."

"Why, I never heard father say a word against Mr. Rayson," Jacynth replied in surprise.

"Ye never did! Well, as it's you that sez so, I'll believe ye. But if anybody else said so I'd call him a d— liar."

"What do you mean, anyway, Bill? You have just said that my father knows all about Mr. Rayson. If so, it is strange that he never told me anything."

"Oh, you were too little at the time, an' when ye grew up, mebbe he wanted to keep it all from ye. Yaas, I guess that's it, fer it's jist like 'im. He's a good man, yer Dad is, an' I've no grudge ag'inst 'im. He's allus treated me right."

"But what about Mr. Rayson?" Jacynth asked. "What did he do to my father?"

"Ruined 'im, of course. They were pardners, ye see, though Old Thistle looked after the bizness an' handled the money. Yer Dad trusted 'im, bein' fonder of readin' an' studyin' than anything else. That's where he made the mistake."

This was most startling news to Jacynth. She knew that Bill was a liar and a mischief-maker, but would he dare to tell her such a thing unless it was true? She had often wondered why her father had come to Storm King Valley, and when she had asked him he had always given her an evasive answer. "I prefer the quietness of the woods," he had once told her. "Here I can study the beautiful things of nature and not be disturbed. I have my books and you, so what more do I need?" But such an answer had never fully satisfied her, and the older she grew, the more she wondered. Bill's words, therefore, brought new light to her mind. Had her father really come here because of the way he had been treated by Mr. Rayson? She looked keenly into Bill's eyes.

"Why did you never tell me this before?" she asked. "I have been often at your house, yet you never mentioned it to me."

"No, I never did, fer I thought ye knew all about it. An', besides, it didn't matter to me then whether ye knew or not. But now it's different since ye'r in tow with Old Thistle's son, an' he's Matt's twin-brother."

"Did you know my father before he came here?"

"Sure I knew 'im, an' yer mother, too. She was as fine a woman as ever walked the earth, an' she never turned me away from her door hungry when I was down an' out. But the trouble between Rayson an' yer Dad was too much fer her, so she

didn't live long after that. You were too young then, so didn't know anything about it."

To these words Jacynth made no reply. She sat very still, her whole body tense with emotion. Bill watched her closely, and his mouth expanded into a grin.

"That's news to ye, eh, Jacynth?"

The girl started from her reverie, and her face became stern, while her fingers clutched hard her riding-whip.

"Have you told me all this to annoy me?" she demanded. "Do you want me to hate Kent Rayson for what his father did?"

At once an expression overspread Bill's heavy features such as Jacynth had never seen there before. His slouching form straightened and his bowed shoulders jerked back. This sudden transformation was astonishing to her. It hardly seemed possible that it was Bill Jukins standing there. And the strange look in his eyes as he fixed them upon her face revealed something in the man she had never suspected. It was like a gleam of sunshine through banks of dark angry clouds.

"I have told ye this, Jacynth, to warn ye. I have known ye ever since ye was a little child an' when ye played with Het. I kin never fergit how ye allus gave me a smile when we met, while others gave me nothin' but black looks. Oh, I haven't fergotten, so I warn ye now to be keerful, an' not make a mistake like Het."

These words spoken so quietly, and entirely unlike Bill's usual talk, surprised Jacynth. She knew he was deadly in earnest. She remembered how when she had played with Hettie as a child, she was never afraid of Bill. Although rough in talk at times, and uncouth in manner, she had liked him then because he could make wonderful things with his sharp knife, such as wooden dolls, whistles, jumping-jacks, and little boats which the girls sailed in the brook. In fact, he was better at making such toys than earning a living for his family. And that kindness which he had exhibited years before was showing itself again to her in this unexpected way.

"If that is why you have told me about Mr. Rayson, I thank you, Bill," she told him. "I am sorry for having misjudged you. But why did you not warn Hettie?"

"She was away from home, so I had no chance. Anyway, it was her own fault that she got into trouble."

"Was it?"

This question caused the man to look at the girl in surprise. Then the meaning of her words dawned upon him, and once again the cloud settled upon his face. He was the Bill Jukins people knew.

"Don't throw that up to me, Jacynth," he growled. "I didn't think it of you."

"I didn't intend to offend you, Bill. But you know very well that you never taught Hettie what was right. Isn't that so?"

"Mebbe it is, when I come to think of it. But she went to Sunday School, so she knew the difference between right an' wrong."

Jacynth was becoming impatient with this man. The glow of respect that had come to her a few minutes ago had almost vanished. Yet it was strange that he should be more concerned about her than about his own daughter. She laid a hand upon his shoulder.

"Look here, Bill, it's no use for us to argue about the past. Let us forget that and think about the present. I want you to promise me something."

"Not until I know what it is, Jacynth. Out with it."

"Promise me that you will be good to Hettie. She needs your help and sympathy now. Go to her, take her and the baby home, and be kind to them."

"Not unless Het hands over her money," was the emphatic reply. "She kin come home if she likes, but she won't bring her brat unless she does as I say. That's the long an' short of it."

"You may regret it some day, Bill. Hettie will never agree to your terms, for you know what she is like. But I must go now, as I have stayed too long. Think over what I have said."

"It'll do no good, Jacynth. The devil has sich a grip on me that I can't shake him off, no matter how hard I try. I'm bad through an' through, an' everybody knows it."

"No, Bill, you are not. I cannot believe it. You have always been kind to me."

"An' do ye really intend to give up Old Thistle's son, Jacynth?"

"I shall have to think over all you told me, and have a talk with father. But, good-bye now, and don't forget what I said about Hettie."

A word to Midnight, and the girl was speeding along the road, leaving Bill gazing thoughtfully after her.

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## CHAPTER XVII

### REJECTED

The afternoon was bright and warm as Kent Rayson rode up Storm King Valley. His high-mettled horse sped rapidly along the forest road, apparently as eager as his master to reach the end of his journey. Kent was in a thoughtful mood, and the hope of soon beholding the girl he was on his way to meet could not altogether banish the weight that rested upon his mind. That morning he had cast off the shackles which bound him, and he was free. The decisive step had been taken when his father had ordered him to undertake a task which to him was not only contemptible but degrading. This was nothing less than acting the spy upon Prosper Dean, Peter Horn, and the people in the parish generally, and reporting to him what he saw and heard. Only upon this condition would his father allow him to absent himself from the office for any length of time. Kent had refused, and the storm of wrath had descended upon his head. He had made no reply to his father's words, but had left the office, determined never to return.

A feeling of relief came upon him as he rode from the city. He was eager to tell Jacynth of what had happened, and he believed that she would understand and sympathize with him. He was glad now that he had kept himself under control, and had not replied to his father's fierce anger. But it had been a trying ordeal, so the ride soothed his hot brain and gave him time for thought. He had no idea as to what he would do. But he was free, speeding towards the girl he loved, so the future could take care of itself. He could manage for a while, and then he would have money of his own, and his father could not take that from him.

When part way up the Valley he checked Blackbird's speed. He wished to dwell upon the pleasure in store for him, and he pictured Jacynth's joy at seeing him again. To him this place was now the Valley of Romance. It was here he had first met the wonderful girl, and it was along this road she so often travelled. Every tree, rock and hill were familiar to her. In his mind he saw her riding from the shore, thinking of him, perhaps, and reading his letter. It was a bright vision which came to him this pleasant afternoon, and he saw all things through love-enchanted eyes.

Coming at length in sight of Val Haven, he looked eagerly forward, but no sign of life could he behold. He had been hoping that Jacynth would be out in the garden among the flowers. Perhaps she was down by the brook at the place where he had first met her, and he was partly tempted to turn aside upon the narrow woodland road which led to the stream. But just then the front door of the house opened and Martha stepped out upon the verandah. Seeing the young man approaching, she stood at the top of the steps until he drew rein below. Kent lifted his hat and smiled.

"I was afraid the house was deserted," he began. "It looks so, anyway."

"I am always here, sir," the woman quietly replied. "I never go away."

"Is Jacynth at home?" Kent eagerly asked.

"Her home is wherever she happens to be. She is that kind of a girl."

"But is she here? I can understand how she is always at home no matter where she is, for she takes home with her, and makes every place pleasant."

"You are quite right, sir. But she is not here now. She left after dinner, but did not tell me where she was going."

"Did she go on Midnight?"

"Not today. She took only Lad with her."

Kent was keenly disappointed, and this Martha noticed. She liked the young man, and sympathized with him.

"She did not tell me where she was going, but she left something for you, though. Just a minute."

Going back into the house, she soon returned with a letter in her hand.

"Jacynth told me to give this to you if you came."

"So she was expecting me? Why, then, did she go away?"

"Perhaps the letter will explain."

Kent tore open the envelope, and as his eyes rested upon the brief message contained therein, his shoulders straightened, and his body became tense. He looked keenly at the woman.

"Do you know anything about this?" he demanded. "Is it true what she says?"

"I do not know what she has written, so how can I tell?"

"True, true. Excuse my impatience. But Jacynth has written such strange words. She says that we must never see each other again, and must forget that we ever met."

"Does she explain why, sir?"

"She does. My father ruined her father years ago, and the trouble killed her mother. Jacynth never knew about it until yesterday. That is all she says, but it is terrible news to me. I knew nothing about it. My father ruined her father, and the trouble killed her mother! It can't be true. There must be some mistake. Do you know anything about it? You have lived with the Deans many years, have you not?"

"Yes, ever since Jacynth was a baby. She is as dear to me as my own child."

"And she is very dear to me," Kent impulsively declared. "And in this letter she says that we must part, never to see each other again. Do you think she means it?"

"That is hard for me to tell. Jacynth is a determined girl, and there is no knowing what she might do when she makes up her mind."

"But why should she throw me over like this? It is not my fault if our fathers had trouble years ago. I want to know what it really was. Do you mind telling me?"

For a few seconds Martha stood irresolute, and then slowly shook her head.

"It is not for me to tell you, sir. I have no right to do so. It will be better for you to speak to Mr. Dean. I am sorry he is not at home this afternoon. But tie your horse and rest awhile. I have some good homemade wine and cake which I think you will like."

"No, thank you. I must leave at once. Something compels me, though I cannot explain what it is. But I must be out in the open, to go I know not where. In fact, it doesn't matter to me now. But listen. Tell Jacynth that I have been here, that I am an outcast, that I have no home, and that I came to see her as my only hope and comfort. But now even that is gone, and I am at my wit's end. Good afternoon."

Wheeling his horse, Kent sped away, leaving Martha gazing wonderingly after him.

"He's a fine young man, and I like him. It's too bad Jacynth wrote him that letter. I wish she could have seen his face when he read it. They certainly love each other, and it's a pity that this trouble has come between them. But, then, it may be just as well for them to be separated, for it might be a serious matter to become connected with the Rayson family. I know what his father is like, and Kent may be something of his nature, for all we know. Perhaps Jacynth is right in rejecting him. She always was a sensible girl."

When out of sight of the house, Kent slowed down Blackbird to a walk. He wanted to think, to consider Jacynth's letter, and what her words meant. So their fathers had known each other years ago! That was news to him. And his father had ruined Mr. Dean, and the trouble had been the cause of his wife's death! That was startling. Jacynth must have just learned about it. Who had told her? Was it her father? But why had he never mentioned it to her before? He recalled now the questions Mr. Dean had asked him on several occasions about his father. He had thought nothing about them at the time, but now he viewed them in a different light. He remembered, too, that Mr. Dean had always been more or less reserved when he was present. These thoughts came to Kent as he rode slowly along. It was quite evident that Mr. Dean was worried about something. And he could not blame him if what he had just learned was true. He must find out the truth. Anyway, he was not going to lose Jacynth without a struggle.

Coming at length to the bridge which spanned the little brook, Blackbird looked longingly at the flowing water.

"Thirsty, are you?" Kent queried. "And well you might be, for the day is hot. I am thirsty, too, and tired. A rest will do both of us good."

In another minute the horse was knee-deep in the water, when he gave a start and lifted his head in fright. The next instant the bushes parted on the left and Penny Royal came forth carrying what seemed like a bunch of weeds in his hand. His face wrinkled into a smile as he saw the horse and his rider.

"Well, well!" he exclaimed, coming close to the bank. "This is a great place to meet people. You are the third person who has come here within the last hour. And they all stopped at the brook, and muddied the water with their horses' feet."

"And you stop here, too," Kent replied, pleased to see the little man.

"Sure, I do, my boy. But I have no horse to stir up the mud, nothing but shank's mare."

"It must be a nice life, though, Penny, to go where you please with no one to interfere with your movements."

"Yes, it is great to be free, that's a fact. Like to try it, eh?"

Kent glanced quickly at his companion, for his words brought a new idea to his mind.

"Why do you ask that? Do you know what has happened?"

Penny smiled and seated himself upon the bank.

"Come here, my boy, and let's have a talk. There's some grass right near for your horse. A bite will do him good."

"But I'm in a hurry to reach the city. I have important business there."

"Maybe you have. But I shall not keep you long, and your horse will travel all the better after his feed."

Kent could not very well refuse this good-natured invitation. And, besides, he was anxious to have a talk with this queer man who seemed to know so much. He spoke to Blackbird, who clattered out of the brook, making the water more muddy than ever. When he had led him to the plot of grass, he came and sat down by Penny's side.

"You have not tied your horse," the latter reminded. "He might run away."

"Not while that grass is before him. He is in no hurry to be on the road again. He's had too much of it already today. I can trust him."

"I suppose so. He's muddied the brook, though, and now he's forgotten all about it. And look how old Mother Nature is clearing it again. She always does that. Your horse didn't mean any harm, and Mother Nature didn't begin to scold, but just set to work to repair the damage. She likes to keep things clean. And she never fails when she gets the chance, but —"

Penny paused and gazed down thoughtfully at the flowing water.

"But what?" Kent asked.

"But sometimes she doesn't get a chance, for we keep messing things up so fast that she can't do anything. There are some people who are always making life so dirty that the mud hasn't a ghost of a chance to settle."

"Have you any one specially in mind Penny?"

"Oh, maybe not. I was merely philisophizing over what I have seen. But tell me, young man, what are you doing here?"

"Why should I not be here?" Kent asked in a surprised voice. "I am on my way to the city, of course."

"Yes, that's quite evident. But why? You went by here but a short time ago, and now you are back."

"You saw me? Where?"

"Oh, yes, I saw you, but it makes no difference where. Wasn't Jacynth at home? But maybe—"



"Maybe what?"

"Maybe she has heard something."

"She has, so that's why I'm back so soon. Read that."

Impulsively Kent handed Penny Jacynth's letter, and watched the expression upon his companion's face as he read.

"I imagined something like that had happened," Penny quietly remarked as he returned the letter. "Who gave it to you?"

"Martha. She was the only one at home."

"Did she tell you where Jacynth had gone?"

"No. And she would explain nothing, although I believe she knows the full meaning of this letter."

"She surely does, for she's been with the Deans for a long time. And what do you intend to do now, my boy?"

"Go to the city and have it out with my father. He will have to clear up this mystery."

"Then, you might as well save yourself the trouble. I know your father, and so do you. He will only raise high-jinks and tell you nothing. Better give up the idea, and come with me on a trip. I need a companion, and you are a young man after my own heart. A tramp through the country will do you good. You have nothing to prevent you, I suppose?"

"Nothing," was the low reply. "Life has no interest for me now since Jacynth has rejected me."

"Tut, tut, that's all nonsense. A young man like you, with health and strength, should never utter such words. Come with me, and a few weeks in God's great open will put new life in you, and cause you to view things in a different light."

"You want me to go tramping with you out through the country?" Kent asked.

"I do. You have nothing to keep you in the city, so you say. And you may get some fine pictures, too."

"Who told you about my painting?"

Penny laughed as he rose to his feet.

"Never mind who told me. But I know, all right."

"Was it Jacynth?"

"There, now, you want to know too much. Get away to the city, and I shall meet you in a couple of days at the Royal Arms where I generally stop when in town."

"But I haven't agreed to go with you."

"Perhaps not, but I think you will. You'll have time to make up your mind, anyway."

"It is made up now," Kent impulsively replied. "I shall go with you, no matter where, for it will make no difference to me."

"That's good. We shall have a great time, and I shall introduce you to Old Stop-an'-Sneeze."

"Old Stop-an'-Sneeze! Who in the world is that? I never heard of him."

Penny laughed heartily at the astonished expression upon Kent's face.

"Not likely you ever heard of him, my boy. But you will know all there is to learn after you have been with me for awhile. So get along. I have much business to attend to this afternoon, and it is very important."

As Kent rode away, Penny watched him until he had disappeared from view. He then smiled as he gathered up his few belongings, and left the brook.

"I must see about this," he mused. "Yes, there is trouble, so I might be able to do something. What fools young people

often are."



# CHAPTER XVIII

## THE FOREST RETREAT

About a mile up Storm King Brook great boulders filled the bed of the stream. When the water was low, these were exposed to view, and presented a rough, wild appearance. One, exceptionally large, lifted itself above the others, a massive cube, as if squared by the hands of mighty giants. This was close to the left bank, and nestling against it was a big spruce tree, its branches forming a cooling shade when the sun poured its hot beams down upon the tree-embowered valley.

Upon this rock, and leaning against the tree, Jacynth sat lost in thought, unheeding the birds that flittered here and there, and the butterflies that zigzagged to and fro. There was too much upon her mind now for the wild things of the woods which hitherto had always been of such great interest to her. Upon the bank, close to the rock, Lad kept watch. He knew that something was troubling his mistress this afternoon, and he often cast a wistful glance in her direction. But she paid no heed to him, and this worried the faithful animal.

To Jacynth nothing mattered now. She had made her decision, and had cast off the one who had become so dear to her. She had thought it all out alone. She must never see Kent Rayson again. Her duty was to her father, and she must be loyal to him. His enemies must be her enemies. To no one had she confided her troubles. She would bear them alone. Kent would come to the Valley that afternoon, and she could not meet him. It would not do to look upon his face again lest she should weaken in her decision. So she had fled to this place of retreat to be by herself with her great heart-sorrow. Life had now lost its meaning for her. How could she go on as before and enjoy the things around her? Love had come to her, and had enhanced everything with the golden halo of romance. That she must tear from her heart and leave there a wound which never could be healed. She longed to tell it all to some one who would understand and sympathize with her. But there was no one to whom she could entrust the secret of her heart except her father, and she would not tell him lest he should worry too much.

Time meant nothing to her as she crouched there like some wounded creature that had fled away from the haunts of men to be alone with its agony. She knew that her father would return home and wonder what had become of her. Perhaps he would be anxious, and this was the only thing that at length aroused her from her despairing mood. She knew now something of what he had endured. He had been silent through the years, and had borne all so bravely. He had never spoken of it to her, as he did not wish to sadden her young life. Yes, that was the reason, and to her he seemed more of a hero than ever. She must not desert him. She must stand by his side and comfort him in his loneliness. She was all that he had in the world, and how sad would his life be if she failed him now.

She was aroused by a deep growl from Lad. Glancing quickly down at the dog, she saw that he had risen to his feet and was looking keenly among the trees. One more growl he gave, and then his aspect of hostility changed, and he began to wag his tail in a friendly manner. Jacynth was relieved, for she knew that Lad had sighted a friend instead of an enemy. She could trust him, for she had never known him to be mistaken.

In another minute she heard the sound of footsteps, and then the form of a man could be seen coming towards her. At once she recognized him. It was Penny Royal! Lad bounded forward and welcomed the visitor, barking loudly and almost knocking down the little man in his wild enthusiasm.

"Well, well, what's the meaning of all this?" Penny demanded, as he reached the rock and looked up at the girl. "I'm all out of breath, and your dog will finish me if you don't call him off. He's licked my face enough to do the rest of my life. It hasn't been so clean since my mother washed it when I was a youngster."

Jacynth laughed in spite of herself. Penny's presence was just what she needed.

"Come up," she invited, holding out her hand. "I'm so glad to see you. And how tired you look. What are you doing here? Looking for me?"

"Looking for you, my dear! Why, how did I know you were here? I came to find something I lost that Saturday night when your father and I were searching for a treasure. But that doesn't matter now since I have found you."

Penny scrambled up on the rock, sat down and let his legs hang over the side. He mopped his face with his handkerchief.

"My, I'm hot! I've come a long way this afternoon, and I can't stand as much as I used to when I was a boy. I think it's great to be young and strong, with so much to live for."

"I don't," Jacynth bitterly replied. "I think it must be great to be old."

"You do! I'm surprised. Why should a girl like you, with such health and beauty, wish to be old? If you only knew what old people have to suffer, you would not say that. Now, look at me, for instance. I used to be able to walk from the river to your house without stopping once. But now I have to rest quite often."

"You should have a horse, Penny. It's a pity you have to do so much walking. I have a good mind to give you mine."

"That's very kind of you, my dear. But what would I do with a horse? I never rode one, and a queer sight I'd make. Oh, no, I must put up with my own legs and leave horses to you and that young fellow I met at the little brook this afternoon. My, he was good to look at, and the way he sat upon that black horse was wonderful. They were both thoroughbreds without any doubt."

"Who was he?" Jacynth asked in a low voice.

"Oh, some young fellow on his way to the city. He stopped to give his horse a drink, and we had quite a chat. He was very agreeable, even though he was in trouble."

"What was the matter?"

"It seems he'd had a set-to with his father, and they parted, so he said. I do feel sorry for him, as he was adrift and didn't know what to do."

"Was it Kent Rayson?"

Penny's eyes opened wide in pretended surprise.

"Why, you've guessed right, my dear! Yes, that's who it was, on his way back to the city. My, he was disappointed. He expected to meet some one up the Valley, but she wasn't at home."

"She wasn't, Penny, and she never intends to be at home to him."

A deep silence followed this announcement. Penny's attention seemed suddenly centred upon something among the trees. Presently he turned and looked down at the brook.

"This is a nice place," he at length remarked, as if to himself. "It's so quiet. When Old Nature gets busy she makes things very beautiful. I like those trees bending over the water and casting their shadows upon the great rocks. And I like to watch the birds on swift wings darting to and fro after flies. The great busy world does not disturb one here. I should like to build a little cabin and live in this place."

"All alone, Penny?" Jacynth asked.

"Oh, no, my dear. I could not live without my friends, and I believe they would miss me. They would want to visit me at times, and we would be so happy together. I would keep open house, and welcome all the poor and lonely who have no homes of their own. This would be a resting-place for them where they would be refreshed."

He ceased, thrust his hand into a pocket of his jacket and brought forth a piece of soiled paper, which he carefully unfolded.

"This is a poem I found somewhere," he explained. "It is called *The Tramp's Dream*. Maybe you'd like to hear it. But, then, I don't want to trouble you. It might not mean to you what it does to me."

"I should like to hear it," Jacynth replied. "Anything is better than my own thoughts this afternoon."

Penny smiled as he glanced at his fair companion.

"It's too bad not to have beautiful thoughts on a day like this. That's what made me feel so sorry for that young chap I met by the brook. Why should a man like that, with such health and strength, go through life so mournfully when he has so

much to live for, and a girl just dying to see him? Yet—"

"Never mind him," Jacynth interrupted. "Read those verses."

"Well, if you don't want to hear about him, I suppose it's no use for me to say anything more. So here's the poem.

I open wide the door,  
That all may enter in;  
I have a goodly store  
In byre and in bin;  
For all the lone and poor  
To me are kith and kin.

I keep the fires bright  
With faggots of old oak,  
And every room alight  
For all the humble folk  
Who come in from the night,  
Devoid of shoon or cloak.

So Susan leads her man,  
And Peter brings his dame,  
And others of the clan,  
The homeless, blind and lame,  
Come where there is no ban,  
And where there is no blame.

With homely song and cheer  
We speed the evening by,  
When shadows disappear,  
And hope gems every eye,  
While hearts forget to fear,  
And lips forget to sigh.

Alas, the golden dream!  
Too swiftly has it sped,  
And I am poor and mean,  
With nought but earth for bed—  
A tramp who caught the gleam  
When stars smiled overhead.

Penny finished, and glanced at Jacynth who was gazing thoughtfully out over the brook. Presently she reached out and took the paper in her hand.

"I like those words. Did you write them?"

"Why, what makes you ask that? Do you think I'm a poet?"

"Certainly. I always knew you were one at heart, although I did not know you wrote anything. You never told me."

"That's one of my secrets."

"Why a secret?"

"Because so many think a man who writes poetry is somewhat soft in the head. Oh, I know from what they say about others, so I never let out my secret until now."

"Why now?"

"Because I believe you understand the words I have just read."

"That they have a meaning for me?"

"That's just it. You see, I am like that tramp, so I can only dream of what I long to do for others who are lonely and in need. But you with such health, youth and beauty, can do so much."

Jacynth remained silent for a few minutes as she read the lines. Penny watched the expression upon her face, and longed to know her thoughts. He then began to hum a tune.

"What is that?" the girl asked.

"Oh, just a tune I put to those words. But it's such a poor one that I want you to make a better. It will be good to have it to sing on a journey I'm to take next week."

"Where are you going?"

"Down along the coast. I have many friends there, and will meet others on the way who are tramps like myself. I think they will like to hear me sing as we camp at night under the stars. And that young fellow who is going with me will be pleased when he knows that you gave me the tune."

"Who is that, Penny?"

"Oh, I guess you know, so it's not necessary for me to explain. But, there, I must get on my way and find that thing I lost. You may keep these verses. And you'll put a good tune to them, will you not?"

Jacynth rose to her feet, and reached out both hands to her companion.

"Let me help you up. You have done much for me today, Penny. Find what you lost while I wait for you here. I want you to come home with me, as there are several things I wish to tell you."

"And you will make up a tune for my verses and play it on your violin?"

"I shall do the best I can, although I fear it will be very poor."

"Anything you do, my dear, could not be poor. Oh, no, that would be impossible. And I am not the only one who thinks so. Wait here, then, and I shall soon be back."

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## CHAPTER XIX

### WARNING

Long Sol Jordan was standing in the doorway of his blacksmith shop as Prosper Dean rode up and drew rein before him. A smile overspread his face.

"Great day for a ride," he accosted. "I've been waiting for you. Your grub-hoe is finished, and a good job I've made of it, too. Will you take it with you, sir?"

"Yes. I have some more roots to get out, so will have to get busy to-morrow. I should have been at them today, but broke my grub-hoe last week. Some of those roots are very tough. I'm afraid I'm getting lazy, Mr. Jordan. I would much rather ride a day like this than work in the hot woods. It was very beautiful along the river this afternoon, and I had a most delightful talk with Captain Slocum."

"So that's where you've been, eh? And how's the captain?"

"In good spirits, although quite lame. He chafes, though, at not being able to go to sea any more. He should be very happy with a comfortable home, enough to live upon, and a good wife and daughter to care for him."

"He certainly should. But just a minute sir."

Sol went back into his shop and returned holding a new grub-hoe in his hand. He looked at it with pride.

"You won't break this in a hurry, sir. It's not like the ones you buy in the city, with painted tops and shining blades. But they won't stand up to tough work. Now this," and he tapped the hoe with the forefinger of his right hand, "will last. It does not look as gay as the city-made ones, I admit, but it will stand up to its job."

"I believe you are right, Mr. Jordan," and Mr. Dean reached out for the implement as he spoke. "You always do good work, and that should be a great satisfaction. How you must enjoy your trade. Would you care to make a change?"

Long Sol glanced up at the horseman in surprise.

"Why should I make a change? Is there anything else I could do?"

"Perhaps not. But I find that most people are not satisfied with their places in life, and are anxious to be somewhere else, so I thought it might be the same with you."

"What you say is quite true, Mr. Dean. I have heard many grumble about their lot in life. The farmers would like to be boating on the river, and the boatmen would like to be farmers. But as for me, I am quite contented here. The smell of coal, the sight of the blazing fire, and the ring of my hammer upon the anvil, are all very pleasant to me. No, I would not care to make any change."

"It is good to hear you say that, Mr. Jordan. I wish others would think the same."

"Ah, there's a difference. Some are not in their right element, and that makes them so dissatisfied. They do not like their work, and in fact, are not fitted for it. They are like caged birds that long to be free."

"Jim Weston, for instance? Are you thinking of him? How can a man whose heart is at sea, be contented with grubbing on a farm? It is not natural."

"Yes, Jim is one, or I should say, he was one, for a remarkable change has come over him. He called here this afternoon, and seemed like a new man."

"In what way?" Mr. Dean asked, leaning forward a little.

"It is difficult for me to explain. But he came into this shop with a quick, firm step, and greeted me like a long-lost friend. He was always gruff and moody any time he was here before. But today he was different. He had just come from the city, and dropped in here to get me to do some work for him."

"What caused the change, Mr. Jordan? Did Jim tell you?"

"No, and I did not ask him. There was something about his eyes that kept me from doing so. He was not the Jim Weston I've known since he came here. He's in a queer mood for him. Have you any idea, sir, why he went to the city? He very seldom goes."

"He had a letter from a law firm. That is all I know."

"Something must have happened there which made such a change in him. Do you suppose it was money he got?"

"There is only one thing that would give Jim Weston new life. You know what I mean."

"Yes, yes, you're quite right. To have his name cleared would make him happy. But that is hardly likely now after all these years."

"What were Jim's eyes like, Mr. Jordan? You said there was something peculiar about them."

"It is hard for me to explain, sir. But I have a picture in my house of soldiers at the Battle of Waterloo. They are about to charge upon the enemy, and one can see their eyes quite plainly."

"And what do you see in them?" Mr. Dean asked as Sol paused.

"It's really hard to tell. But I have studied them often, and see their terrible expressions of joy, excitement, hatred and reckless daring. Perhaps that doesn't express what I see, but it is the nearest I can come to it. Anyway, I saw something like that in Jim's eyes. Suppose you come home with me and have a look at that picture. Annie will be pleased to see you, and have you stay for supper."

"No, thank you, Mr. Jordan. I am anxious to see Jim's eyes. And, besides, Jacynth will be waiting for me."

"Ah, Jacynth. She's a fine girl, sir, and Annie and I think the world of her. But keep a watchful eye over her, Mr. Dean. I shouldn't be saying this, but it might do no harm."

Prosper Dean started and looked keenly at the blacksmith.

"Have you been hearing anything?" he demanded. "What has Jacynth been doing? Nothing wrong, I hope?"

"Oh, not at all. But she is young and beautiful, as you well know. She travels much alone, and there are not always angels to be met with upon the roads these days. But, there, I'm not going to say anything more. Maybe I've talked too much already."

Although Mr. Dean was most anxious to know more, he could not induce the blacksmith to give him any further information.

"It's only a warning," Sol told him, as he locked the door of his shop and left for home.

Prosper Dean's mind was now greatly disturbed. After he had obtained his mail, he rode slowly homeward. He did not even glance at the headlines of the newspaper, for today he was not interested in the news of the world. All he could think about was his own little world, and that seemed to him very topsy-turvy just now. What he had heard about Jim Weston, and the warning concerning Jacynth, worried him. Jim's affairs, of course, were his own, but with his daughter it was different. Why had Sol given such a warning? What had he heard? And what were the dangers which threatened her? She had no enemies, so far as he knew, who would try to harm her. It was all very puzzling.

Then suddenly Kent Rayson came into his mind. Was he the danger? Did Sol know something about the young man which he did not care to tell? It seemed so, and this troubled him. What was he to do? Forbid Kent to come any more to Val Haven? He could do that, but what effect would it have upon Jacynth? She might take matters into her own hands and leave home. He knew how determined she was, and with love added, it would make a great difference. All the reasoning in the world would be powerless against love. He was wise enough to realise this, so he sighed as he continued his journey. He thought of Prospero and his magical influence. How helpless now was that fanciful character to assist him in his time of need. It was like following a will-o'-the-wisp, vain and elusive. It was one thing to create an imaginary character like Prospero, but quite another to practise his art.



In this disturbed state of mind, he came out of the woods to Jim Weston's cleared field. And at once his eyes fell upon the banner floating above the pine off in the distance. He reined up Camilla and gazed intently upon that signal he had placed there for his own guidance. And he needed it very much now, especially the red of courage. It had always inspired him, and so it did again this afternoon, for when he continued on his way, there was a determination in his heart to meet with courage the problems which faced him. He had overcome many in the past, he had won against all opposition, and he felt sure now that he could do so again. He must always keep the banner of courage and hope flying.

He found Jim and Mrs. Weston at supper, with the baby asleep in the cradle nearby. He was heartily welcomed, and Mrs. Weston invited him to join them in the frugal meal. But Mr. Dean declined. He had merely called in passing to see how they were getting along, and to learn if there was anything he could do to help.

"Nothing at present, thank you," Jim replied. "I have the foundation of the house laid, and when I am ready to raise the frame I shall need some assistance. I shall begin hauling the lumber to-morrow. It is good of you to let me have it."

"Not at all. I am glad it will be of use to you. It has been lying there for some time, and I fear the exposure to the weather has injured it a little. But what's the news in the city? You came home this afternoon, so Mr. Jordan told me."

The mention of the city caused Jim to glance quickly at Mr. Dean, and the latter noticed the changed expression in his eyes. It was just as Sol had described. Jim laid down his knife, pushed back his chair, and drew forth his pipe and tobacco. He then rose to his feet, stepped over to the cradle and looked down upon the sleeping child. Presently he turned towards Mr. Dean.

"I saw Hettie in the city today, and she asked me no end of questions about her baby. She's just dying to see it."

"Why doesn't she come, then?"

"She said she would in a week or so, but she cannot get away at present. She's changed, so I thought, and is more sensible, with none of her fancy airs. She's had her lesson, I guess."

Mr. Dean longed to know what the letter from the law firm was about, but as Jim offered no information, he did not care to ask. Mrs. Weston stood with them looking at the baby.

"He's a darling," she said, "and we are very fond of him."

"Has Bill Jukins made any attempt to take him?"

"Not yet, but we never know when he might try. Lank comes sometimes, and talks about what his father is going to do."

"Where is Lank now?"

"In the city, and when he comes home, he is sure to be drunk. He is nasty then. I don't want him about, especially when he's been drinking."

"If I'm home when he comes he won't stay long," Jim declared. "He's in an ugly mood these days, and mighty jealous over young Rayson coming to your place. It's just as well, sir, for you to be on your guard against him, as there's no telling what dirty work he might do."

At once Sol Jordan's warning came into Mr. Dean's mind. Perhaps it was Lank Jukins he meant.

"And what about Kent Rayson, Jim? As Old Thistle's son, is he to be trusted?"

"Yes, be on your guard against him, too, sir. It's just as well to be watchful of any one coming from the Rayson stock."

"You may be right. Yes, you may be right. But what am I to do when Jacynth has taken such a fancy to that young man? I must go home now and think it all over."

As he left the house, Jim followed him. He said nothing until Mr. Dean had mounted his horse. He then glanced back, as if to be sure his wife was not within sound of his voice.

"Have you a copy you would lend me, sir, about Old Prospero? I would like to read that story."

"Certainly. I have several, and shall let you have one with good notes and some very excellent pictures. I hope you will enjoy it. You saw the play in London, so you told me, and that should help you to understand it."

Mr. Dean was about to ask him why he wished to read the play, but decided not to do so. Jim was a strange man, and would not brook too much questioning. But he was certain it was for some special reason rather than for entertainment that he wanted to read *The Tempest*. But he wondered, nevertheless, as Jim had never before asked for a book. He was not a reader, so there must be something in the play which he wished to find out. And what could that be?

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# CHAPTER XX

## DREAM AND STORM

When Jacynth and Penny arrived home from up the brook, Martha had tea ready. Mr. Dean came a few minutes later and stabled his horse. He noticed that his daughter looked somewhat pale and unusually listless, but said nothing as he greeted Penny, took his place at the head of the table and began to serve the cold roast lamb and fried potatoes. The latter were from his own garden, of which he was justly proud. He glanced several times at Jacynth, who was merely pretending to eat. This worried him, and he wondered what was troubling her.

Penny Royal was hungry and thoroughly enjoyed his supper. It was easy, however, for him to see that Mr. Dean and Jacynth needed to have their minds diverted from their cares. So as he ate, he told several amusing stories about his experiences in seeking water. This he did casually and naturally without any apparent meaning.

"That is excellent water," he remarked, as he placed his glass down upon the table. "I always boast about it wherever I go, and tell people that I can get as good water on their places as you have here. And yet some will not believe me, they are so pig-headed. For instance, there was Sam Tompkins over in Kingston, who doubted my ability to get good water near his house. I asked him what he would give me if I did, and what do you suppose he said? You could never imagine, not if you tried all your life. No, no, you could never guess. If Old Stop-an'-Sneeze had only known it he would have put it in one of his plays, and it would have made him famous. Why, he offered me a wife."

"A wife!" Jacynth exclaimed in surprise.

"Yes, a wife, just think of that. And none other than his mother-in-law. She's on his hands, you see, so he wanted to get rid of her."

Jacynth's ringing laugh was good to hear, and her father smiled more at her amusement than at the story. Penny knew that he was succeeding, and his eyes twinkled.

"I didn't accept Sam's offer, though," he continued. "I know his mother-in-law, so agreed to find the water for nothing."

"And did you get it?" Jacynth asked.

"Sure I did, and right near his house, too. Sam had to go down only fifteen feet and struck as sweet a vein of water as you would wish to taste. It had been there all the time, but Sam didn't know it. That's the way with many things in life. We don't know what we have right at our own door. There was Sam depending for years upon brook water some distance from his house, when all the time it was near at hand.

"I hope he paid you for it, notwithstanding your offer to do it for nothing," Mr. Dean remarked.

"Oh, yes, he paid me, all right. Sam's a good soul, and he was only joking about giving me his mother-in-law, even though she is anything but a joke to him. But, there, I'm not in the habit of speaking against any one, especially a woman."

"I suppose you meet many strange people as you travel around."

"Indeed I do, sir. I came across one not long ago. You don't know him, but up the Washademoak everybody knows Old Billy, the spring cleaner, and they all think he's more than half crazy. But he's very gentle, and believes he has a big mission in life, and that is to clean out dirty springs."

"What in the world does he do that for?" Jacynth asked.

"Well, you see, it goes back some time ago. He had a daughter, his only child. When little, she drank from a spring which was foul, so took sick and died. Billy never got over that. It turned his brain, so people believe. Anyway, he got the notion that he should go around cleaning springs, so other people's children will not die as his little girl did. He thinks that is his mission in life, and really makes a religion of it. And maybe there is more in it than people imagine. His own sorrow turned his mind to others, so he is doing what he can for their welfare. It is good to hear him talk, and tell how the Lord brought trouble upon him that he might see the world's needs and do what he can to help. Trouble does that quite often, I guess."

When the meal was ended, Mr. Dean offered Penny his tobacco-pouch.

"Join me," he invited. "I enjoy a smoke after eating. It's good for the digestion."

"No, thank you, sir, not just now. I know something that helps digestion better than tobacco, and that's music. I can smoke as a rule along the road. I must be away soon, but before I go, I want Jacynth to play me a few old tunes. The memory of them helps me on my way."

Jacynth was in no mood for playing, but as she looked at the little old man and noticed the pleading expression in his eyes, she had not the heart to refuse. So rising from the table, she picked up her violin from a stand nearby.

"Suppose we go out on the verandah," she suggested. "It is nice there, and I can always play better in the open."

After they had left, Mr. Dean filled and lighted his pipe. He then picked up the paper lying by his side and glanced at the headlines for the news of the world. Finding nothing of special interest to him, he turned to the back page. As he did so, his eyes rested upon a headline which attracted his immediate attention.

Man Injured on the *Gipsy Rose*.

As he read, his interest increased, causing him to straighten suddenly up in his chair. It told how a sailor, Larry Jagger by name, while working on a big schooner had fallen into the hold, and was seriously injured. He was taken to the Hospital, and though conscious, there was little hope of his recovery. Mr. Dean stared at the name. Larry Jagger! It brought back memories of the man who had testified against Jim Weston. Yes, it was his evidence that had condemned Jim.

Mr. Dean rose to his feet, greatly agitated. He must go at once and show Jim the article. The next instant, however, he resumed his seat. Perhaps Jim knew already. Was that why he had been summoned to the city? Had the letter anything to do with that? And had Jim met Larry? These questions surged through his mind as he sat there, unheeding the strains that came from Jacynth's violin. He tried to imagine what had taken place at the Hospital, Larry making his tardy confession, Jim listening, and the lawyer taking down the words from the lips of the dying man. He knew that he might be wrong in his conjecture, but surely something like that had happened. And was that the cause of the change which had come over Jim, which even Sol Jordan had noticed? It seemed so to Mr. Dean. But why had not Jim told him about Larry? If he had been so unexpectedly freed from the terrible charge, why had he not mentioned it to his best friend? Why did he keep back such wonderful news? That was what puzzled him, causing his brow to knit in perplexity.

When Penny had taken his departure, after having bidden good-by to his friends, Jacynth went upstairs to her father's study. She wished to be alone that she might think over all that had taken place during the day. She knew that Kent had come to see her, and Martha had told her how dejected he looked as he rode slowly away. She knew that he loved her as she loved him. Was it right that they should be separated for what had taken place between their fathers years before? They could not help that. They were both young, and had their own lives to live. Why should they suffer for something over which they had no control?

Thinking thus, she seated herself in a big easy chair and looked out of the window off towards Storm King's rugged wooded eastern side upon which the shades of night had already fallen. The top alone glowed with the rays of the setting sun, and as she watched, these, too, gradually faded. Down below flowed the little brook where she and Kent had first met. That seemed long ago to her now, and much had happened since then. She pictured him standing there on the opposite bank, and recalled the expression of wonder in his eyes as she rode Midnight into the water. Yes, he had come into her life, giving it a new meaning. And now he was gone from her forever.

At length she rose to her feet and crossed the room to her father's well-filled shelves of books. There in their splendid bindings were the complete works of Shakespeare. It was a beautifully-illustrated edition, of which Mr. Dean was very proud. Jacynth had often looked at the pictures and read the stories connected with them until she knew some of the words by heart. Among the ones which had always appealed to her were the heroines, especially the love-scenes between Ferdinand and Miranda, and Romeo and Juliet. To these now she turned, and carrying the volumes over to the window, she resumed her seat and opened *The Tempest* first, while the others she placed on a small stool at her side. The scene to which she at once turned was one she had always liked, and about which she had often many a day-dream. It showed the first meeting of Ferdinand and Miranda, while beneath were the words of the delighted maiden, "I might call him a thing divine; for nothing natural I ever saw so noble." And what Miranda said about Ferdinand Jacynth knew she could truthfully say about Kent Rayson, for to her love-lit eyes they looked much alike.

She turned to another picture where Prospero was testing Ferdinand, calling him a spy. Miranda is standing by and saying, "There's nothing ill can dwell in such a temple." Jacynth felt the same about Kent. No matter what his father was like, she could not believe there was any ill in him.

For some time she studied these pictures, seeing in those two lovers Kent and herself. But how different were their lots. Everything ended well with those lovers of the story. Their fathers settled the old trouble between them, so everything turned out all right. How she longed for the same thing to happen now in real life between her and Kent. But from what she had learned it did not seem likely that their fathers could ever be friends again. But all stories did not have happy endings, so the sad tale of *Romeo* and *Juliet*, suited her better. Picking up the volume, she opened it at the scene where Juliet is looking from her window, and sighing, "O wherefore, wherefore, art thou, Romeo?" Yes, that applied to her rather than the other. Her Romeo had gone, and she did not know where he was. Would he ever come back to her again after the way he had been treated? Did he love her enough to return?

With such thoughts in her mind, she leaned back in the chair and closed her eyes. The memory of those happy days when Kent was with her filled her mind. Life was so pleasant then, with no clouds to mar her joy.

And there her father found her, fast asleep. He stood before her, and when he saw the books on her lap, and the pictures upon which she had been looking, he understood, and a great pity came into his heart. He did not know for sure what was troubling her. Perhaps she would tell him later. He hoped so, anyway. He turned to leave the room to go downstairs to have a talk with Martha who loved the girl as if she were her own child. She might be able to explain something.

He was about to leave the room, when a rumble of thunder stayed his steps. He looked out of the window and saw great black clouds massed above Storm King summit. He was not surprised, as the day had been hot. He always enjoyed watching such a storm sweeping over the Valley, so he went to the window opposite to where Jacynth was sitting and watched the lightning as it streaked the heavens with livid flashes, and listened to the thunder which was now much louder. The wind was bending the trees on the hillside, driving before it fierce gusts of rain. Soon Storm King was blotted from view as the waves of clouds rolled down its side, swept across the Valley and struck the house with such a force that it trembled like a frightened creature. The thunder increased in intensity, and at times it seemed as if the very heavens were being rent asunder.

Although Mr. Dean had experienced many storms in his forest retreat, he had never witnessed a grander display of nature's artillery as he did this evening. At one deafening crash, very near, followed instantly by a blinding flash, Jacynth awoke with a start, and a cry of fear. The books on her lap fell to the floor as she struggled to her feet and stared around her in a bewildered manner. Her father hurried to her side and caught her in his arms. She clung to him, and her loosened hair fell in rich profusion over her cheeks and shoulders.

"It is all right, dear," he comforted. "The storm will soon be over, so do not be afraid."

"It's not the storm I mind, father. But it was the dream which frightened me. Oh, it was terrible! I am so glad you are here."

And there they stood, the father thankful that he was yet of some comfort to her who was so dear to him, and the daughter finding peace in those strong loving arms surrounding her.

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# CHAPTER XXI

## DISAPPOINTMENT

Next morning was calm and bright, and as Mr. Dean stepped out upon the verandah he saw Jacynth in the garden. She was tying up several flowers whose tall stems had been bent by the fierce storm. To her father she seemed the fairest flower of all, and a natural pride came into his heart as he watched her. She looked quite happy, and exhibited no outward sign of her trouble of the night before.

When she saw her father watching her, she smiled.

"It is lovely out here this morning. But these flowers had a hard time of it in the storm. Their poor heads are bent, and they are so glad that I am able to do something for them. See how grateful they look. I believe they all know me."

"I am sure they do, for how could they help it? All beautiful things love you, even the flowers, because you are in harmony with them. That makes all the difference. But come in now, for breakfast is ready."

"Just a minute, father, while I pick a few of these asters and gladioli. They will look nice on the table."

Mr. Dean watched her as she gathered a cluster of choice blooms. He wondered what she was thinking about, and why she was so animated this morning. He had always thought he understood her moods perfectly, but now he was not so sure. She was becoming a puzzle to him, which all his knowledge of books could not help him to solve.

It did not take Jacynth long to arrange the flowers in an artistic manner in a cut-glass vase, while her father watched her deft nimble fingers as she worked. When she had finished, she stepped back from the table and viewed them with critical eyes.

"There, don't they look lovely, father?"

"They certainly do, and you have arranged them so well. But let us have breakfast now, as I am going over to help Jim with his house this morning. He is much behind with the building, so I am anxious to do all I can to assist him. He lost two days when he went to the city."

"Wasn't it rather unusual for him to go there?"

"It was, and I hope to find out why he went. He had a letter from a law firm, and that makes me quite curious. Jim did not tell me yesterday what it was about, but something happened in the city which made a great change in him."

"In what way?"

"I can hardly explain. But Jim had a peculiar expression in his eyes such as I never noticed there before. Mr. Jordan observed it, too, when Jim called at the blacksmith shop on his way home from the wharf. I believe it is due to his interview with Larry Jagger who was badly injured on a vessel in the harbor. Larry was the man who swore that Jim scuttled his ship."

Jacynth put down her cup of coffee and looked at her father.

"Did Larry die?"

"I do not know, but I have the feeling that he made a confession."

"To clear Jim?"

"Most likely. But what puzzles me is why Jim said nothing to me about why he went to the city and what happened there. It is all the more strange, as I am one of his very few friends."

"Perhaps he will tell you today, father. You will stay there for dinner, I suppose?"

"I expect to. And what are you going to do?"

"Martha and I are planning to pick blueberries. They are thick out in Peter Horn's back pasture. We are to have a fine time together, and shall take our lunch with us and eat it by the little brook. It will be quite a long walk for Martha, but she is determined to go."

"I am pleased to see you looking so bright this morning, dear. You slept well last night, I hope? The storm didn't disturb you?"

"Not at all. It was over before I went to bed. I was terribly frightened, though, when that heavy clap of thunder woke me. It was silly of me to go to sleep in that chair."

"You were tired out. You had a hard day, didn't you?"

"Quite," and Jacynth gave a deep sigh. "But I don't want to think about it now. This is too fine a day for gloomy thoughts."

Mr. Dean was greatly disappointed that his daughter did not confide to him her trouble. He had given her the chance which she did not seem inclined to accept. There was a gulf between them, and this worried him. It had never been there before, and it had come since young Rayson's arrival. He knew nothing about her resolve to give up Kent for his sake. Had he known of the sacrifice she was making, how it would have thrilled his heart. But not knowing, he went sadly from home, wondering what was the cause of Jacynth's unusual depression the previous day. Had Kent Rayson deserted her? he asked himself as he walked along the road. The thought stirred him with anger. Was Kent like his father, a man devoid of all principle? He could not believe it possible, and yet what else could give Jacynth such distress of mind? Ere long his anger cooled, and a sense of relief stole over him. Perhaps it was for the best. Jacynth would get over her trouble and be thankful that Kent had left her. Even now, it might be, she was losing interest in the young man who had come so suddenly into her life. The fact that he was the twin-brother of the man who had brought such trouble upon Hettie Jukins, may have decided her. He hoped it was so, anyway, not only for Jacynth's sake but for his own.

After her father had left, Jacynth went out again into the garden among her beloved flowers. Many of the plants were still drooping from the effect of the storm. These she began to straighten up and tie with some strong twine she had brought with her.

"Poor things," she murmured, "you have been hurt, too. But I shall help you all I can, and you will be as well as ever. The storm did not ruin your beautiful blossoms. Oh, if life's troubles could be as soon remedied!"

She looked off down the valley, as if expecting to see some one coming up the road with the light of joy in his eyes. But she soon turned her attention again to the flowers, feeling certain that Kent would never return. He had gone that way yesterday, so Martha had told her, saddened and depressed. She must forget him and think of other things. She recalled Penny Royal's story about Billy, the cleaner of springs. That old man was transforming his great sorrow by helping others. And he was receiving joy and comfort in such service. Why should not she herself do the same? But what could she do? Who needed her help? She could not travel over the country like that old man. She sighed as she tied up the last plant, and then went into the house.

When Jacynth and Martha returned from Peter Horn's pasture with their dishes full of berries, they were both tired. But in the girl's heart there was a deep peace like the calmness of the day after the storm of the night. She had been to see Mrs. Horn on her way home, and had been inspired by her faith and courage. She had also told several stories to Tom and Peggy, and their guileless chatter had been pleasant to hear. They lifted her out of her own world of trouble, as did Mrs. Horn's words about her lot.

"I thank the Lord every minute, dearie, that I am able to work and look after my family," she had quietly said. "The Lord has guided us hitherto, and I can trust Him. It is a grand feeling, Jacynth, to know that He is near at all times, and will give us grace sufficient for our needs. I was rebellious at first when I heard that Mr. Rayson is planning to take our timber land. But now I see things in a different light. And Peter does, too. We both pray the same as ever, go on with our work, and trust."

Mr. Dean came home just as supper was ready. He was tired, and confessed to Jacynth as they sat down to the table that he was not much good.

"I am not used to such work. Look at my hands, blistered and rough. I tried to keep up with Jim, but it was a hard task. He must have thought he was at sea in a storm, giving orders to his crew. I felt quite amused at first, but before the day

was ended it was not much fun."

"What a strange way for Jim to act," Jacynth replied, "especially as you were giving your service free."

"It was, but Jim was very strange today. As he worked he seemed to be some one else, the captain, I suppose, as in other days."

"Did he tell you anything about his trip to the city?"

"Not a word. And he spoke but little all day. He thanked me, however, as I was leaving and asked me if I would let him have a copy of *The Tempest*. He asked for it yesterday, but I forgot all about it when I left this morning."

"I will take it over this evening, father, as I want to see how the baby is getting along. But why does Jim want *The Tempest*?"

"I do not know for sure, but imagine he is anxious to read how Prospero made trouble for his enemies. I can think of no other reason."

"But the enemies were reconciled, father. Will Jim read that?"

"Not likely. He will turn to what suits him, as most people do, even when reading the Bible. Anyway, I shall let him have a small copy with several good pictures in it, and some valuable notes."

After Jacynth had left the table when supper was ended, Mr. Dean pushed back his chair, filled and lighted his pipe. Ere long he went out on the verandah. He was somewhat rested now, but his mind was not at ease. The sun riding above Storm King smiled down upon the valley. But he paid no attention to it as formerly. A feeling of depression weighed upon his heart which he could not banish. His daughter was uppermost in his mind, and as he saw her riding towards the road, he was tempted to call her back and tell her not to go to the Westons. But with a wave of the hand and a cheery good-bye she was off, and in another minute she and Midnight were out of sight around the bend in the road. He had partly risen from his chair, but sank back again, clutching his pipe in his left hand and staring out over the garden. Why did he want to call her back? he asked himself. He had never felt that way before. He had always been perfectly contented when Jacynth rode abroad, especially when Lad was with her. What, then, was the meaning of this strange sense of fear which pressed upon him now? Was it a premonition of trouble? No, it could not be. He chided himself for such an idea. He was too strong-minded for that. He glanced up at the banner above the pine tree.

"I have never lowered that yet, and do not intend to do so now. It will only come down when I give way to craven fear. A heart of courage will overcome all fear. May such a heart be mine."

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## CHAPTER XXII

### FOR LOVE'S SAKE

The sight of her father sitting so lonely upon the verandah brought a throb of compunction to Jacynth's heart. She suspected how anxious he was to know about her trouble. And she was also aware of the opportunities he had given her to explain. She had not done so lest he should be greatly worried. If he learned that she had given up Kent for his sake, he might take it too much to heart. His love for her was so deep, and his nature so sensitive, that he would be keenly grieved at her sacrifice on his account. Now, however, she felt that she had been in the wrong. Until recently she had always confided in him, and trusted implicitly to his advice. He had the wisdom and experience of years, so knew how to counsel aright. And, perhaps, he could do so now. She should have spoken to him before she made her final decision. It might not be too late yet. That last glimpse she had of him sitting so forlornly upon the verandah decided her. She would tell him all when she returned, and that would be a great relief to her troubled heart and mind.

Coming at length in sight of Jim Weston's place on her right, she did not feel like stopping there at present. The evening was so beautiful that she resolved to ride to the shore and call on her way back. So at the cross roads she took the one leading to the wharf. She would return by the way of the Creek, and thus enjoy the river which was always at its best on such an evening as this.

In a few minutes she came to Bill Jukins' house. Lad who had been chasing birds and rabbits, suddenly ceased his wild racing and took up his position close to Midnight's heels. He sensed danger ahead, so it would be necessary for him to be on guard. He knew that a mongrel cur would spring forth with savage yelps to insult his dignity. And this soon took place, for when near the gate a lean dog leaped out and with furious barks rushed towards the travellers. Lad's eyes gleamed with an angry light, his thick mane rose, and low growls came from between his grinning teeth.

"Quiet, Lad," Jacynth commanded.

The dog obeyed, and was silent. He kept his eyes fixed, however, upon the yelping mongrel, and once wheeled suddenly to attack. But another word from his mistress checked him, and although quivering with the rage of battle, he endured the insults hurled upon him.

Jacynth was glad when past the house. She knew that she was being watched, for she saw a number of children's faces at the windows. Lank she did not see. Then she remembered that she had not seen him since Sunday afternoon when he had encountered her and Kent on their way from Peter Horn's. What had become of him she did not know. But the thought of him brought an uneasy feeling into her heart. Why, she could not tell. But knowing him as she did, there was no doubt but that he was planning some revenge, and would strike back in an underhand manner sooner or later. And it would be upon Kent most likely the blow would fall when least expected. She longed to warn him of his danger. But he was far away, and she might never see him again.

When she came to the river, she found that the steamer had been already at the wharf and was now some distance up stream. Swinging Midnight to the left, she started up the shore road. The river on her right was like a great mirror, broken only by three islands which caught the last glow of the sinking sun. Jacynth always enjoyed such a sight as this, and once she drew rein to contemplate the beautiful scene. It brought a comforting peace to her heart. Nature always did that whether it was the river, woods, brooks, or flowers. And she needed such help this evening more than ever.

At the shipyard she saw Thomas Whipple, the master-builder, standing by one of his vessels. The yard was quiet now, with the sounds of the hammers, axes, and caulking-irons stilled. There were three boats on the stocks, one almost finished, and the others half-constructed. By one of the latter Mr. Whipple was standing. He turned as Jacynth drew near, and when he saw her, a smile of pleasure overspread his honest, careworn face. Jacynth called out a cheery greeting, and was about to pass when he signalled her to stop.

"You are in a hurry this evening, I see. But wait a minute. I shall not keep you long."

"I am never in a hurry when you want to speak to me, Mr. Whipple," Jacynth replied, as she turned Midnight into the yard. "I thought you were too busy to be troubled with a useless girl."

"You can be of use to me now, as you are the very person I need. I have a message for your father, and was wondering

how I could get it to him, so your arrival is most timely. Just a minute."

Thrusting his right hand into a pocket of his coat, he brought forth a piece of paper and a pencil.

"I want your father to get me several knees for these boats. I shall write down the number and size so there will be no mistake. Bill Jukins promised to get them for me, but the lazy rascal has not done so. He'll come whining to me next winter for something to eat. But he and his brood can starve, for all I care. And that useless Lank does nothing but drink and make mischief. He came from town on the boat this evening, and went by here a while ago in Jed Barker's waggon. He roared at me, and spat out nasty words. I'd like to get my hands on the wretched thing."

"Why did he go up the road?" Jacynth asked. "He should have gone straight home. That's the right place for him when he's drunk."

"Lank couldn't do anything straight. He never did. He'll hang around Creek Corner and sleep in the ditch most likely, until he sobers up. He's a menace to the country, that's what he is."

Jacynth was on the point of turning back instead of going home by way of the Creek. She did not want to meet Lank, especially when he was under the influence of liquor. She banished this idea, however, for mounted upon Midnight, and with Lad ready to defend her, she need have no fear. And, besides, she did not wish such a creature as Lank Jukins to cause her to change her purpose to go by the shore road.

Leaving the shipyard, she continued her journey. The shades of evening had now deepened, and the islands had lost their glow. Giving Midnight a free rein, he sped rapidly forward, his hoofs striking the ground with resounding thuds. It was an exhilarating ride, as up hill and down they raced, with Lad close behind.

When near Creek Corner, Jacynth checked Midnight's speed to a walk. The store was on her left, and as she approached, she saw several men standing before the door with Lank among them. She did not intend to stop, and was about to pass with a word of greeting, when Lank stepped unsteadily into the road and laid his hand roughly upon Midnight's bridle-rein. Unused to such treatment, the noble animal surged suddenly back, reared high, and if Jacynth had not been an expert rider she would have been hurled from the saddle. With a deep, savage growl Lad rushed forward, causing Lank to spring back just in time to escape the horse's hurtling fore-hoofs. His companions, who had been watching in silence, broke forth into loud laughter at his ignominious retreat. To them it was a most amusing scene. To Jacynth, however, it was far otherwise. Although very calm outwardly as she brought Midnight under control, her heart was filled with an intense anger at Lank's rudeness. Her blood was up, and she was in a fighting mood as she looked down contemptuously at the creature before her.

"What is the meaning of this?" she demanded. "Explain your action."

"Oh, I jist wanted to have a word with ye, that's all," was the growling reply. "Ye might have stopped to speak to a friend."

"Friend!" Jacynth's eyes flashed as she uttered the word. "When were you ever my friend?"

"I used to be until ye jilted me fer that city cur. He's yer friend now, so I thought I'd tell ye that he can't come to see ye fer some time. He's got other bizness to attend to at present. Oh, yes, he's got something else to think about, a'right."

"What do you mean?" Jacynth asked. The grin upon Lank's face, and the triumphant leer in his eyes, brought a nameless fear to her heart. What had happened to Kent?

"The captain of the *Roarin' Bluenose* might be able to tell ye, hee, hee. Yes, he'll explain about yer friend. He needed an extry man, so we got him one last night. We caught him moonin' round the docks, so helped him on board. Guess he had a mighty sore head when he woke this mornin'."

These words caused the young men to move nearer that they might not miss anything that was said. Although they were ready at times to laugh at Lank, they looked upon him with contempt. They themselves were hard-working fellows and good quiet citizens. They understood the meaning of Lank's words, for they had heard about men who had been shanghaied and carried away to sea. They listened, but said nothing. It was not their business to interfere in this affair.

And Jacynth understood, too. She had read about men who had been attacked, drugged, carried on board ships, and taken

away on long voyages. These stories had always interested her, and she had often tried to imagine their feelings when they recovered from their stupor to find themselves at sea, away from their friends, and with no way of sending them word. And this had now happened to Kent! Last night, so Lank said, as he was mooning around the docks. Why was he there? Was it because she had rejected him? Then, she herself was to blame. It was her fault that this trouble had come upon him. So carried away was she by this idea, that she could think of nothing else. Her impulsive nature, charged with an overwhelming love, drove reason from her mind. She must rescue him.

All this swept upon her as she glanced at the young men nearby. They could not help her, so she must do something herself. She looked sternly at Lank.

"Has the *Roaring Bluenose* sailed yet?"

"She'll go out on the tide t'night. Wouldn't ye like to be there to wave good-bye to yer friend?"

"When will that be?"

"Oh, 'bout midnight, I guess."

"Then, I'll be there. And maybe I'll do more than wave him good-bye."

"Is that so? You can't do nuthin'. Ye'r only a girl, hee, hee. I'd like to see ye try to git yer lover off the ship. Ye'd only make a laughin'-stock of yerself."

"Perhaps so. But I intend to make a laughing-stock of you before I go."

Swerving Midnight suddenly to the left, she lifted her right hand and rained blow after blow with her riding-whip upon Lank's head and shoulders.

"Take that, and that, and that, you coward!" she cried, as the whip fell with unerring aim.

With a howl of pain and rage Lank tried to escape. But as he moved back, Midnight surged near, as if he understood his mistress' purpose, and desired to assist her all he could. Lad, too, took part, for with a roar he leaped upon Lank. With a yell of terror the latter staggered back, and if his companions had not hastened to his aid, he would have been severely injured. They tore away the infuriated dog, dragged Lank to the store and thrust him inside. Only by kicks and blows could they restrain Lad from further attack.

Jacynth no longer delayed. Time was precious now, so wheeling Midnight about, she sped down the road over which she had recently travelled. For a few minutes she allowed the horse free rein. Then reason took command, and she slowed him down to a steady pace.

Her brain was in a tumult as she moved forward. She must rescue Kent. That was her one thought. How she would do it she had no idea. But once in the city, she would find some way. The mayor, or some one in authority, would assist her. Surely British justice would not permit a man to be seized and carried to sea against his will. Oh, yes, she would succeed when once there.

For two hours she continued her journey. Night settled over the land, but Midnight never stumbled. He picked his way as if in broad daylight, and although he walked up the hills, he raced across the level stretches as fresh as ever, closely followed by Lad.

On one of these level places there was a small pole bridge, partly covered with earth. As Midnight's forefeet struck this, his left hoof caught for an instant in a hole where the wood had rotted away. He was thrown forward on his knees, while Jacynth was hurled over his head upon the hard ground beyond. Midnight regained his feet and stood by his mistress, wondering, perhaps, why she did not move. Lad came, licked her hands and face, and whined. But Jacynth was beyond all knowledge of time or place, and the concern of her faithful dog failed to arouse any response in her prostrate form.



## CHAPTER XXIII

### OLD THISTLE

In the dead of night Timothy Rayson woke with a start. He sat suddenly up and stared hard at the darkness. At first he imagined he was out on the Broad Road with his driver, Pat Malone, bending over an unconscious girl, and trying to keep back a growling dog. Soon, however, he knew it was a dream, and an exact repetition of what had occurred the night before. He was not altogether surprised, so recently had it happened. But it was another vision which disturbed him, something that had taken place years before. It was all clear to him as he sat there. It was a Gipsy camp, near a village which he was passing, when a girl came forth and requested that she should tell his fortune. He had refused her offer, cursing her as a black-headed witch.

He remembered how the Gipsy's eyes had flashed with anger as she retorted that the day would come when he himself would be bewitched by another black-headed girl. Although not inclined to be superstitious, he had never forgotten that scene nor the prophecy which had been made. And it came back to him this night mixed up in a confused manner with that unconscious girl lying upon the road. It was not only strange, but startling. Was it the fulfilment of what the Gipsy had told him? he asked himself. By the light of the lantern her hair seemed to him jet-black, and her face very white. He and Pat had taken her to the Hospital, and to the questions which had been asked there he could give no definite answer. She had been found lying upon the road at South Bay, with a black horse standing quietly by, and an angry collie dog on guard. He could tell no more, so having left his name and street number, he had gone home. He had fallen asleep that night with a vision of the dark-haired, white-faced girl before him.

Mr. Rayson was an unhappy, ill-tempered, and disappointed man. During the day, and when busy, he could for a while forget the many things which troubled him. But at night it was different, and so now they all crowded upon him like so many tormenting demons. His wife, whom he had sent to an untimely death through neglect and abuse, stood before him. He saw her sad eyes of reproach fixed upon him, and he covered his face with his hands in a vain effort to shut out the vision. And two men appeared to him, as well, the partner he had robbed, and the man he had sent to jail. Of the former he never had any fear, but the latter he held in secret dread lest he should do him some bodily harm, now that he was free. He had never felt comfortable while Larry Jagger was alive, and more than once the sailor had demanded money to keep silence. So when he read of his death in the paper, he felt greatly relieved. The secret had died with him, and there was no one left to bear witness of the treachery to the innocent captain, Jim Weston.

It was a long weary night the unhappy man passed. Sleep would not come to his eyes, and he could not rid himself of the thoughts which surged through his troubled mind. More than once a great loneliness swept upon him. He had struggled by fair means and foul to make money, and what had all his efforts amounted to? He was hated by all, and even his sons had disappointed him. One had no interest in his business. He was too much like his mother, fond of art and such useless things. The other, more of his own nature, spent most of his time in sport and frivolity, and getting into trouble with women. Mr. Rayson groaned in despair as he brooded over these things.

He was early down to breakfast, but could eat only a little, and gave a curt answer to his housekeeper when she anxiously inquired about his lack of appetite.

"You had a trying experience last night, I see by this morning's paper," she remarked.

"What's that?" Mr. Rayson quickly asked. "In the paper, you say? About me?"

"Yes, sir, here it is. You can see for yourself," and the woman laid the newspaper on the table before him.

At once Mr. Rayson's eyes fell upon the headline, Unknown Girl Found Unconscious On Road. He read with interest how Timothy Rayson and Patrick Malone, while driving to the city, had discovered a girl lying on the road at South Bay, with a black horse standing by, and a collie dog on watch. The girl had evidently been thrown from her horse, so the paper said. Rayson and Malone had taken her to the Hospital, but it could not be learned who she was, nor how serious her injuries.

Twice Mr. Rayson read the article, and then turned to his housekeeper.

"What time did Matt get in last night?"

"He did not come in at all, sir. His bed has not been touched."

"The scamp! And I need him this morning. Dear me, what is the world coming to, anyway? It's disgraceful the way young people act these days, out all night, and sleeping all day. But I must go to the Hospital to see if I can learn anything about that girl. I hope she's not dead, for if she is, I shall have to attend the inquest. Pat will be summoned, too. That will keep me in the city when I want to go to the country to see about some lumber. Pat should be here by now. I want him to drive me to the Hospital. I would walk but for this confounded leg of mine. It's getting worse all the time."

"Let me bathe it, sir. It helped you once."

"No, no. It did no good. Why doesn't Pat come!"

"It's early yet, sir," the woman reminded as she began to clear away the dishes. "I did not expect you down for breakfast so soon."

"I couldn't sleep," Mr. Rayson growled, as he again looked at the paper. "The thought of that injured girl kept me awake. I wish to goodness there was some law to prevent young girls riding along the roads alone at night, and making trouble for busy people."

"Was she quite young, sir?"

"She seemed so, eighteen or nineteen, I should judge. She had black hair, and wore riding-breeches. Yes, riding-breeches, just think of that, Mrs. Brown! That shows what kind of a girl she must be."

He rose from the table, limped over to the window, and looked out. As usual he was in an ugly mood. Everything was wrong in the world except himself. He was suspicious of everybody, and his fierce eyes were ever watching lest he should be tricked. His rough beard added greatly to his fierceness. The disagreeable nature of the man was clearly stamped upon his face. Friends he had none, and those who served him, hated him. Old Thistle was a byword of contempt, and he deserved it.

"Confound Pat Malone! What in time is keeping him," he growled as he looked down the street. "Ah, there he is at last, the lazy rascal, creeping along like a snail."

He limped out into the hallway and met Pat, a big, burly, good-natured Irishman.

"What's been keepin you?" he demanded. "Didn't I tell you to be here early?"

"Indade ye did, sir. But I had to git some ointment fer that horse we brought in last night. He's as foine a baste as iver I set me eyes on, Misther Rayson, an' it's a pity he's so cut up."

"What's the matter with him?"

"Faith, an' I cannot tell fer sure. His left shoulder's got a big gash in it, an' both knees are bruised. He could hardly walk last night, ye remember. The horse-docter's bandaged up the poor critter, but I'm afraid he'll be lame fer life."

"And where's the dog?"

"With the horse, av coorse. He wouldn't lave his frind. He jist lay there with a mournful look in thim big eyes of his. It'd make yer heart melt to see him, Misther Rayson. Wouldn't ye like now to go to the stable to look at the poor bastes yerself?"

"Have you heard anything about the girl?" Mr. Rayson asked, ignoring the invitation. "If she dies we'll be in a pretty fix, summoned as witnesses, and arrested, maybe."

"Arrested, sir! An' fer what?"

"Think it out, you stupid blockhead. Men have been arrested for less than that. Have you heard anything about her, who she is?"

"Narry a word, sir. But I couldn't git her out of me mind last night. I saw her layin' there in the road, with her black hair an' pale face, as plain as—"

"There, there, you fool. No more of that nonsense. I want you to drive me to the Hospital. I must find out how she is getting along before we leave the city. Make haste."

Upon reaching the Hospital, Mr. Rayson inquired at the office about the girl, and was much relieved to learn that she was not dead.

"Is she badly hurt?" he asked.

"I do not know," was the guarded reply.

"Have you found out who she is?"

"No."

"Where is she?"

"On the second floor."

That was all the information he could obtain, so inwardly cursing the close-mouthed official, he limped slowly and painfully up the winding stairway, as the elevator was not running so early in the morning. At the second floor a nurse informed him that no one was allowed to see the girl, as her condition was quite critical.

"But I must see her," Mr. Rayson protested. "I am the man who found her on the road last night and brought her here. Let me look at her, anyway. I will not disturb her. Is she conscious?"

"I am afraid not. Her mind seems deranged, for she is constantly pleading to have some one rescued from a ship. She will not heed anything that is said to her. You may have a look at her, so you can see for yourself."

Mr. Rayson followed the nurse along the hallway until she stopped at a door on the right, which she gently opened. And there he saw the invalid lying upon the bed, her dark hair falling in waves over the white pillow. Silently though the door opened, Jacynth saw the movement and the two standing before her. An eager look came into her eyes.

"Have you found him?" she asked. "Is he saved? Oh, don't let them take him away!"

The nurse glanced at Mr. Rayson who was staring at the girl. She then motioned for him to go, and she was about to close the door when the sound of hurrying feet was heard coming towards them. Mr. Rayson looked, and startled, he stepped back, and shrank against the wall. He recognized the one approaching, the last man in the world, except Jim Weston, he cared to meet. Prosper Dean, however, saw nothing but the open door. The one dearer to him than life, all he had in the world, was lying there, so hospital rules and orders meant nothing to him. As he passed into the room, Mr. Rayson stepped forward just in time to see Prosper Dean bending over the bed, and the girl's arms entwining his neck in a fond embrace. Then he understood.

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## CHAPTER XXIV

### SUSPENSE

With a mingled feeling of anxiety and thankfulness, Mr. Dean looked at his daughter, anxious as to her condition, and thankful that he had found her. For a few seconds neither spoke, satisfied to be with each other. Then seating himself by the bed, Mr. Dean held Jacynth's left hand in his. And in that gentle pressure the girl felt the great love in his heart.

"Oh, father," she whispered, "I am so glad you have come. Will you ever forgive me?"

"There is nothing to forgive, dear. I think I understand."

"You do! You know why I came to the city?"

"Yes."

"And I could do nothing to save Kent. I know the ship has sailed and taken him away."

"You must not worry yourself now, Jacynth. Kent will be all right. He is young and strong, so can look after himself. You must think of yourself. Do you suffer any pain?"

"Not much now. But I am so tired, that is all. My head aches some."

"Rest, then. A sleep will do you good."

"But you will not leave me, father? I want you by my side when I wake."

"I shall be near you all the time. But here comes the nurse, so I must go."

When Mr. Dean left the room, he walked for a while up and down the corridor, waiting to return to Jacynth. Ere long the nurse came and told him that his daughter was resting as comfortably as could be expected, and that it was best for her to be alone for a while that she might sleep.

"Is she seriously injured?" he anxiously inquired.

"I do not think she is. There are no bones broken. But she is quite badly bruised, and her head troubles her. With rest and care she should soon recover."

With his mind somewhat relieved by this information, Mr. Dean left the Hospital to seek a restaurant. He was very tired after the exertions and worries of the night. It all seemed to him like a terrible dream, and as he ate his toast and sipped his coffee, he reviewed all that had taken place. How troubled he had been when Jacynth did not arrive home. He had paced up and down the verandah, and had walked several times down the road in the hope of meeting her. Then when she did not return, he had mounted Camilla and sped to Jim Weston's. There he could learn nothing, except that the Westons had seen the girl riding by before dark, and they had thought it strange that she did not call as was her usual custom. Mr. Dean hastened in the direction Jacynth had taken. He stopped at the shipyard, and what Mr. Whipple told him about Lank Jukins increased his uneasiness. It was only when he arrived at Creek Corner did he receive full information from the store-keeper. That had sent him down the road as fast as his horse could take him. But it was a long journey, and it was late when he reached the city. But of his daughter he could learn nothing. He stabled his horse and made his way to the waterfront, as he believed Jacynth would most likely visit the place in her effort to save Kent Rayson. But all in vain. He walked from dock to dock, accosting everyone he met, hoping to obtain some information. Two or three men, hardened wharf-rats they were, grinned at him. They could not keep track of all the girls who came there looking for some one, so they said. These words gave him a feeling of great fear lest Jacynth, in seeking for her lover, had been seized by some creatures who infested the docks at night, and had carried her away to a terrible fate. He left the place in despair, went to the heart of the city and sat down upon a bench in the large square. He was tired and bewildered. Here he remained for some time. What did all his philosophy amount to now in the face of this trouble? The magic of Prospero was well enough in a tale of imagination, but in the stern reality of life it was nothing more than a glowing mirage in the desert. He had tried his best to practice the art of subtle power, but now he knew it was useless. He was unable to check evil designs, and in this his great need he was powerless to do anything. He was nothing but a

weak human being, after all.

The coolness of the night pierced him, and he shivered. He rose to his feet, left the square and walked along the street leading to the place where he had stabled his horse. This suggested to him other stables. Perhaps in one of them he would find Midnight, and learn something about his daughter. The horse must be somewhere in the city. And what had become of Lad? He would stay with Jacynth, and defend her, if necessary. Yes, he would visit the stables.

This idea gave him new hope, so during the rest of the morning he went from place to place. At several he found men on duty who gave him the same discouraging reply. Some of the stables were locked, so he determined to return to them later.

Morning broke fresh and fair as he continued his search. The sun rose upon the weary man as he at last made his way back to where Camilla was stabled. The two men in charge looked with pitying eyes upon the distracted father, but could give him no assistance. They would make inquiries during the day, so they told him. This was cold comfort to Mr. Dean. What was he to do? He would not leave the city until he had found Jacynth. He would rest a while here, and then take Camilla and visit all the other stables. They would be open now. Midnight must be in one of them without any doubt.

During the next hour he rode from stable to stable, but everywhere he received the same answer as before. He was about to give up his search for Midnight, when at the last stable he visited he saw a man reading the morning paper while his horse was being harnessed. Presently he turned to the stableman.

"I see by this paper that a girl was thrown from her horse last night at South Bay," he said. "She is now in the Hospital, but no one knows who she is."

Mr. Dean overheard these words, and trembling with excitement, he asked permission to see the article. Hurriedly he read, and then knew that the girl was his own daughter. There could be no mistake, for the description in the paper was all he needed. He did stare, however, at the name of the man who had found her. Timothy Rayson! How strange that he, of all men, should have rescued Jacynth.

He thought of all these things as he sat in the restaurant. How surprised Old Thistle would be when he learned the name of the girl he had saved. And he would soon know, for it would be impossible to keep Jacynth's name out of the paper. He did not want to meet Rayson, and yet he must thank him. How would he be received? he wondered. Anyway, he would go to him as soon as he could. He would act the man, no matter what his enemy might do. If he did not thank the one who had saved his daughter, how could he keep the banner flying at Storm King Valley?

Mr. Dean spent the rest of the day with Jacynth. He was not permitted to talk much with her, so he sat by her side, holding her hand in his while she slept. Often he dozed in his chair, but always woke when Jacynth stirred. Dear as she had always been to him, she seemed more precious now than ever as he watched her lying before him. How like her mother she looked when he had first met her. He had lost her through the cruel deviltry of the very man who had rescued her only child. Strange that he had now appeared again. And it was for the sake of his son that this trouble had come upon Jacynth. What was the meaning of it all? Timothy Rayson had dealt him a terrible blow in the past, and was that same sinister influence to take from him his only child? How badly Jacynth was injured by her fall the doctors could not tell. No bones were broken, but the shock to her whole system had been severe, and her head had been hurt. He looked at her, and his whole heart went out to her in loving affection. How he longed to see her once again at the Valley, happy and buoyant as she used to be.

About the middle of the afternoon Jacynth aroused from sleep, and feeling her father's hand holding hers, she smiled.

"Have you been sitting here all day?" she asked.

"Most of the time. How do you feel now?"

"Quite comfortable. I had a beautiful dream, and thought I was back home in the garden among the flowers."

"Your dream will soon come true, let us hope. When you are strong enough, we shall go back and be so happy there again."

"That will be nice, father. But I shall miss some one. You know whom I mean. But now he is far away, and I shall never see him again. Has the *Roaring Bluenose* sailed?"



"She went out on the tide last night, I was told."

Jacynth sighed, closed her eyes, and remained silent. Her father's heart was heavy. Never again, he knew, would their life be what it had been in the Valley. She would not be happy there. It was but natural, and he understood the heart of youth and the fire of love.

Towards evening the nurse informed Mr. Dean that there was a man downstairs who wished to see him. Telling Jacynth that he would be back as soon as possible, he kissed her and left the room.



# CHAPTER XXV

## FACE TO FACE

Downstairs Mr. Dean found a man standing by the office desk. He was a stranger to him, and he wondered what he wanted.

"Do you wish to see me?" he asked.

"I suppose so, sir. Are you Mither Dean?"

"I am, so what can I do for you?"

"Nothin' fer me, begorra. But I'm here to tell ye about the horse that threw its rider last night at South Bay. You're the gintleman that owns 'im, I've been towld, an' the girl is a daughter of yours. Is that so, sir? I'm Pat Malone, an' work fer Mither Rayson. It was 'im that sint me."

"Where is the horse now?" Mr. Dean asked.

"In the stable, av coorse."

"What stable? I visited nearly all the stables in the city, but could not find him."

"Faith, sir, but this is a private one, behint the hoose where Mither Rayson lives."

"I see."

Mr. Dean turned and looked thoughtfully out through a large window on his right. So Tim Rayson had charge of Midnight! More and more the man who had injured him was coming into his life. Most likely he would meet him if he went to see the horse.

"Sit down, Mr. Malone," he ordered. "I wish to ask you something."

"I haven't time, sir. Mither Rayson towld me to come straight back, an' he'll kick up a divil av a fuss if I stay too long."

"I will go with you, so do not worry. I shall keep you only a few minutes. Take that chair, and I shall sit by your side. There, that's better than standing. Tell me, now, about last night, and how you happened to find my daughter."

"There's not much to tell, sir. I was drivin' Mither Rayson in from up river whin we found her. It was dark, an' we heard nothin' until we heard a dog growl. We had a lantern, so by its light we saw a horse standin' in the road. I got out to examine, an' found a girrl lyin' there with a big dog by her side, showin' his teeth an' snarlin'. That's about all I can tell ye. But we had a divil av a time to keep that dog from tearin' us to pieces while we were gettin' the poor girrl into the waggon. We led the horse, an' he was so lame we had to drive very slow."

"And you took my daughter right to the Hospital?"

"Indade we did, sir, an' the poor thing knew nothin' about it. I couldn't git her out av me mind all night. An' neither could Mither Rayson. He towld me so this mornin'."

"Does Mr. Rayson know who she is?"

"He didn't at first. But he must av found out when he came here airly, fer he sint me to tell ye about the horse."

"So Mr. Rayson was here this morning?"

"Sure he was. Didn't ye see 'im?"

Mr. Dean made no reply, but rose to his feet.

"Come, Mr. Malone, let us go. I want to see the horse. And where is the dog?"

"With the horse, av coorse. He won't lave his frind, but jist stays nearby with a sad look in thim big eyes of his. It makes

me heart ache to see 'im."

Together they hurried along the street, and ere long entered an alleyway leading into a back yard.

"There's the dog now, sir," Pat said. "He hasn't moved from that corner since he came here."

As Mr. Dean approached, he gave a low whistle and called the dog by name. Lad started, pricked up his ears, gave one keen look, and then with a bark of joy leaped forward, sprang upon his master and licked his face and hands. Only with difficulty could Mr. Dean maintain his footing at the noble animal's onset.

"Down, down, Lad," he ordered, as he struggled to free himself from the dog's wild caresses. "You're glad to see me, I know, but don't be so crazy."

Lad, however, was so frantic with joy that after Mr. Dean had freed himself from his embrace, he continued to bark, howl, and whine in the most excited manner. Suddenly he ceased, and a remarkable transformation took place. His barks and yelps of joy changed, and low growls came from his snarling lips. Astonished, Mr. Dean turned quickly around, and at once saw Timothy Rayson limping into the yard. He could tell at a glance that he was angry at the noise, so stepped forward to explain the cause. But Mr. Rayson forestalled him.

"What in h— is the meaning of this racket?" he roared. "Is this a wild-beast show?"

"Faith, sir, it's only the dog," Pat hastened to explain. "He's glad to see his masther."

Rayson glared at Mr. Dean. He showed no sign of recognition, but treated him as if he were a complete stranger.

"Is that your dog?" he demanded.

"He is. Have you any doubt about it, Tim Rayson? You know me, I guess, and why I am here. I want to thank you for saving my daughter last night."

He then stepped forward and held out his hand, which Rayson ignored, while his lip curled in contempt.

"Oh, I know you, all right. Take your d— animals out of this. The sooner you make yourself scarce the better for all concerned. What business had your daughter on the road alone last night, giving decent people so much trouble? Has she been in the habit of coming to the city under cover of darkness? A fine daughter, and how proud you must be of her."

These words uttered so fiercely and with such venomous insinuation, stung Mr. Dean to the quick. His body trembled, and only with the greatest effort could he control himself. His first impulse was to knock the sneering man down. He restrained himself, however, and when he spoke his voice was calm.

"Your words are cruel and uncalled for, Tim Rayson. My daughter has never been in the habit of riding to the city alone at night. This time she did it to rescue a young man she loves."

"H'm, a fine excuse, that," Rayson retorted. "And you are fool enough to believe her, I suppose?"

"I am. And if you knew my daughter as well as I do, you would believe her, too."

"But did you know what she was coming for? Did she tell you?"

"She did not. She was away from home at the time, and when she received news of the young man's peril, she could not very well return to notify me. She only thought of that young man and his danger."

"A likely story! And what happened to her lover? Some worthless scamp, I suppose, who got into a scrape and sent for his sweetheart. I am not at all interested in such a silly yarn."

"But you should be, Tim, for that young man is your son."

The change that took place in Mr. Rayson's eyes was startling. The expression of sneering contempt and indifference vanished, giving place to amazement and concern.

"My son!" he gasped. "Which one? Matt?"

"No, Kent. He has been shanghaied, and is now at sea on board the *Roaring Bluenose*. My daughter tried to reach the city in time to save him. That was why she was on the road last night."

Mr. Rayson stared straight before him, bewildered.

"My son shanghaied! And who did this deed?" he demanded.

"I know but little about it, Tim. It was Lank Jukins, a worthless fellow, who boasted about it last night at Creek Corner. He did it out of revenge."

"Ah, so that's the reason! I understand it all now. I wondered why Kent was so anxious to go up river. It was your daughter he was after, eh? And Lank didn't like it. Where is he? I shall settle with the rascal, and make an example of him to all such devils. By G—, he shall know what I can do."

He paused and looked sternly at Mr. Dean.

"But it wasn't all his fault, I see. It was your daughter's. She left Lank when my son came your way. That's just like girls these days, always running after—"

Rayson was suddenly interrupted as Mr. Dean's right hand fell upon his shoulder with such a heavy grip that he winced with pain. His face became livid with rage as he struggled to free himself.

"Take your hands off," he roared, "or by G—, I'll knock you down. Pat! Pat! Where are you? Why don't you help me against this brute?"

But Pat was in no mood to come to his master's assistance. He was thoroughly enjoying the scene, pleased to see Mr. Dean doing what he had often been tempted to do himself. He merely stood there, his mouth expanded in a broad grin, and his eyes sparkling with delight. What a story he would have to tell his friends!

Slowly Mr. Dean's grip relaxed, and his hand dropped to his side. A vision of a banner floating above a great pine came to him. Courage! Yes, the courage of a man; not the rage of a beast. Courage to speak the truth boldly when necessary, and not revenge. The courage of self-control.

"Look here, Tim Rayson, I want to tell you how mistaken you are about my daughter. Lank Jukins was never anything to her. He is nothing but a contemptible creature, and she has always despised him. She was living happily with me when your son came to Storm King Valley. She took compassion on him when he sprained his foot in the woods. It was love with them at first sight, so it was but natural that she should throw discretion to the wind and do what she could to rescue your son, so do not put the whole blame upon her. If there is anyone to blame it is yourself, Tim. You sent your son to serve notice upon Peter Horn that you are going to take his fine block of timber. In fact, you are planning to steal it from that worthy man, because you have no right to it."

"That's a d— lie," Rayson roared. "Those trees belong to me, and I shall have them. Who will stop me?"

"Jim Weston. Have you forgotten him?"

Mr. Dean smiled as he noticed the startled expression that came into Mr. Rayson's eyes.

"You understand, I see, Tim. That is well."

"Jim Weston! Jim Weston! How can he stop me?"

"That remains to be seen. Jim met Larry Jagger."

"Larry Jagger! Why, he's dead."

"How do you know that?"

"I saw it in the paper, of course."

"I suppose so. He was one of your men, and it was only natural that you should take notice of his death."

These words spoken so quietly sent a feeling of fear into Mr. Rayson's heart. He looked searchingly at the man standing

before him, as if he would read his mind to find out how much he knew. He then scowled.

"Yes, yes, Larry worked for me. He was no good. But he's dead now, and the world is well rid of him."

"Maybe he's not as dead as you imagine, Tim. Jim Weston met him, remember. Think that over."

Leaving the staring and speechless man, Mr. Dean turned and walked out of the yard, closely followed by Lad, who had been puzzled at his master's neglect of him. The shades of night had now deepened, and the street-lamps were lighted. Mr. Dean was anxious to get back to the Hospital to see Jacynth. He had been away too long already. His encounter with Rayson had detained him.

Suddenly he remembered that he had not seen Midnight. He stopped and was about to retrace his steps, when a peculiar noise on the street startled him. He hurried to the sidewalk just in time to see two great horses, mad with terror, dash furiously by, dragging a broken waggon which was bounding from side to side. Then a short distance ahead a woman's wild screams of fear were heard as the horses sped on their way unchecked. Seeing the crowd which had rushed to the scene, he hastened forward, and presently saw a woman kneeling upon the sidewalk, clasping a small child to her breast.

"A brave deed, that," he heard one man say to another.

"What is the matter?" Mr. Dean asked.

"A child was nearly killed by that runaway team."

"How was it saved?"

"A man sprang out and rescued it from under the very hoofs of those horses. I never saw anything like it. I was sure that both man and child would be killed."

"Who is the man?"

"No one seems to know. He placed the child on the sidewalk, and disappeared. It was the bravest thing I ever saw."

Mr. Dean watched the woman as she embraced her little one. Then lifting it in her arms she left the place, accompanied by several sympathetic persons.

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# CHAPTER XXVI

## STORM IN THE NIGHT

The glad smile of welcome that Jacynth gave her father when he entered her room was like a gleam of sunshine after stormy clouds. It was just what he needed to calm his agitated mind after his trying ordeal with Timothy Rayson.

"How are you feeling now?" he asked, as he sat down by her side and clasped the hand she held out to him.

"Better, I think, but tired."

"You had a good sleep?"

"Oh, yes, and I dreamed that I was home among the flowers, with you reading upon the verandah. Everything was so peaceful, just like it used to be before—"

She ceased abruptly, while an expression of sadness came into her eyes. Her father understood, and pressed her hand more firmly.

"There, there, dear. We shall go home soon, and be happy together again."

"I hope so."

A sudden gust of wind rattled the window, causing her to start.

"Is a storm coming, father?"

"I think so. But you are safe here, so do not worry."

"But it will be very rough at sea. The ships will have a hard time, and some of them may be wrecked."

"They have great captains who know their business. Sailors do not mind a storm when it is not too severe. I have heard them say that they enjoy it."

"Perhaps so. But it must be terrible for one who is not a sailor."

"Are you thinking of Kent, dear?"

"I am. He is always in my mind. And I was too late to save him!"

"But you did what you could, remember."

"That is no comfort, father. And now he is gone, carried away on that ship, and I may never see him again."

"Oh, he will be all right. He is young and the experience will do him no harm. And, besides, his father will see that he is brought back. Just as soon as the *Roaring Bluenose* reaches the other side, Kent will be returned on the first ship bound for this port. He will have a great story to tell you of his adventure."

"Maybe so," and the girl sighed. "That is my only hope."

Just then the nurse entered, so Mr. Dean left after kissing his daughter and speaking a word of cheer. He found Lad waiting for him at the front door, and together they walked along the street towards the heart of the city. Mr. Dean was tired and longed for rest. He would go to a hotel where he and Lad would be comfortable.

Reaching at length the Royal Arms, he entered, signed the register, and asked the clerk for a room.

"I want my dog with me," he said.

"Dogs are not allowed in this hotel," was the curt reply.

"But this one will be quiet, and do no harm."

"Maybe not, but I have my orders. You will have to go elsewhere. The Fundy will take you both, most likely. They do not mind fleas there."

A feeling of deep anger came into Mr. Dean's heart at these cutting words. He said nothing, however, as he had to step aside to give way to a man who had lurched up to the desk, and in a loud voice was asking for a room. It was quite evident that he was under the influence of liquor. He was unsteady, and his words were maudlin.

"G—give me a g—good r—room, an' b—be d— q—quick about it," he ordered. "I'm s—shleepy."

The clerk was all attention, and obeyed without any hesitation. When the drunken man had staggered away, muttering and cursing, Mr. Dean again stepped up to the desk, and looked sternly at the clerk.

"You refuse to give a clean decent dog a lodging for the night, and yet you allow any creature in the form of a man to pollute your place. Come, Lad," and he turned to the dog, "we shall go. You're too much of a gentleman, anyway, for a place like this."

Leaving the clerk staring after him in amazement and anger, Mr. Dean left the hotel and went to the Fundy situated near the waterfront. No objection was made here to the dog, so a comfortable room was given them. Mr. Dean patted Lad's head.

"We have found a refuge at last, eh, boy?"

The dog thrust his nose into his master's hand, and thumped his tail upon the floor. His big brown eyes expressed the deep loyalty and affection of his heart.

"To turn a dog like you away from a hotel is downright injustice," Mr. Dean continued. "Yet a drunken brute is admitted and made welcome. And that seems to be largely the way with the world. Perhaps you don't think or worry about it, and that shows you are superior to human beings. I wish I had such a heart as yours, Lad, a heart so simple and yet so great that it is almost divine. When I compare you with myself and others, I feel ashamed. But, there, I know you do not care a rap about this, and you wonder, no doubt, what my talk is all about."

Without undressing, Mr. Dean stretched himself upon the bed, and drew a large quilt over his body, while Lad curled up contentedly on the floor by his side. He was very tired, and it was so restful here. He closed his eyes, and for a while thought over what had happened in such a short time. His only anxiety was about Jacynth. He was quite confident that she would recover from her accident and go home with him in a few days. But how would she endure the life at Storm King Valley? Would the place be distasteful to her? He was afraid so, and this worried him.

Thinking thus, he fell asleep. He woke with a start, and sat up in bed. At once he knew what had aroused him. A furious storm was abroad, shaking the house and driving sheets of rain against the windows. There were momentary lulls, when it seemed as if the tempest was pausing for a greater onslaught. This was one of the worst storms Mr. Dean had ever experienced, and he thought of the ships at sea, especially the *Roaring Bluenose*. And what of Jacynth? She would be awake, most likely, and terribly anxious. He longed to go to comfort her by his presence. But that would not be advisable at such an hour of the night. He saw it was three o'clock, and the storm might beat itself out by morning. He would then go to the Hospital. Sleep had fled from his eyes, and as he stood at the window watching the rain-splashed pavements and the few flickering street-lights, Lad came quietly to his side. Mr. Dean laid his hand affectionately upon the head of the noble animal.

"You understand, don't you, boy? If you could speak I know you would tell me that you are worried about Jacynth, too. But I must get you home as soon as I can. To-morrow, perhaps, we shall go. You are needed at the Valley to look after things there, and guard the place."

For some time Mr. Dean remained at the window, lost in thought. If he possessed but a portion of Old Prospero's magical power he could calm this storm. He smiled a little sadly at this idea. It was one thing to perform imaginary wonders in a play, but it was altogether different in actual life. Nature and human beings could not be thus influenced. The storms which swept the world and the souls of men had to beat themselves out for better or for worse. What could one man do against such fierce outbursts? Nothing, so it seemed to him this night. He had tried, but his efforts had been all in vain.

Much depressed, he turned and lighted the gas. He needed the brightness to cheer him, a smoke, too, would do him good.

He fumbled in his pockets for his pipe and tobacco. He had not smoked since leaving the Valley, so was uncertain where he had put them. Presently his hand touched a little book, one of the small volumes he usually carried with him to read while riding along the road, or when resting from his work in the woods. This was one of his favorites, *The Life and Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*. It was just what he needed now, for the story and writings of that noble Roman Emperor had always inspired and thrilled his soul. When he had filled and lighted his pipe, he opened the book, and was soon deep in the great thoughts contained therein. Although he had read the words many times before, they came to him with a new meaning now. Occasionally he paused in his reading and meditated upon the remarkable life that ancient Roman led. In a debased and brutal age, he kept the nobility of his mind and soul intact. Surrounded by troubles, in the midst of conflicts, on the field of battle, he never lowered his manhood. He rose above all outward circumstances because of the loftiness of his soul. And in this manner he conquered more than his enemies of flesh and blood.

He read again the words of the Emperor's biographer,

Were men contemptible? It was all the more reason why he himself should be noble. Were men petty, and malignant, and passionate, and unjust? In that proportion were they all the more marked out for pity and tenderness, and in that proportion was he bound to the utmost of his ability to show himself great, and forgiving, and calm, and true. Thus Marcus turns his very bitterest experience to gold, and from the vileness of others, which depressed his lonely life, so far from suffering himself to be embittered as well as saddened, he only draws fresh lessons of humanity and love.... The best way of avenging thyself is not to become like the wrong-doer.

Mr. Dean meditated long upon these words, and others of a similar nature. They braced his soul, giving him a new courage.

"And that man was not a Christian!" he mused. "If he held and practised such lofty ideals, should not I, too, rise superior to all outward things who have the example and inspiration of the Master of Galilee? That old Roman rebukes me, and makes me ashamed."

The tempest subsided at the break of day, and when Mr. Dean went downstairs the rain had ceased. In the smoking-room several men were discussing the storm.

"The harbor is crowded with vessels which sought shelter during the night," one man was saying. "I'm afraid we shall soon hear of serious damage at sea and along the coast. This is the worst storm we have had for some time."

Mr. Dean thought of the *Roaring Bluenose*, and how anxious Jacynth must be. After breakfast he would go at once to see her, early though it was.

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## CHAPTER XXVII

### A PASSING GLEAM

The storm did not keep Timothy Rayson awake, for he had not been asleep, notwithstanding his broken slumber of the previous night. His meeting with Mr. Dean had brought back memories he wished to forget, and the stinging words of his former partner rankled in his soul. The more he thought about them as he tossed upon his bed, the more angry he became. He had not the slightest admiration for the man he had so basely treated, but an unreasonable feeling of envy and resentment. He hated him for his patience and courage in adversity, and he envied him for having a daughter like the one he had seen for a few seconds at the Hospital, while he himself had two sons who spurned him. And he resented, as well, the words of rebuke to which he had been forced to listen at the stable door.

The storm was a fitting accompaniment to his wretchedness and loneliness. He thought of Kent out upon the sea, but it brought him no sense of anxiety. His only worry was about his own ship somewhere along the coast carrying lumber to New York. His main hope was that the captain had either reached his destination, or had found shelter in some harbor. That ship was of more importance to him than a son. One meant money; the other disappointment.

As the tempest increased in fury, there came suddenly into his mind a vision of the Gipsy girl he had met years before. He recalled the very words she had uttered, and the expression in her eyes. Why should he think of her two nights in succession? he asked himself. He had cursed her, and called her a black-headed witch. He remembered how her eyes had flashed with anger, and her scathing reply. He had scorned her words then, and had cursed her. But was her prophecy coming true in that girl lying in the Hospital? And she was Prosper Dean's daughter! The thought was almost more than he could endure. There was something mysterious about all this. He seemed to be surrounded by unseen influences over which he had no control. The enemies of darkness were in league to torment him without mercy. The storm outside was less to this unhappy man than the one raging in his soul.

Towards morning he fell into a fitful slumber, so he was later than usual for breakfast. He was in a surly mood, and answered his housekeeper's cheery greeting with a growl.

"Did the storm keep you awake, sir?" she inquired.

"No," was the curt reply.

"It was terrible, and I was afraid it disturbed you. Here is the paper, sir. It says that the harbor is full of vessels which came in during the night for shelter."

The woman laid the paper before him, and went out to the kitchen. As Mr. Rayson ate his toast and bacon and gulped down his coffee, he merely glanced at the headlines. He was not interested enough to read any more.

"Where is Matt?" he asked as the housekeeper returned to the table.

"I don't know, sir. He's not in his room."

"He isn't! Out again all night. My, my!"

He pushed back his chair, and rose to his feet.

"I'm going down to the office. When Matt comes in, tell him I want to see him at once. I'll put up no longer with his deviltry."

At that instant the door-bell rang. The housekeeper hurried away, and soon returned with a letter, which she handed to her master. Mr. Rayson glared at it, and noticed that it contained no stamp. But he recognized Matt's handwriting. As he tore open the envelope and read the contents, his hand trembled, and he scowled.

"D— him!" he roared. "He can stay there, for all I care. I won't help him."

Throwing the letter upon the table, he limped heavily out of the room. When he had gone, Mrs. Brown picked it up and read:

Father,

I'm in jail. Got mixed up in a racket last night. Get me out of this hole, and I'll go straight after this,

MATT.

"Ah, I expected something like this," was the woman's comment. "He's been headed for it a long time. I pity him, though, when he meets his father."

When he reached his office, Mr. Rayson unlocked the door and entered. It was a small stuffy place near the waterfront. He glared around the room, and then crossed over to the window facing the harbor. From here he could see the ships that had come in during the night. To behold those vessels which had been battered by the gale, some with sails torn, and others with topmasts gone, was a sight to stir almost any heart. But it had no effect upon the lone watcher. He was thinking of Matt.

"Serves him right," he muttered. "He can stay in jail. I'll not move a finger to get him out. It may teach the rascal a lesson. So this is what I've come to! One son in jail, and the other shanghaied! Good Lord! Did ever any man have such troubles! Women! Confound them! I got Matt out of one scrape with that Jukins girl. She bewitched him with her black hair, snapping eyes, and painted face. And now he's in trouble, most likely with some other witch. And the same has happened to Kent. He's been ensnared, too. But, but—"

He ceased suddenly, turned and limped up and down the room.

"But that girl's different," he continued. "Yes, she's different, that's evident from the glimpse I had of her. She's Prosper Dean's daughter, so comes from good stock. I hate her father, but he's not low-down like the Jukins tribe. He's clean through and through, and that's why I hate him. My God! Is that why?"

He stared again out upon the harbor, but he did not see the ships. It was the past which had risen before him, dark and menacing. And through it all was a girl lying in the Hospital, reaching out arms of welcome to her father. He raised a hand to his face, as if to blot out the vision. But all in vain, for he still saw the girl as plainly as ever.

Just then the door opened, and Pat Murphy entered.

"Do ye need me today, sir?" he asked. "I've brought the horse along, thinkin' maybe ye'd be wantin' to go somewheres."

Rayson turned and glared at his servant.

"Drive me to the Hospital. That's where I want to go."

"All right, sir. But I thought maybe ye'd be wantin' to go to the jail."

"So you've heard about Matt, have you?"

"Sure I've heard. It's all around town."

"What was the trouble?"

"A woman, av coorse. A bad mix-up with some young bloods, rum, fightin', an' hell let loose."

"I thought it was something like that," and Mr. Rayson sighed. "But never mind about Matt. I'm done with him. Take me to the Hospital."

Jacynth was talking with the nurse as Mr. Rayson appeared at the door of her room. She had asked how long she would have to stay in the Hospital.

"Only a day or two," the nurse replied. "You are getting along well. It is a wonder, though, that you were not killed."

Jacynth made no reply, for at that instant she caught sight of Mr. Rayson watching her. His sudden appearance startled her, causing the nurse to look quickly around. She, too, was surprised.

"Are you looking for some one?" she asked.

"I am, and I see her there. May I speak to her?"

As the nurse hesitated, Jacynth told the visitor to enter. She did not know him, but believed he had something important to say. Rayson stepped at once to her side.

"How are you feeling this morning, Miss?"

"Much better, thank you. Won't you sit down?"

"I prefer to stand. I just wanted to see you, to make sure that you're improving. I didn't have much hope for you the night I found you on the road."

Jacynth's eyes opened wide with interest and surprise.

"Oh, you're Mr. Rayson! I am so glad you have come, as I want to thank you for saving me."

"Umph! Don't speak about that. Where is your father?"

"He went home today, but will be back in the morning. You know him, I believe."

"Yes, yes, I know him, all right. He did wrong to let you come to the city alone at night. Yes, very wrong."

"But he didn't know anything about it. I had no time to tell him. Do you know why I came?"

"I guess so. It was a foolish thing to do. How could you save my son?"

"I thought I could. But I was too late, and now he's gone. You must be very anxious about him, Mr. Rayson."

"Why should I? He thinks nothing of me, but wasted his time roaming out over the country, painting pictures, and, and—"

"Visiting me," Jacynth added with a smile. "Is that what you intended to say? He was not doing any harm, and you cannot imagine what his visits meant to me. He is so good and noble."

"Umph! All girls think that about young men. They don't know them as well as I do."

"But you must surely know that Kent is different. Did he ever give you any trouble?"

"No," was the fierce reply. "He's not like Matt, I acknowledge. He's like his mother. She was always thinking about music, flowers, pictures, and other useless things."

"Are they useless, Mr. Rayson?"

"What good are they? You can't live by such things. They won't bring you in money."

"I suppose not. But we need more in life than money. Are you happy?"

"Happy! No. How can I be happy with sons who care nothing for me?"

"Did you ever give them a chance?"

"Did I! Why, I've slaved for years to make them happy."

"How?"

"By building up a business, of course. I have toiled night and day to provide for them, and look how they serve me."

"But did you give them your love, sympathy, and companionship? Were you a real father to them, as my father is to me? They needed more than money."

Mr. Rayson stared at the girl, and then sat down upon the chair by the side of the bed. The old fierce defiant expression disappeared from his eyes as he looked at the girl. Her words had struck deep into his soul. Never before had any one spoken to him in such a calm straightforward manner. Jacynth felt that she had offended him.

"Please forgive me, Mr. Rayson. Why should I say such things to you? I am only a girl, so may not be able to

understand."

"You have not offended me, Miss. But no one ever spoke to me like this before. I must go now. I hope I have not tired you."

"Not at all. Come again soon," and Jacynth held out her hand.

As Mr. Rayson took it in his, looked at her smiling face, and clear sincere eyes, a peculiar feeling of rest came upon him. This room seemed like a haven of peace, and this girl like a being from another world which was unfamiliar to him. And now he would have to go back to his old life! He hardly knew what he said as he left her and went downstairs. Here he found Pat sitting in the waggon smoking. He climbed in without a word.

"An' where is it ye want to go, sir?" Pat asked.

"Where? Where? To the jail, of course. Where else should I go?"

Pat grinned knowingly as he wheeled the horse around and headed him for the street. They had gone about half-way when they came to a place where carts and waggons were crowded together as they passed one another. In the midst of this confusion a loaded coal cart became entangled with their waggon, causing them considerable annoyance. The driver shouted and cursed. He declared it was not his fault, as he had the right of way. Mr. Rayson shook his fist at the man, and threatened him with the law.

"Why didn't you watch out where you were going?" he roared. "You were asleep, you confounded idiot."

Cleared at last from the tangle, Pat was about to turn into the side-street leading to the jail, when Mr. Rayson clutched him by the arm.

"Where are you going?" he demanded.

"To the jail, av coorse. That's where ye towld me to go, sir."

"Did I! Well, I've changed my mind. Take me back to the office."

He was Old Thistle again as the world knew him. The influence of his short meeting with Jacynth Dean had passed like a ray of sunshine hidden by black clouds.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII

### PUNISHMENT

All along the road leading out of the city Mr. Dean saw evidences of the havoc wrought by the storm during the night. Branches were broken from trees, while here and there a fir, spruce, or pine lay prostrate upon the ground. Two or three had fallen across the road, and over these Camilla had to step with some difficulty.

It was near noon when Mr. Dean left the shore road and entered upon the narrow one leading to Storm King Valley. Here the damage had not been so great, as the trees consisted of a growth of small hardwood, chiefly birch and maple. They did not present the same rigid resistance to the wind as did the softwood trees, so instead of breaking, they bent their tops before the furious onset. Although they swayed and beat about in wild confusion, their resilience saved them, so when the storm was over they stood practically unharmed. All this Mr. Dean noticed. He was glad to be back again among such familiar scenes. It was a relief to be out of the city with its noise and rank odors, to be in the silence of the forest, and to inhale the wholesome perfumes of uncontaminated nature.

During the journey from the city to the Valley road Lad had kept close to Camilla's heels. But when near home, and on familiar ground, he became suddenly transformed, and raced here and there after birds, squirrels, and rabbits. Only when passing Bill Jukins' house did he take his position once more at the horse's heels to be in readiness to protect his master from the mongrel cur which was generally lying in wait. It came out, but this time contented itself with savage barks when it saw the guarding collie's bristling mane and menacing teeth. He had experienced those same teeth on several other occasions, so did not desire another encounter.

Mr. Dean paid no attention to the faces at the windows, but hastened by, anxious to get out of sight of the building and its wretched occupants. He tried to calm the anger in his heart at Lank's cowardly deed which had caused so much trouble and worry. He knew it was not right that the villain should go unpunished, but he did not know how it could be accomplished. There seemed to be no legal course that could be taken, as the shanghaiing of men was a common occurrence, and little thought of it. So Lank, most likely, would go free to strut around boasting about what he had done.

At the Weston place no one was to be seen. It was evident, however, that Jim had been busy at his new house, for it was all boarded in, the roof shingled, and the window-frames inserted. It would soon be ready to be occupied, and this pleased him, for it showed that Jim had settled down to steady work.

Entering Storm King Valley a scene of peace and beauty met his eyes. The whole hillside was a blaze of glory from summit to base. The maple trees were beginning to change their green summer colors for the more brilliant ones of autumn. Even now some of them were flaming like scarlet banners. But the pines, firs, and spruces remained the same. How often had he watched such a scene with Jacynth by his side. It had always been a joy to him to see her responsiveness to the beautiful wonders of nature. Would it ever be the same again?

Reaching Val Haven, he surprised Martha and the Westons at dinner. They were delighted to see him, and as he joined them at the table, Mrs. Weston asked question after question about Jacynth.

"We have been terribly anxious," she said. "All kinds of reports reached us, until we did not know what to believe. The whole country is greatly stirred up over Jacynth's accident, and Lank's cowardly deed."

After Mr. Dean had set their minds at rest, he thanked the Westons for their kindness in staying with Martha.

"I hoped you would get the message I left at the store. There was no time to come home to tell you. I was so anxious about Jacynth that I started at once for the city."

"Sam Brown brought it," Mrs. Weston replied. "And he told us what happened in front of the store, and how Jacynth gave Lank such a thorough whipping. I wish I had been there."

This was startling news to Mr. Dean. But it was just like Jacynth to do such a thing. A feeling of pride came into his heart at the thought of her courage. It annoyed him to think that the punishing of Lank had to fall upon a girl. Why did not those young men take a hand in chastising the coward?

Martha had been observing her master ever since his arrival, and saw something the others did not notice.

"You are tired, sir," she said. "You should rest."

"Indeed I am, Martha. I have had hardly any sleep for two nights. And added to that, was the worry about Jacynth. I shall attend to Camilla and then go to my room."

During the meal Jim Weston had seldom spoken. As Mr. Dean rose from the table to go to the stable, he accompanied him.

"Did you see anything of Old Thistle?" he asked when they were out of the house.

"I did, and he has not changed in the least. We had a sharp set-to, and I reminded him of you and Larry Jagger."

"What about Larry? He's dead, isn't he?"

"Rayson said so."

"But did you know it before he told you?"

"I saw the account of his death in the paper. Look here, Jim, you have been keeping something from me. I am your best friend, so won't you tell me what is on your mind? I feel sure that you were called to the city to meet Larry when he was dying. He made a confession, didn't he? And the lawyer was there to take down his words and be a witness? Isn't that so?"

"My G—, Mr. Dean, how did you find all that out? I never told a soul, and I'm sure the lawyer didn't."

"Never mind how I found out. But I know that I was right in my surmise. Tell me, now, what are you going to do?"

"No, no. You will have to wait and see. I am off."

With that, he turned away and hastened towards the road like a man wishing to escape from some temptation that was about to overcome him. Mr. Dean watched him until he had disappeared, and then entered the stable. He knew that Jim had been on the point of telling him what he was planning to do, and had only resisted with a great effort. For the life of him, he could not imagine what scheme Jim had in mind. That it was some evil design against Rayson he had no doubt. But why was he waiting? And when would the blow fall? These thoughts troubled him, and he wondered what he could do to keep Jim from any rash action.

After he had attended to Camilla, he returned to the house, and went at once upstairs. Passing Jacynth's room, he looked in. It was just as she had left it, and everything reminded him of her. He almost imagined he could see her there nestled in that cosy-corner by the window reading one of her favorite books. He sighed as he moved away. Would she ever be happy there again? Would the room, with its pictures, books, and collection of nick-knacks she had gathered with such care, be of any more interest to her?

It was tea time when he came downstairs, greatly refreshed after his sleep. The Westons had gone home for the night, and he was glad, as he wished to be alone. If they were present, he would be forced to keep up a conversation. With Martha, however, it was different. She would not trouble him. He ate his meal in silence, and when he was through, he filled and lighted his pipe. Martha came to clear away the dishes.

"Never mind those things now," he told her. "Sit down and tell me what you have heard since I left."

"There is nothing more to tell, sir, than what you have already heard. The parson came twice, and several others. They were all very sorry about what happened to Jacynth, and anxious to hear how she was getting along. I could tell them very little."

"People are much excited over Lank's cowardly deed, so Jim told me. Is that so?"

"I believe it is true from what I have heard. The young men, especially, are enraged. But it is not likely they will do anything. It will all end in talk."

For some time they sat there discussing all that had taken place the last two days. Night shut down, and Martha lighted the lamp. Lad dozed by his master's side, his big form stretched full-length upon the floor. After a while Mr. Dean rose from the table, walked slowly up to his study, stood at the window and looked out into the blackness of the night. A

restless spirit was upon him. He entered Jacynth's room, stayed for a while there, and then went downstairs. Martha had finished clearing off the table, and was about to return to the kitchen, when she suddenly paused and listened, while a startled expression appeared upon her face. Lad, too, had heard something, for he lifted his head and growled.

"Did you hear that?" Martha asked Mr. Dean.

"Hear what?"

"A sound like a cry of distress. There it is again, and louder."

This time Mr. Dean heard it, and hurried to the door, followed by the woman and the dog. From the verandah they could hear the sounds more plainly, and they brought a chill into their hearts. They were wild shrieks, cries of terror, and distress, which rose and fell to long-drawn out wails. Lad growled fiercely, and only with difficulty could Mr. Dean restrain him from rushing forth into the night.

"I must get the lantern and find out the meaning of this," he declared. "It is a human being. No wild animal ever made such a noise as that. But it is silent now, coming to us, perhaps! This is most uncanny."

As he stared through the darkness, he saw a light, and as it drew nearer, he recognized the form of Jim Weston striding swiftly towards the house. He stopped at the foot of the verandah steps.

"Did you hear the cries?" he asked.

"We did," Mr. Dean replied, "and are greatly puzzled."

"And no wonder. I was at the barn when I heard them, so came as fast as I could and followed the thing, whatever it is, here. I felt you might need help. There it is again, down among the bushes."

"Let us go, Jim, and find out what it is. This suspense is getting on my nerves."

With Lad close at their heels, they walked cautiously from the house, crossed the road, and by the light of the lantern peered in every direction. At first they could see nothing. Ere long, however, a moan was heard on their right, and then some bushes moved. Advancing warily, they soon caught sight of a figure huddled upon the ground. But what it was they could not tell, so horrible did it appear. It resembled nothing but a grotesque and unearthly creature crouching there. Then they knew it was a human being, swathed from head to foot with a mass of feathers. At once they understood the meaning. It was Lank Jukins, who had been caught, tarred and feathered. He presented a terrible appearance, and his wild, blood-shot eyes staring through feathers on his face greatly increased the horrible spectacle.

"Come out of that," Jim ordered. "You've got what was coming to you, all right. But you can't stay there."

Instead of obeying, Lank shrank back, and emitted another shriek.

"Stop that," was the stern command. "We have come to help you, so hurry."

Seeing that it was useless to say anything more to the half-crazed fellow, both men stepped forward and laid hold of the repulsive creature. Their hands became covered with tar and feathers as they dragged him out from among the bushes across the road towards the stable. At first Lank struggled and yelled to be let alone. But when he found that his captors meant no harm to him, he became quiet and allowed himself to be led without any more resistance.

Then for over an hour Jim and Mr. Dean worked cleaning the feathers from Lank's body, and removing as much as they could of the tar with soap, warm water, and scrubbing-brush. With a pair of scissors Mr. Dean clipped his matted hair close to the scalp, washed his head and face, thus giving him somewhat the resemblance of a human being. He also brought some clothes from the house, which Lank gladly put on, for he was shivering, more now from the cold than from fear. This done, Mr. Dean stepped back, held up the lantern, and viewed him critically.

"There, we've done all we can for you, my boy. Go home, and behave yourself after this. You don't look any too good yet, but keep on washing, and in time you will get clear of the rest of the tar."

"No, no, I won't go home. Let me stay here," Lank pleaded. "Dad will kill me. I can sleep on the floor till mornin', and then I'll go away an' never come back."

"All right. Get some hay from the floor there, and make yourself a bed. You can wrap yourself up in one of those horse-blankets. Hurry."

When this had been done, and Lank was curled up in his make-shift bed, the men left him, after Mr. Dean had closed the door.

"Poor devil, I feel sorry for him," was Jim's comment as they stood for a few minutes near the verandah ere parting.

"So do I," Mr. Dean agreed. "He's had no chance in life. His father is really the one who should be tarred and feathered."

"You're right. And Bill's not the only one. Good-night, sir."





# CHAPTER XXIX

## THE COMFORT OF HOPE

Two days later Jacynth returned home. Mrs. Weston went to the city to accompany her on the river steamer, and Jim met them at the wharf. Mr. Dean came by the road, leading Midnight, who had made a rapid recovery. Except for a slight stiffness in his right foreleg, he was able to maintain a moderate pace by the side of Camilla.

It was a great relief to Jacynth to be back at the Valley, and to receive the affectionate attention of the faithful Martha. That evening as she sat in a big comfortable chair before a bright open wood-fire, she gave a sigh of relief.

"It is so nice to be here," she said. "How long it seems since I went away. Were you worried about me?" she asked Martha who was knitting nearby.

"Worried!" the worthy woman exclaimed. "I gave up worrying about you years ago, my dear. Why, I used to be on the verge of nervous prostration when you did so many wild and daring things. But as you came through them all with nothing more than torn clothes, bruised and scratched body, I decided not to make my life miserable on your account."

"And so you were sure that I would come out of this last scrape, all right," Jacynth laughingly replied. "But the fall I had from Midnight was worse than from any tree I ever climbed. I'm glad, though, you didn't worry. It shows how sensible you are."

Martha smiled a little as she paused to count the stitches in the stocking. She was not going to confess how terribly anxious she had been, walking the floor for hours night after night, in an agony of suspense. But with Jacynth safe at home, she was unwilling to acknowledge what she considered her weakness.

"I had other things to think about while you were away on your wild-goose chase," she continued. "People rode in from the shore to inquire after you, and those Horn children bothered me every day, and kept me back with my work."

"So Tom and Peggy came to ask about me? I must go and see them as soon as I can. I hope they will come again."

"Oh, they'll be here in the morning, most likely, before you are up. They were greatly interested in the baby, and were never tired watching it."

"Are Jim and his wife as fond of it as ever?"

"Indeed they are. They have taken the poor little thing to their hearts, and it has done them both good. It came into their lives just in time, and it is unconsciously performing a valuable service. Life is very strange."

During the next three days Jacynth's strength increased, and she spent some of the time in the garden and down by the brook. She liked to visit the place where she and Kent had first met, and to imagine that he was again with her. Every word he had uttered, and every glance he had given her, she remembered and cherished fondly in her heart. Visitors came to call upon her, and the Horn children arrived each morning without fail. Although she appreciated the kindness of all, she was always glad when they left, that she might be alone with her own thoughts.

Her father watched her closely, and read her mind better than she imagined. At times he noticed her standing among the flowers, or seated before the fire in the evening, with a far-away look in her eyes. He understood its meaning, and his heart responded with loving sympathy. He longed to comfort her, but felt helpless to do anything.

The third evening after her return home Jacynth and Martha were alone. Mr. Dean had gone for the mail. When he at length returned, he went upstairs before coming into the room where they were sitting. Jacynth thought nothing of this at first, but when he remained there so long, she wondered what had happened to him. Going out into the hall, she heard him pacing rapidly up and down the study.

"What is the matter, father?" she called. "Come down and tell me what it is."

"I shall be with you in a minute," was the reply.

Jacynth went back to the fire and waited. Her heart was beating fast, for only something of serious importance could

make her father so greatly agitated. And when he did arrive, carrying a newspaper in his hand, the expression upon his face caused her to rise quickly to her feet.

"What is it, father? Have you had bad news?"

His only reply was to hand her the paper, and point to a big headline,

The *Roaring Bluenose* lost at Sea, with All Hands, in Big Gale.

A sudden weakness came upon her, as she dropped the paper, and sank down into the chair, as she stared wild-eyed at her father.

"Lost! All hands lost!" she murmured. "In big gale! Read it again, father. I can't see very well. Something has happened to my eyes."

Mr. Dean did as he was requested, and read how the *Morning Light* had arrived in port the day before bringing news of the disaster. Caught in the raging tempest, the *Roaring Bluenose* was wallowing in mountainous seas, with her masts gone, and constantly swept by huge billows when first sighted by the *Morning Light*. Nothing could be done to aid the men in distress, as no small boat could live in such a sea, so one by one they were swept to their doom. Then followed the names of the captain and the crew.

"Kent's name is not among them," Jacynth excitedly exclaimed. "He could not have been on that ship. Lank may have been mistaken about its name. Or maybe he was lying."

"Perhaps he was," her father replied. He had to say something to comfort her, although he was well aware that a shanghaied man would not be recorded at the shipping-office in the city. And, besides, Lank might have been lying, boasting of his prowess. It would be as well to wait, for most likely Tim Rayson would start a thorough investigation about his son. Anyway, it would be better to let Jacynth hope that Kent had not been on the lost vessel. It would be of considerable comfort to her now, and if it should be proven later that he had gone down with the *Roaring Bluenose*, she would be stronger to endure the blow.

So certain was Jacynth that Kent was on land, that she looked forward expectantly for a letter from him. She did not even lose hope as the days passed into weeks and no word was received. Reports came from the city that Mr. Rayson could learn nothing about his son. No one could be found who had seen him seized and taken on board the ship. The only one who seemed to know anything was Lank Jukins, and he had mysteriously disappeared after the night he had been tarred and feathered. For the first time Jacynth longed to see him, to find out, if possible, more about what had happened to Kent.

She spent much of her time out-of-doors, sometimes riding with her father through the country, visiting the Westons and the Horns, or walking with Lad in her favorite haunts among the trees. In the presence of others she showed no sign of the great longing of her heart, but was the same cheerful girl they had always known. When alone, however, it was different. Then she was not forced to keep up an appearance she did not feel. The crisp tang of the fall air, the changing leaves, and the quietness of the forest were in harmony with her spirit. If Lad noticed her unusual silence and absent-mindedness, he did not show it. He kept a watchful eye, nevertheless, upon his mistress, returning to her at intervals and expressing his joy by licking her hands and giving a bark or two ere bounding off again upon his eager chase of bird or rabbit. The care and affection of this noble animal appealed to the girl, and she always patted his head in a loving manner. It was good to have such a companion who asked no questions, and with whom she did not have to assume any false appearance of light-heartedness.

One afternoon as she and her father were returning home from a long ride, Mr. Dean reined up his horse when part way up the Valley, and pointed to Storm King hillside ablaze with gold, crimson, and scarlet of autumn leaves.

"How beautiful they are!" he exclaimed. "You used to say that the trees were blushing when they were like that, because they were putting off their summer clothes."

"I know I did," Jacynth smilingly replied. "But now they seem to me like dying things giving up their life-blood in sacrifice."

"But the trees are not dying, remember; only the leaves. For a while they will stand stark and bare, to be clothed again in

due time with fresh beauty. The never-failing renewal of nature has always been a great comfort to me. During the dark and bleak winter I look forward to spring when all things will be transformed into loveliness. And such is life. 'Hope is a lover's staff,' so Shakespeare said, and he was right."

"I like those words, father. They are comforting, and I shall remember them."



# CHAPTER XXX

## AT THE MERCY OF HIS VICTIMS

"I am sure you will find him, Penny."

"I shall do what I can, my dear, but—"

"Don't say 'but'," Jacynth interrupted. "Every one says that. All believe that Kent was drowned, and when I remind them that his name was not in the paper, they look at me in such a queer way, and ask what happened to him. Yes, all except father. He believes as I do."

Penny Royal had spent the night at Val Haven, and as he started forth in the morning, Jacynth accompanied him to the cross-roads. This was the first time he had visited the Valley since the accident, so there were many things for them to discuss. But Jacynth's chief concern was about Kent, and she was anxious to know what Penny thought about him. Having reached the cross-roads, she stopped.

"I must leave you now," she said, "as I want to see Mrs. Weston and the baby. But you can do wonderful things with that little stick of yours, so I am depending upon you to find Kent. Will you try?"

"Yes, I can do great things with my stick," Penny replied. "I can discover water, and sometimes I unearth treasures in the ground, though not always. But to find a missing man is something I have never tried. Yet, when I come to think about it, I might be able to do more than I ever imagined. You have put a notion into my head. Here we are at these cross-roads. They run north, south, east, and west. If I am to hunt for Kent Rayson, which direction shall I take? Ah, I have it! You stand right in the centre where these roads meet."

"Why, what good will that do?" the girl asked in surprise.

"Never mind. Just do as I say, and let us see what happens."

While Penny was taking his divining-rod from his pack, Jacynth did as she was ordered, and waited expectantly to see what Penny was about to do. Grasping the hazel twig firmly with both hands, he walked to her side and held it in an upright position.

"Place your hands upon mine, my dear, and that will increase the mystical current. This is a new venture for me, so I need assistance."

As Jacynth did so, a strange feeling came upon her as she watched that uplifted twig which showed no sign of movement, but remained perfectly stationary.

"There's no pull there," Penny declared. "Let us try another direction."

No sooner had he faced east than the stick began to quiver, and presently took a sharp jerk forward, with a slight inclination to the south.

"We have it!" Penny exclaimed. "South-east is the way I'm to go. My, this is wonderful! I never imagined such a thing could be done with my rod."

"And you will begin the search at once?" Jacynth eagerly asked.

"Indeed I will, and I'm off this very minute. Good-bye, my dear, and keep up hope."

Penny shouldered his pack and started along the road towards the Creek, while Jacynth went to see Mrs. Weston. Coming to a wooded section of the highway, he stopped and mopped his forehead with his handkerchief.

"My, I'm hot! And the day is cool, too. But it's the excitement, I guess. I feel like a hypocrite for deceiving that girl. She'd never forgive me if she knew I made the twig move south-east. But it had to turn, so that direction will do as well as any other. And, besides, it will cheer her up for a while, so that is some comfort."

Winter arrived earlier than usual, and with it came the lumbermen to cut logs for Timothy Rayson. It made considerable

stir in the Valley, and gave work to a number of men. Ere long teams were hauling the logs by Val Haven to the brow near the brook from which place they would be floated to the river in the spring. At first Jacynth was much interested in watching the great horses drawing their loads, and listening to the merry jingle of their bells. She soon tired of this, however, for it was the same thing over and over again. And, besides, her mind was filled with other thoughts. She lived much of the time in a world of fancy. Kent Rayson, her hero, was away upon a great quest, and she was awaiting his home-coming. The longer he was absent, the more he seemed to her like a knight of olden days who had gone forth on deeds of great daring. Often in the evenings her father found her poring over books containing ancient tales of heroes and heroines, gazing dreamily upon the pictures which adorned the volumes. She would sometimes lift her eyes from the pages and gaze into the fire, lost in thought.

One night when a fierce north-east snow-storm was raging over the Valley, they were thus sitting together, while Martha was doing some work in the kitchen. Mr. Dean had been laid up for several days with a severe cold, so Jacynth had attended to the horses and gone for the mail. She was glad to have this work to occupy her mind, and riding to the Creek in the clear frosty air was stimulating.

"How nice it is to be in a comfortable place like this on such a night," Mr. Dean remarked as he laid aside the book he had been reading. "Listen to that storm. It is the worst we have had this winter."

"I would like to be out in it," Jacynth replied. "Something always stirs my soul when a wild north-easter is raging. I feel like taking Midnight for a good run. And I am sure he would enjoy it, too, for he is fully recovered from his lameness and has not been doing much of late."

"I often feel the same myself, dear. It's the blood of our forefathers. Some of them were great seamen, and we have inherited their adventurous spirit. That is why you like those ancient tales which you read so much."

"I like them better than modern stories, father. Those ancient warriors believed that there were supernatural beings surrounding and guarding them. In this book, 'Saluga's Knight', which I have been reading, Froda, the great knight, had the presence of that beautiful maiden to inspire and strengthen him in his mighty deeds. Why do writers today leave such things out?"

"Because they do not believe in them."

"But you do, father."

"Certainly I do. Any one who thinks at all, must surely feel that there are unseen influences around us, some evil and some good, which have a great effect upon us. Many today scorn such a belief, and think only of the material world of outward sense. But I have had experiences which prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that the unseen world is very real, and those tales contain more truth than fiction."

"And you believe, too, father, that we can direct those unseen powers, and they will help us?"

"I do. What Prospero did on that island, we can do if we have the right spirit, and do not allow evil influences to counteract the good. Why, we have not really begun to grasp the importance of the influence of the unseen world upon our lives. When we do, and make proper use of it, we shall become supermen and women, for then we shall be in control of forces which are not even imagined at present. I seldom speak about this to others, because they would consider me weak-minded. Penny Royal is the only one I know who understands such things."

There were several questions Jacynth wished to ask her father, but just then a loud rap upon the front door startled them. Rising to her feet, she went into the hall, opened the door, and by the light of a bracket-lamp kept burning there, she saw two snow-covered figures supporting a limp and helpless man, one of whom she recognized as Peter Horn. The wind rushed into the hall and threatened to extinguish the lamp, as Jacynth stood astonished at the sight before her. But without a word of explanation the two men entered and laid their burden down near the box-stove which was giving forth its pleasant heat.

"There!" Peter exclaimed. "That's the hardest job I've done in a long while. But we got him here, though."

"Begorra, ye'r right," Pat Malone agreed, as he stooped to examine the prostrate man. "Are ye dead, sir?"

"You fool!" was Timothy Rayson's growling response. "Oh!"

"What is the meaning of all this?" Mr. Dean asked, as he appeared upon the scene. "What has happened?"

"I hardly know, sir," Pat replied. "I was drivin' Misther Rayson from the city to visit his camp when the storm hit us. I wanted to put up at Jerry Logan's fer the night, but he wouldn't let me. We got to the woods beyont yer house when a tree fell across the road. By the Lord's mercy it didn't hit me, but a branch struck Misther Rayson a glancin' blow an' smashed the back of the sleigh. I was in a devil av a fix when who should appear but Misther Horn. Niver was an angel right from hiven more welcome to me than was him, so together we brought Misther—"

"Hold yer d— tongue," the injured man roared, "and do something for me. Get the doctor at once. My arm's broken, and I'm bruised all over."

Martha was the only one who seemed to know what to do.

"Bring him into the dining-room," she ordered. "I will do what I can for him until the doctor arrives."

Lifting the prostrate man from the floor, Pat followed the woman.

"Put him on the sofa there. But be very careful. I can attend to him now while you go for the doctor."

"How can I go, when I've got to git back to look afther that horse I left there in the road? The poor crathur was almost played out an' lathered with sweat from his hard struggle through the deep snow. He'll git a chill an' die if I don't take 'im out of that place."

"You think more of a horse than you do of a man," Rayson growled. "What's to become of me if the doctor doesn't come?"

"That's true, sir," and Pat scratched his head in perplexity. "Now, what the devil am I to do!"

"Suppose I look after him," Peter suggested, "while you go for the doctor."

"You, sir! Why, that horse wouldn't budge a step without me. I've driven him since he was broken to harness, an' he doesn't know the touch of any hand upon the reins but mine. Oh, no, I'm the only one he'll mind."

Pat did not want to go for the doctor in such a storm, so had to trump up some excuse. Jacynth who had been watching and listening, was quite certain that the jovial Irishman was lying. She turned and went to her father in the other room. He was standing with his back to the fire, with a strange expression in his eyes.

"I am going for the doctor," she announced.

"You cannot go in such a storm. You must not. I shall go myself."

"Indeed you won't, father. It would kill you. Let me go."

"But it is too far, and the risk too great."

"I shall get Jim to go, then."

"Jim! Jim Weston to go for the doctor for Tim Rayson! Girl, you do not know what you are talking about."

"I do, father. If Jim will not go for Mr. Rayson, he will go for me."

"All right," and Mr. Dean sighed. "Something will have to be done. But if Jim will not go, you must not."

"Leave that to me. Mr. Rayson needs help. I shall be careful."

Rapidly Jacynth prepared for her ride, and as she led Midnight from the stable and mounted him, a spirit of exaltation possessed her. Her wish to be out in the storm was about to be satisfied. And it was for Kent's father she was doing it. That meant much to her, and as the horse sped along the road she hardly noticed the stinging wind-driven snow on her face, so thrilled was she with the importance of her mission.

The Westons were astonished to see Jacynth. When she told them about Rayson's accident, a gleam of joy came into Jim's eyes.

"So the old devil's getting what's coming to him at last. Broke his arm, eh?"

"We do not know for sure, but he's badly hurt."

"I'm glad, and I hope he'll suffer all the tortures of hell. I'd like to watch him. It would do my heart good."

"Jim, Jim, don't say that," his wife protested. "It's terrible!"

"No more terrible than what he did to me, remember. I wouldn't turn a finger to help him."

"You won't go for the doctor, then?" Jacynth asked.

"Go for the doctor! For that thing! I should say not. Let him die. It will be good riddance to have—"

He stopped suddenly, and stood lost in thought.

"No, he must not die just yet," he declared. "There's something more coming to him. He must live a while longer. Will you stay with Nell till I come back?"

"I shall stay," Jacynth replied, wondering what had caused Jim's sudden change of mind.

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# CHAPTER XXXI

## STOP THAT MUSIC!

Propped up in bed, Timothy Rayson glared at Prosper Dean who had just entered the room.

"Ah, so you've come to see me at last," he growled. "I've been wondering what happened to you."

"I stayed away, Tim, because I did not wish to hear any more of your curses," Mr. Dean quietly replied, as he walked to the side of the bed. "You cursed me the night you came here, and told me to keep out of your sight when I was anxious to do something for you. But as you have sent for me, I have come. What do you want?"

"When am I to get out of this cursed hole? Where's Pat? Why doesn't he come for me?"

"You might be in a worse place, Tim, and you should be thankful that your arm was not broken. You had a very narrow escape, remember, for the big branch of that tree missed you by only a few inches. A small one struck you a glancing blow which bruised your arm and body."

"You're sorry, I suppose, that the big branch did not hit me?"

"Why should I?"

"To get even with me, of course. You'd like to see me dead, wouldn't you?"

"You are entirely wrong, Tim. I never wished your death. On the contrary, I hoped you would live long enough to repent of the injury you did to an innocent man, and clear his name. And there is another you should consider, an old man you are robbing."

Rayson lifted his shoulder from the pillow, as if he would spring forward.

"What are you talking about?" he demanded.

"You should know, Tim, so it is not necessary for me to explain."

"Ah, you mean Jim Weston and Peter Horn, I suppose? You think I have wronged them. Is that it?"

"Your conscience should tell you so. If you have any manhood left, you should clear Jim Weston, and pay Peter Horn for his timber you are taking."

"But those trees are mine. The old line is wrong."

"It is not, and you dare not have a surveyor come to settle it."

So stern was Mr. Dean's voice, and so flashing his eyes, that Rayson quailed a little. His anger, however, increased.

"So you've taken up Horn's cause, have you?" he sneered. "You want to pose as a public benefactor."

"I am only seeking to help a good old man who cannot defend himself. And I shall do all in my power to see that justice is done."

"Justice! Justice! There is no such a thing as justice."

"There is, Tim, and though at times it may seem delayed, it never fails. 'Justice always whirls in equal measure', as Shakespeare says, and he is right."

"H'm, I see you're sticking to Shakespeare yet. It's a wonder you haven't got tired of him long before this. The idea of justice has changed since his day. There's no such thing now. It's every man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost."

"And you practice that belief, Tim?"

"Why shouldn't I? If I didn't fight for my rights where would I be? The law is no good to help a man, so he must fight."



"That's what Jim Weston is always saying, and I've had a hard time to hold his hand. But for me, Tim, you might not be sitting here now."

An expression of anxiety came into Rayson's fierce eyes. This Mr. Dean noticed.

"Why, what's the matter? You look frightened."

"Why should I be frightened?"

"You have much cause to be, and you know it. Why are you afraid of Jim Weston?"

"He's a grudge against me. He imagines that I caused all his trouble."

"And you know he is right. To save yourself, you had him punished. There, now, don't get excited, for you know it's the truth."

"You devil! How dare you say that?"

"Because you need plain words. It is no use beating about the bush with you. And you might as well know that since you've been here Jim has been prowling around this house night and day with gun in hand."

"He has! Would he shoot me?"

"Most likely."

"What stopped him? He went for the doctor for me, didn't he? Your daughter told me so."

"Quite true. But he wanted you to live long enough that he might settle that old score with you himself. He didn't want you to escape him too easily. I know that, for he told me so. He begged me to let him in here to meet you face to face. I almost fought with him once when he was more determined than ever, and told him that while you are under my roof I would protect you. When Jim is mad with rage, there is no telling what he might do."

"Ah, so I've heard. Why, he's not a safe man to have at large. Prowling around here with a gun to shoot me! He should be arrested. I shall have something done to him at once. The law should attend to such a man."

"Why do you talk about the law, Tim, when you believe there is no such a thing as justice? But you need not be afraid of Jim just now. He has given me his word of honor that he will not harm you while you are here."

"I'm glad of that. But what will he do when I leave? Will he follow me and shoot me as if I were a dog?"

Mr. Dean saw that Rayson was frightened, and quivering with apprehension.

"I do not think he will try to shoot you, Tim. He has something else in store for you."

"What is that?"

"It remains to be seen. He met Larry Jagger in the city, and I am certain he obtained a confession from that sailor. I told you this the night we met in your backyard near the stable. I mention it again, as you may have forgotten it. This is just a warning that you might do something while there is time."

"Do something! What can I do?"

"A great deal. Clear Jim of that charge against him, and act the man, late though it is. He is innocent, and you are the guilty one."

Rayson's eyes glared more fiercely than ever at his accuser. If ever the devil looked through human eyes, it certainly did through Tim Rayson's just then.

"You'll pay dearly for those words, Prosper Dean. You've made a charge against me which I shall call upon you to prove in Court. I see your game. Ha, ha! yes, I see it, all right. You've got me here, a helpless man, and you're striking at me for imagined injuries. But, look out. I'm not down yet. Let Jim Weston, and all your other sweet cronies do what they will. I'll show you all a thing or two, by God, I will."

Mr. Dean laid a hand upon the infuriated man's shoulder.

"I see it is no use talking to you any longer, Tim. But before I go I wish to tell you that I am not striking back at you in the spirit of revenge as you think. I only want to clear the name of an innocent man, and keep Peter Horn from being robbed."

"And what do you expect to get out of it? People don't take trouble for others these days just for the joy of the thing. Oh, no, they are looking for some personal gain, such as money or notoriety. But maybe it's some of that Prospero stuff you've been trying to practice. How in h— did you ever get such a notion in your mind?"

"Do you want to know, Tim?"

"Would it do me any good? If so, out with it. But, say, has it helped you?"

"To a certain extent it has. Prosper was the name given to me, as it had been in my family for several generations. I never cared much for it until I came across the name Prospero in *The Tempest*. That was my introduction to Shakespeare, and since then I have made quite a study of his plays. But *The Tempest* appealed to me most of all, and I conceived the idea that what Prospero did on his island by his magic, people could do the same in real life. I have tried it, and though it has been a help to me in many ways, I have learned that a greater power is needed."

"Ah, you are right," Rayson declared as Mr. Dean paused. "It is money. That is the only power that tells today. Money is a god, and works wonders. Its touch is magic."

"No, Tim, it's not money. That is your god, and it has not worked wonders with you. There, now, just a minute until I finish. The power I mean is greater than the magic of Prospero and money; it is the power of the Master of Galilee. In Him I have found strength and comfort which nothing else could give."

"H'm, so you're dragging in religion, eh?" Rayson sneered. "It's all humbug. What good has it done to stop the devil's work?"

"Have you ever tried it, Tim?"

"H—, no! I've seen too much of the hypocrisy of church people to take any stock in religion. I keep outside."

"And are you happy? Has your keeping away from Christ given you peace?"

"Peace! Peace! I know not the meaning of the word. How can a man have peace with so many devils around him?"

"And inside him, too, eh, Tim? It is not the devils without that trouble you so much as the devils in your own heart. But, there, it's no use for me to say such things, as you don't believe them."

"I don't, and you can go to the devil with all your pious nonsense," Rayson shouted. "I want to get away from here, and from you, from you, I say, and your—"

He stopped abruptly as the strains of a violin floated into the room.

"Do you hear that?" he gasped, reaching out and clutching Mr. Dean by the arm.

"Yes, I hear it. But why should that excite you? It is only Jacynth playing on her violin. It is the first time she has done that since you came here."

"But, Prosper, are you sure it's your daughter?"

"Certainly. Why do you doubt my word?"

"I don't know. But I thought it was my wife. She used to play like that, and I hated it. Stop that girl! Stop her, I say! Hurry!"

"So you don't like the memories of the past, is that it, Tim? Your conscience is troubling you, I see."

"Conscience! Conscience! What have I to do with conscience? It's all nonsense. But stop that music, and send the girl to me. I want to talk to her."



## CHAPTER XXXII

### DEFIANCE

The next day Mr. Rayson left for the city with Pat Malone. Although the day was bright and quite mild, he growled about the coldness as he limped from the house to the sleigh. Jacynth wrapped him up well in the big buffalo-robies, while Martha placed a warm brick, enwrapped in flannel, at his feet. To such attentions he showed no sign of gratitude, thanking no one, but curtly ordered Pat to move on.

Mr. Dean watched from the verandah, knowing that his assistance would be repulsed with curses. He was disappointed, for he had hoped that Rayson would unbend a little, at least, before leaving.

"I never saw such a man," Jacynth indignantly exclaimed as she joined her father. "He left without one word of thanks. I wonder if he is really human. I don't want to see him again. He is not well, and should not go today."

"Perhaps not, but I am glad to be rid of him," Mr. Dean replied.

"And I am more than glad," Martha declared. "Nothing I cooked suited him, not even that lovely chicken-broth. He said it tasted like dish-water."

"That's a sure sign he's not human, Martha. Any one who growls at what you cook must be inhuman." At this compliment the worthy woman smiled as she went back into the house.

As the sleigh rounded the bend in the road, Rayson turned his vitriolic tongue upon his driver.

"What in h— kept you so long?" he demanded. "Didn't I tell you to come for me yesterday?"

"I know ye did, sir, but I was very busy."

"Busy! Busy! That's no excuse. Don't I pay you to attend to me? What were you doing? Taking a holiday, I suppose."

"Lookin' afther Matt wasn't much of a holiday, begorra. I've had me hands more'n full 'tendin' to 'im."

"Why, what's he been up to now? Not in jail again, I hope?"

"Ah, worse than that, sir. He's in the Hospital."

"Hospital!" Rayson exclaimed. "What happened?"

"He fell into the howld of a ship, sir, when he wint on board with some gay young birrds. They were all dhrunk, so didn't know what they were doin'."

"Is he badly hurt?"

"Indade he is, sir. The docthers all say he can't git betther nohow. Poor Matt, an' 'im so young!"

The only response from Rayson was a deep groan of despair as he huddled down more than ever in the sleigh. Pat told him how Matt had been drinking for several days, and would listen to no word of advice.

"I thried me best, sir, to keep an eye upon 'im, but it was no use. With you away, he lost all conthrol of himself. I knew somethin' would happen, an' sure enough it did."

"When was that?"

"Night before lasth, sir. I stayed with 'im at the Hospital most of yisterday, thinkin' that maybe he'd recognize me. An' that poor young woman, who should be his wife, never left his side, but jist sat there watchin' 'im with her whole heart in her eyes. Oh, it was sad to see her."

"What woman was that?"

"Hettie Jukins, av coorse, the girrl he brought to bed with a child. Ye know about that racket, sir."

"But why didn't you send for me at once?" Rayson demanded. "I should have been notified."

"There was no chance, sir. No one was comin' this way. The roads were very bad afther the big storm."

Rayson said but little more the rest of the way to the city. This blow was crushing to all his hopes. The loss of Kent had not meant much to him, as he had never seemed to be his own son in his view of things. He was like his mother, and Rayson had always scorned her ideals of life, considering them of no practical value. To make money was his one ambition, and for that he had trained Matt. He had put up with his wild manner of living so long as it did not interfere with his business. And although annoyed at Matt's escapades, he had overlooked them and paid his debts in the hope that after he had sowed his wild oats he would settle down to a steady life. But now he realized that all his fond plans were in vain. Matt would die, and he would be left alone. It was not affection for his son that gave him such agony of mind. Self had always been the dominant factor in his life, and for that he had sacrificed everything, wife, friends, and honor. And what had he left now? Nothing but gall and wormwood. He had no power to sustain him, and not one person to whom he could go for comfort. The blackness of futility and despair settled like a cloud upon this unhappy man, through which there gleamed not one ray of hope.

The journey was a trying one to Rayson, and when he reached home Pat had some difficulty in getting him from the sleigh into the house. He shivered, notwithstanding the warm robes in which he had been wrapped. His housekeeper was greatly concerned, and wished to send for a doctor at once. But Rayson fiercely refused her suggestion.

"Never mind the doctor. I'm tired, that's all. Get me a cup of hot tea. I'll be all right soon."

In another hour, however, he reluctantly consented to have a doctor called. The result was that he was ordered to bed, and told to stay there for several days.

"You have had a chill," the doctor said, "so you must be very careful. I shall leave a prescription and call to see you later."

"But I can't stay in bed," Rayson protested. "I have business to look after. And, besides, I have a son dying in the Hospital, so must see him."

"You will leave this house at your own risk," was the emphatic reply. "That is all I can say."

Greatly against his will Rayson was forced to submit, and was well waited upon by his housekeeper. Twice a day Pat brought him news about Matt.

"It's only a matther of a short time now, sir," he informed him the third afternoon after his arrival home. "I could git nothin' from the nurses, but me own common sense towld me that he's slippin' away fast. Poor Matt, he won't be throublin' us much longer, sir. I'm fond of that boy, even though he did kick up naughty shindies at times."

The worthy Irishman brushed a tear from his eye, which Rayson noticed.

"It's no use getting sentimental," he growled. "I hate to see any one blubbering, especially a man. Leave me now, but be sure to be here early in the morning."

Pat had been gone but a short time, when Mrs. Brown came into the room.

"There's a man at the front door who wishes to see you, sir," she announced.

"Who is he?"

"I do not know. But when I told him you were sick in bed, he said it made no difference as he must see you at once."

"The rascal! Some tramp, no doubt. Send him away. I won't see him. I can't be bothered."

"But suppose he won't go, sir?"

"Send for the police. They'll soon get rid of him."

He ceased abruptly, and his face became pale as his eyes stared towards the door. Mrs. Brown turned quickly, saw a large man standing there looking fixedly at the invalid.

"Jim Weston!" Rayson gasped. "What are you doing here? How dare you come into this room?"

"You know me, I see," the visitor replied as he walked over to the bed. "I thought you would."

"Go away! Go at once! I don't want to see you! Stay, Mrs. Brown," he pleaded as the woman was about to leave the room. "This man will kill me."

A grim smile lurked around the corners of Jim Weston's mouth as he watched the cowering man before him.

"I shall not harm a hair of your head, Tim Rayson. Let the woman go. I want to speak to you alone."

"And you promise you'll not kill me?"

"Why should I? That would be letting you off too easily."

"All right, Mrs. Brown, you may go. I'll have to trust him, I suppose."

For a minute or more the two men silently faced each other after the woman had left.

"Well, what do you want?" Rayson at length asked. "Out with it. I'm a sick man. Why do you come to disturb me now?"

"Are you not surprised that I did not come before?" Jim quietly asked. "Have I not an old score to settle with you?"

"What do you mean, you d— rascal? Do you think you can bluff me with your nonsense?"

"I am not bluffing, Tim Rayson. You ruined my life, and made me a byword among men as the captain who scuttled his ship for gain. You are the guilty one, and you can't deny it."

"I do, and you can go to h— for all I care. Prove what you say, or by God, I'll have you arrested."

"You might as well save your breath, for I have sufficient proof of what I say. But I am not here now on my own behalf, as I shall attend to that later. It is for another I wish to speak."

"And who is that?"

"Peter Horn. You are robbing him of his property. I ask you either to leave his place alone, or pay him a fair price for his timber."

"But that land's mine. The old line is wrong, so I'll not pay him a cent."

"You know very well that the old line is not wrong, and you dare not have a new one run. You wish to steal his valuable timber, and he is too poor to contest your claim. Why not be merciful to an honest man?"

"H'm, what does that matter to me? It's every man for himself in this world."

"And you've acted upon that idea all your life, Tim Rayson. I shall not appeal to you any more to have mercy upon Peter Horn. In fact, I am surprised at myself for speaking so calmly to the man who so terribly injured me. A while ago I was ready to shoot you on sight, and I would have done it, but something checked me."

"Ha, you saw it would not be for your welfare, no doubt. You were afraid of the law."

"I was afraid of nothing then. Revenge was all I wanted."

"But what stopped you? What stops you from shooting me now?"

"My manhood."

"Manhood! That's a strange word on your lips."

"Perhaps so. Not long ago I was in danger of losing any manhood I ever had and becoming a murderer. I was that at heart, all right. But something moved me to see things in a different light, and that was the nobleness of another man you tried to ruin, but failed. Yes, it was the influence of Prosper Dean which opened my eyes to see the difference between him and you. I was on the brink of destruction when he drew me back. And there are two others to whom I owe much,

Prosper Dean's daughter, and a little child which came into our home, and that same child is your grandson. I am not in the habit of speaking like this, but I want you to know the truth. I was in danger of becoming a human devil like you, and others of your kind, but thank God, I see things in a different light now."

Instead of being rightly impressed by this manly confession, Rayson's eyes blazed with anger as he sat up in bed.

"I don't want you to throw Prosper Dean at me," he cried. "Neither do I desire to hear any of your canting religious stuff. And as for that brat of a child you mention, he's none of mine, and I won't own him. Get out and leave me alone, or by God, I'll send for the police."

"Very well, then, Tim Rayson, I shall do as you say. But before I go, I have something here which might interest you."

He drew a paper from an inside pocket, and slowly unfolded it. He then looked sternly at the invalid.

"I have tried to reason with you, but all in vain. Perhaps this will have some effect. It's the dying confession of Larry Jagger, signed by a lawyer who was present. It says that you hired Larry to scuttle the *Ocean Belle* to get the insurance, and then laid the blame upon me."

With a face as white as death, and trembling violently, Rayson reached out a shaking hand.

"Let me see it," he gasped.

"No, I shall keep it. But I shall read it to you."

"I don't want to hear it. This is nothing but black-mail. Get out! Get out, I say! Where's Pat? I want him. Why doesn't he come?"

Seeing that further talk would be useless, Weston turned and started for the door, when Rayson shrieked for him to wait.

"What are you going to do with that paper?" he demanded.

"You will find out, all right, if you don't pay Peter Horn for his timber, and then you will wish you had listened to my words of advice."

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# CHAPTER XXXIII

## PENNY ROYAL RETURNS

To most of the people in the Valley and along the Shore Road, Timothy Rayson's accident, followed by his illness, was nothing less than a just judgment for his treatment of Peter Horn. This was intensified almost to a general excitement and awe when news arrived of the death of his son Matt. That both of his sons had been taken from him, while he himself had been injured by a tree, and was now lying ill in the city, were unmistakable signs of divine anger. And they had all happened since he had written to Peter Horn notifying him of his intention to take his timber. It was discussed everywhere, and formed the chief topic of conversation in homes, at the store, and the blacksmith shop. For once Long Sol permitted men to speak plainly, while he himself did not hesitate to express his own views.

"It's no more than I expected," he declared one afternoon when several of his neighbors had dropped in to hear the latest news. "We can tempt the Lord just so far. He puts up with a great deal, but the time comes sooner or later when He acts, and when He does—"

Sol drew a red-hot piece of iron from the fire and swung it on to the anvil. The ringing blows that followed told of the intensity of his emotion.

"But when He acts," he continued, "something happens which no one can mistake. It was so in olden days, as the Bible tells us very plainly. Didn't the parson read in church last Sunday about what happened to the wicked King Ahab and his wife Jezebel when they stole Naboth's vineyard? Some of you heard that story."

"I did," Ned Dicer replied, "and it sent the cold chills up and down my spine. I wonder if the parson had Rayson and Peter Horn in mind while he was reading? My wife was sure that he had, for when he came to that verse where the prophet Elijah told the wicked king that in the place where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs would lick his own blood, the parson's voice became very stern. Yes, I am sure he was thinking of Rayson."

"But such judgment doesn't always follow wickedness," Sam Brown protested. "If it did, many men who are now rich and successful would be behind prison bars."

"There must be some reason for that which we cannot understand now," Sol replied. "I read in the Bible that sometimes divine judgment was swift, as in the case of Ahab and Jezebel. And then it did not happen until after death, like that story Christ told about the rich man and Lazarus. Anyway, it seems quite certain that sudden judgment has come upon Timothy Rayson. No one can make me doubt that."

The thought of Kent Rayson was seldom out of Jacynth Dean's mind. It was hard for her to believe that he had been lost at sea, and that she would never see him again. But as the weeks passed and no word was received from him, her hope gradually faded. If alive, he would surely have communicated with her in some way. The suspense was hard to endure, and her father anxiously noticed her drooping spirits and surmised the cause. No longer was she the animated girl of a year ago, fond of snow-shoeing after every big storm, or riding on Midnight through the great drifts. He wondered what he could do for her.

The problem was somewhat solved at the news of Peter Horn's illness. Peggy and Tom brought word, and when Jacynth returned with them, she found Mrs. Horn troubled.

"I am at my wit's end," she confided in a low voice to the visitor. "Peter seemed to be about as usual until Rayson's men crossed the line and began cutting our trees. Peter saw them, and he came home a sick man. He will not eat, and sleeps very little. He just lies there staring at the window and muttering things I can't understand. I am afraid he is going out of his mind."

Jacynth tried to talk to Peter, and did everything in her power to cheer him up. Her efforts, however, seemed all in vain.

"Rayson will ruin me," he moaned. "He is taking my timber which I hoped to sell that we might have something in our old age."

"Perhaps Mr. Rayson will pay you," Jacynth suggested.



"He never will. Oh, no, he is too hard a man for that. He will take everything and leave me nothing. Oh, it is terrible!"

Jacynth discussed the matter with her father that night.

"There must be some way to protect Peter," she said.

"There is," Mr. Dean replied, "but Peter has no money to engage a lawyer. If I could afford it, I would do something. But the little I have is only enough to keep us. If that should go, we would be helpless except for what I make from the ships-knees, and there is not much demand even for them now. Iron-knees are being used more and more, so the farmers will soon lose all of that business."

Besides being worried over Peter Horn's illness, Jim Weston again caused Mr. Dean considerable anxiety. He had called at the house after Jim's return from the city, and at once noticed the change that had taken place. He was unusually silent, and Mr. Dean did not like the expression in his eyes. The Westons had moved into their new house, but Jim seemed to have lost all interest in it. Mrs. Weston was evidently troubled about her husband's manner, although she presented a cheerful appearance while Mr. Dean was in the house. She talked about Peter Horn, and proudly held up the baby for inspection.

"He is a great comfort to us," she said, "and I do not know what we should do without him."

The quick glance at her husband was noticed by Mr. Dean.

"Has Hettie seen the baby lately?" he asked.

"Not since the boats stopped running. It is difficult for her to get here in winter. But she writes often, and sends him little presents."

"And Bill Jukins makes no trouble?"

"Not now. Since Lank's punishment and disappearance, Bill has been very quiet. His wife told me that he is terribly afraid of what might happen to him if he does not behave himself. I never knew him to be so frightened before."

"I am glad of that, Mrs. Weston. I was somewhat annoyed at what was done to Lank, but if it has taught Bill a lesson, it served a useful purpose."

No word was received from Penny Royal. Jacynth had set great hope upon him. She believed that he would find Kent if any one could, and if he had found him he surely would have let her know at once. Apart from helping Mrs. Horn, she lived most of the time in the past, lost in the memory of those wonderful days when her heart was so full of happiness in her first great love. Would they ever come again? she wondered.

She was thinking of this one evening as she sat before a bright wood fire waiting for her father who had gone over to Peter Horn's, when Penny Royal arrived. He was tired and cold, so the sincere welcome he received was most grateful. Jacynth made him sit before the fire, and while she took off his boots, Martha hurried away to prepare a hot drink and something for him to eat.

"My, my, this is comfort!" he exclaimed, as he watched the animated face of the girl kneeling before him. "It makes up for my long, hard tramp."

"Where have you come from, Penny?" Jacynth asked, as she placed the boots near the fire to warm.

"From the city. I got a lift up with Ned Dicer on top of his load of feed, and left him at the Creek. He wanted me to go home with him and stay the night, but I had important matters on my mind, so came right here."

He ceased, and an expression of anxiety appeared upon his face.

"Where did I put my pack? I forgot all about it."

"It's in the kitchen," Martha replied as she came into the room.

"Ah, I'm glad. I'm getting absent-minded these days, and was afraid I had dropped it on the road. Will you please bring it in, my good woman? There's something very valuable in it. Strange, very strange, that I don't remember bringing it into

the house."

"Have you any news for me?" Jacynth whispered when Martha had left the room. "Did you find him?"

"No, I didn't find him, my dear."

"Oh!"

The tone of Jacynth's voice as she uttered that one word, rebuked Penny for what he had said.

"No, I didn't find him, but Lank Jukins did."

The effect of these words was wonderful. Impetuously the girl knelt by his side and looked up beseechingly into his face.

"Is it true, Penny, or are you deceiving me? Lank found him, you say?"

"Ay, ay, it's as true as the Gospel, my dear. I was passing through Crownville in my search, when Lank saw me. He had just come in from a lumber camp at Deep Brook, fifteen miles or more away. I hardly knew the fellow at first, but he knew me, all right. He was as hungry as a bear, so I took him to a restaurant and gave him a good meal. I saw there was something troubling him, for he was very nervous, and whenever the door opened, he gave a start and looked around. He did this so often that I asked him if he was expecting some one. And then what do you think he did?"

"I could never guess, Penny. No one could tell what he might do."

"You're quite right. But Lank leaned over the table and whispered something to me which I could not make out.

"Speak louder', I told him, and he did.

"I've seen his ghost', he said. 'Will it come here'?"

"Whose ghost'? I asked, thinking the fellow had become queer in the head.

"Kent Rayson's', he said. 'He was drowned at sea, but I saw his ghost'.

"Where'? I asked.

"At Deep Brook. I went there to get work in the woods, and I saw him sitting on a stump painting a picture of the camp'.

"Now, that was what Lank told me. He believed that Kent was dead, and that he had caused his death. He is terribly superstitious, so when he saw Kent at the lumber camp, he was sure it was his ghost."

"But it wasn't, Penny, was it?" Jacynth impulsively asked. "Was it really Kent himself?"

"It was, my dear, for I made it my business to head at once for Deep Brook, where I found him alive and well."

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# CHAPTER XXXIV

## PENNY'S PACK

Jacynth's upturned face, and the expression of joy in her eyes, fully rewarded Penny for all the efforts he had made in seeking for Kent Rayson.

"Where is he now?" she asked. "Why didn't he come with you? Does he know I am waiting for him?"

"He didn't know until I told him. He thought you had given him up, and would have nothing more to do with him. He went away, took another name, worked in the shipyards during the fall, and in the woods in winter."

"Was he glad when you told him I want him to come back?"

Penny's eyes twinkled as he laid his right hand fondly on the girl's head. A smile overspread his wrinkled face.

"Glad, my dear! Wouldn't any young man be glad to know that such a girl as you wants him? I can't begin to tell you all the questions he asked, and when I told him about your accident, I wish you could have seen his face."

"And he never heard about that?"

"Not a word. He left the city soon after he got off the ship."

"He wasn't taken away to sea, then? How was that? Lank was sure he went and was lost in that terrible storm."

"Oh, Kent will explain all about that when he comes."

"But I want to know now, Penny. I can't wait. Did he tell you?"

"He did. It seems that the captain of the *Roaring Bluenose* was well acquainted with Mr. Rayson, so when Kent told him who he was, he put him ashore that very night. He asked the captain to keep it all a secret, as he wished to disappear. But you will hear the details later."

"This is wonderful, Penny. I can hardly believe it is true. But where is Kent now?"

This conversation was interrupted by Martha's arrival. She carried a tray which she placed upon the table by the visitor's side.

"My, that looks good," Penny exclaimed. "It is great to have a woman waiting upon me. But where is my pack?"

"It's quite safe, sir. Shall I bring it in?"

"Please do. There's something very valuable in it."

Jacynth rose to her feet, and drew up a chair to the table.

"I am going to pour your tea, Penny, and while you eat, I want you to tell me about Kent, and where he is."

"He's with his father, who is a very sick man. It's pneumonia he has, so the doctor said. I went to his house to tell him that Kent is alive and well, thinking it would make him happy. But the old curmudgeon only growled and glared at me as if he'd like to take my head off. That roused my ginger, and I got pretty hot, so handed out a few straight truths about his deviltry. He ordered me to leave the room, and when I had almost reached the door, he called me back."

Penny paused to sip his tea, while a triumphant look shone in his eyes. Jacynth anxiously waited for him to continue. She was certain that he had something of great importance to tell her.

"Yes, he called me back, and ordered me to sit close by his side.

"'I'm a dying man', he groaned.

"'I know you are', I said, 'so you'd better make your peace with God at once'.

"It's too late', he moaned. 'He's never been my God, so I'm not going to be a hypocrite now and ask Him to save me. Money has been my god, and little good has it done me'.

"I did not know what to reply to that, but waited to see what he would say next. He lay there very quiet for a while, and at length turned his fiery eyes full upon my face.

"People think I'm a devil. I am, and a devil I'll remain to the end. But I want to show them a thing or two, and what a real devil is like. You know Captain Jim Weston'?

"Quite well', I said. 'He's a good man'.

"But people don't think so. They believe he scuttled his ship. But they're wrong. I'm the guilty one, and I'm going to tell them so'.

"Fumbling under his pillow, he brought out a folded piece of paper.

"This will tell the truth', he said. 'I have signed it, and a lawyer has witnessed it. This will go in the newspaper in the morning. Ha, people will then know what a devil I am. I'd like to see their faces when they read this'.

"It will be a wonderful thing for Jim Weston', I said.

"It will, Penny. I wronged him, and he acted nobly when he got the full confession from Larry Jagger. He could have come back at me at once. But he didn't, he didn't, I tell you. He's a man through and through, and I'm going to clear him before I die. People have been holding him up as a criminal, a man who scuttled his ship. They scorned him. It's the truth. Oh, I'd like to see them when they learn that he's an innocent man. They'll draw in their long stinging tongues then. They'll try to sneak up to Jim Weston, and make a hell of a palaver over him. Oh, I know what they'll do and say. Ha, how I'd like to watch them'."

Penny ceased and wiped his forehead with his handkerchief.

"Excuse me, my dear, but I can't help getting all worked up. I remember every word he said, and how he looked. At first I thought he was the very devil himself, but when he showed me his confession, and said such things about Jim Weston, I did not know what to think. And he was as good as his word, for the next day the whole thing came out in the paper, and I have brought it along to show you."

Penny reached down and began to open his pack. He was all too slow for Jacynth, so she offered to assist him.

"Just give me time, my dear. I have it stowed away somewhere. Ah, here it is."

He drew it forth, and as he did so, a small parcel rolled out upon the floor. Jacynth was about to pick it up, when Penny laid a firm hand upon it.

"Don't touch that. You can't guess what's in it. No, no, you'd never guess it's money for Peter Horn. Ho, ho, I thought that would make you open your eyes in surprise. Yes, money for Peter, payment for his timber, and from Old Thistle, just think of that! He gave it to me last night, and I've been terribly scared ever since lest I should lose it or have it stolen from me."

Penny smiled at the look of amazement upon Jacynth's face, as he replaced the package and unfolded the newspaper.

"Flabbergasted, eh?" he chuckled. "And well you might be. If any one had told me a week ago that Old Thistle would do such a thing, I would have called him a fool. But it's a fact, and there's the money to prove it."

"How much is it, Penny?"

"Ah, I must not tell you now. It's a secret. It's a good sum, anyway. And to think that Old Thistle would entrust it to me after what I said to him!"

"He knows you are honest, Penny. Everybody does. But Mr. Rayson cannot be such a hard man as people thought."

"Well, there must be some streak of goodness in him, though it's taken a mighty long time to show itself. I did think at first that what he has done for Jim Weston and Peter Horn was out of pure cussedness, to dumbfound people, that he

might mentally gloat over their amazement. But I have something else he gave me, which made me change my mind. It's a gift for Hettie Jukins' baby."

"A gift for Hettie's baby! From Mr. Rayson! I can hardly believe it, Penny."

"I knew that would startle you. But it's Gospel truth. And it's money, too. Ho, ho, this is great fun for me. I'm a regular Santa Claus, bringing such wonderful things from my old pack."

"Did your magic-rod have anything to do with it, Penny?"

"Not the rod this time, but something more wonderful than that. Can you guess what it was?"

"I have not the least idea."

"Would you like to know?"

"Certainly."

"My, oh, my, this is grand fun for me. To think that you don't know!"

"Please tell me, Penny. You are teasing me."

"But you might not believe me."

"Why?"

"Because Old Thistle called you a witch."

Penny laughed outright at the look of astonishment that came into Jacynth's eyes.

"Can't say a word, eh?" he bantered. "Dumbfounded, I see. And no wonder. I was the same myself when Rayson told me that it was you who bewitched him. He growled out something about a Gypsy who cursed him years ago when he wouldn't let her tell his fortune. He swore at her, and she said that the day would come when another girl would bewitch him. He cursed her, and never for a moment imagined that it would come true, nor that he would be bewitched by such a girl as Jacynth Dean, of Storm King Valley. So you yourself were the magic which wrought the change in him. He told me that, and a whole lot more. But who's this coming?"

"It is father," Jacynth explained. "He must hear all you have told me. Oh, Penny, it is wonderful!"

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# CHAPTER XXXV

## THE GREAT DAY

Christmas drew near and the spirit of peace reigned over the Valley. A great change had taken place since Penny Royal's visit, and the news that he brought. Peter Horn had rapidly recovered, and his delight at receiving the money was pathetic. Tears of joy rolled down his cheeks as he told Jacynth how Penny had come to him, sat by his bedside, and counted out the crisp bills.

"I thought he would never come to an end," he declared. "I never saw so much money at one time in my life. It was a thousand dollars in all. Just think of that! A thousand dollars!"

Then overcome by his emotion, the old man rose from the chair upon which he had been sitting, and caught the girl's hand in his.

"And it's you I have to thank, my dear. Penny told me so. There, now, you needn't blush, for you know it's true."

To see Peter and his wife so happy was most pleasant to Jacynth, and that night she related it all to her father.

"It seems like a fairy-tale, it is so wonderful."

"It certainly does, my dear. It was the last thing I expected from Timothy Rayson. How thankful I am that such a change came over him. But while you were at Peter's today, I was with Jim and his wife. You must go over to see for yourself the joy that has come into their home. And what pleases me so much was the noble way Jim acted. He told me all about Larry's confession, and how he could have exposed Rayson at once. At first he kept it all a secret, revelling in the thought that he would wait until the logs were all down to the Creek and rafted, and then he would take action. But something changed him, and you cannot imagine what it was."

"Perhaps not altogether, father. But I always knew there was something grand and noble about Jim. He has been badly treated, and his heart was filled with revenge. Caliban was very strong in him at times, but your influence, like Prospero on his island, must have overcome the monster. Isn't that so? Jim was too much of a man to become a mere brute."

"Yes, it was partly that, but not all. It was the combined influence of his wife, that little baby, and the banner above the great pine. He told me so himself, and what a terrible struggle it was. But it was the banner which caused him to make his final decision, and conquer. He knew that I had placed it there to keep me steadfast to the ideals it symbolizes. At first it annoyed him, and several times he was tempted to tear it down, for he could hardly endure its silent challenge to nobleness when his heart was so filled with the spirit of hatred and revenge. He was well aware of the wrong that had been done to me by the man who had injured him. He watched and waited to see what I would do when Kent Rayson came here and won your heart. If I had allowed the Caliban within me to gain the mastery, as at first I was on the verge of doing, then the banner would have been lowered, and revenge would have won the day. Jim eagerly hoped that such would be the case. But as weeks passed, and the flag still floated on high, Jim knew that I had conquered. So that decided him."

Mr. Dean paused and gazed thoughtfully into the fire.

"Then, it was you, after all, father, who influenced Jim," Jacynth quietly remarked. "You are right in believing that Prospero's magical power can be used today to work wonders."

"It may have had some effect upon Jim, my dear, though not upon Tim Rayson," was the smiling reply. "The influence on him was not Prospero's magic, but that of a modern Miranda, of Storm King Valley."

Letters came from Kent, which brought great happiness to Jacynth's heart. He longed to be with her, but could not leave his father, who needed him. At last word was received of Timothy Rayson's death. The account in the newspaper was followed by a letter from Kent.

It is all over, he wrote. Father passed away last night. I think he was pleased to have me with him, although he did not say so. Just before he died he mentioned your name. I shall tell you everything when I go to the Valley, which I hope to do on Christmas Day. I want that to be a wonderful day for both of us. I can hardly wait until we are

together again. I cannot leave before then, as there are so many things to be attended to here.

Jacynth cherished these words, and they were with her day and night. Kent was coming! He would soon be with her, and on Christmas Day! Her father rejoiced at the change that had come over his daughter. She was like her former self once more, and he was glad for her sake. And he planned that Christmas would be a day long to be remembered, so careful preparations were made for the festive occasion. Penny would be with them, as he had promised, to add to their cheer. There would be service in the church in the morning, and he had offered to take Peter and his family along in his big double-seated sleigh, which offer was gratefully accepted.

At last the great day arrived, mild and fine. Jacynth's heart was full of peace and happiness as she joined in the hymn, "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing." Her father was at the organ, as the regular organist was absent on account of illness. She liked to see him there, he looked so noble, and the expression upon his face was good to behold. Then for the first time there came to her mind the real reason of his nobility. It was not the magic of Prospero, but the influence of the Master of Galilee that had given him such strength, and made him victorious over the Calibans of his life. She understood as never before the meaning of that triple-colored banner floating above the tall pine.

Tom and Peggy, standing by her side, had eyes only for the fragrant wreaths of evergreens which festooned the pillars, arches, pulpit, and chancel-rail. Jacynth had assisted in making them, when the young people of the parish had met from house to house night after night for this work of love. The evenings had been very pleasant, made all the more so as she thought of Kent, and how his artistic eyes would appreciate the garlands when they were placed in the church.

Although intent upon the service, the sermon, and the singing, she longed to know if Kent had arrived. She did not like to look around, but she did hope that he was there watching her. It was during the last hymn that she listened attentively to hear his voice, but in vain. She was disappointed, feeling certain that the joy in his heart would cause him to sing as heartily as Peter Horn nearby. No, he had not come, as he had promised. Something had detained him.

She knelt with the others for the benediction, and she needed it just then. The beautiful words seemed to be spoken expressly for her, and they gave her courage and comfort.

Rising from her knees, she looked around, but Kent was not there. But when she left the church, after the Christmas greetings with her friends were over, she saw him. He was seated in a sleigh, holding Blackbird in check. Forgotten was everything else as she went to him and took her place by his side. It seemed to her as if heaven had suddenly opened and the angels were singing again their song of peace and goodwill.

As they drove away, Kent told her about what had happened since his father's death, and the many things he had to look after before leaving the city.

"I did hope to be at church this morning to hear the Christmas hymns sung," he said. "But the travelling was heavy through the woods, and the road over the river was drifted full of snow. I thought I should never get here. Were you expecting me?"

"Indeed I was, and listened for your voice during the singing. Do you remember the last time you were there?"

"I shall never forget that. It was a wonderful day to me. But how much has taken place since then. Until Penny came to Deep Brook, I was sure I would never see you again."

"I knew you would come back some day. I never gave up hope."

"And you didn't believe I went to sea and was lost when the *Roaring Bluenose* went down in that terrible storm?"

"No, not after you rescued that child from the runaway horses in the city."

The reins almost dropped from Kent's hands as he looked at Jacynth's smiling face.

"You are surprised, I see."

"Surprised! Why, I am astounded. Who told you?"

"No one. But I knew it was just like you to do such a thing, and then disappear without telling anyone your name. You wanted to make all think that you were lost at sea, didn't you?"

"I certainly did. But if I had known you were lying in the Hospital, I would not have gone away."

"You would have gone to see me?"

"Nothing would have kept me away. But I did not know."

"Who told you?"

"Penny, of course. He is a great admirer of yours, and told me all about your accident. And to think that you suffered so much for my sake. I owe a great deal to Lank and Penny. But for them, I might not be here today."

"I am glad that Lank was of some use, after all. He did something, anyway, to make up for all the trouble he caused. Where is he now?"

"Working in the woods. He has changed so much that you would hardly know him. He asked me to forgive him for what he had done. He said he was going to quit his old life and try to go straight and make something of himself."

"Oh, I am so glad," Jacynth replied. "Everything is coming out all right at last. And your father made Jim Weston and the Horns so happy by what he did."

"Yes, he tried to atone for the wrong he did them. But that reminds me. I have a message for Captain Weston. He has been offered a ship, and a good one too. Her owner called me into his office and asked me tell Captain Weston to go to the city to see him. He needs a master for the *Ocean Queen*."

"This is great news, Kent. But suppose we wait and go over to see him this afternoon. Martha will have dinner ready, and father will be home soon. Penny has promised to be with us today, and how delighted he will be to see you."

They were passing through a stretch of wooded road, where the fir trees were covered with a snowy mantle. Only the jingle of bells broke the silence. It was then that Kent placed his left arm around the girl and drew her close to him.

"You are mine, Jacynth, and nothing shall ever part us again. I have come for you, and I know you want me. Let us make this the gladdest day in our lives. Are you willing?"

The girl's radiant face upturned to his was all the reply he needed. His head bent, their lips met, and there in the quietness of the great woods their betrothal was sealed.

**THE END.**

### **Transcriber's Notes:**

Page 159, messing things us so fast ==> messing things up so fast

[The end of *Storm King Banner* by H. A. Cody]