



IN doing what we ought, we deserve no praise, because it is our duty.
—St. Augustine.

Winning the Wilderness

(Continued from last week.)

WHEN the turning point came to the sick man, the up-climb was marvellous, as his powers of recollection asserted themselves.

"It is just a matter of self-control and good spirits now, Shirley, and you have both," Dr. Carey said, as he sat by his patient on the ninth day.

"You staid the game out, Carey," Shirley said with an undertone of hopelessness behind his smile. "What possessed you to happen in, anyhow?" "I was possessed not to come and turned back after I'd started. If I hadn't met Mrs. Aydelot coming after me I'd have ramped off up on Big Wolf Creek for a week, maybe, and missed your case entirely."

"And likewise my big fee," Jim interrupted. "Some men are horn lucky. And so Mrs. Aydelot went after you. Asher's a fortunate man to have a wife like Virginia, although he had to give up an inheritance for her."

"How was that?" Carey asked, glad to see the hopeless look leaving Jim's eyes.

"Oh, it's a pretty long story for a sick man. The mere facts are that Asher Aydelot was to have bank stock, a good-paying hotel, and a splendid big farm if he'd promise never to marry any descendant of Jerome Thaine, of Virginia. Asher hiked out West and enlisted in the cavalry and did United States scout duty for two years, hoping to forget Virginia Thaine, who is a descendant of this Jerome Thaine. But it wasn't any use. Distance don't count, you know, in cases like that."

"Yes, I know."

Shirley was too sick to notice Dr. Carey's face, and he did not remember afterward how low and hard those three words sounded.

"It seems Virginia had pulled Asher through a fever in a Rebel hospital, and we all love our nurses," Jim patted the doctor's knee as he said this. "And when the father's will was read out against ever, ever his son marrying a Thaine, Asher promptly said that the whole inheritance, bank stock, hotel, and farm, might go where—the old man Aydelot had already gone—maybe. Anyhow, he married Virginia Thaine and she was game to come out here and pioneer on a Grass River claim. Strange what a woman will do for love, isn't it? And to go on a forty-mile ride to save a worthless pup's life! That's me. Think of the daughter of one of those old Virginia homes up to a trick like that!"

"You've talked enough now," Shirley looked up in surprise at this stern command, but Dr. Carey had gone to the other side of the cabin and sat staring out at the river running bank-full at the base of the little slope.

When he turned to his patient again, the old tender look was in his eyes. Men loved Jim Shirley if they cared for him at all. And now the pathetic hopelessness of Jim's face

cut deep as Carey studied it.

"I say, Shirley, did you ever know a man back East named Thomas Smith?" he asked.

"No. Strange name, that! Where'd you run onto it? Smith! Smith! How do you spell it?" Jim replied indifferently.

"With a spoonful of quinine in Epsom salts, taken raw, if you don't pay attention. Now listen to me." The doctor's tone was as cheery as ever. "Well, don't make it necessary for me to tell you when you've talked enough."

In spite of the joking words, there was a listless hopelessness in Shirley's voice, matching the dull, listless eyes. And Horace Carey rose to the situation at once.

"A stranger named Thomas Smith came to the Crossing the day I came

down here. Rather a small man, with close-set, dark eyes; signed his name in a cramped, left-handed writing. I noticed his right hand seemed a little stiff, sort of paralyzed at the wrist. But here's the funny thing. He made me uneasy, and he made me think of you. Could you identify him? He looked as much like you as I look like that young darkey, Bo Peep, up at the Jacobs House."

"None of my belongings." You are a delicate plant to be so sensitive to strangers." Jim sighed from mental weariness more than from physical weakness.

"I was sensitive, and when I heard Stewart call out your name in the mail and saw this man step up as if to take the letter, I took it. And if you'll take a brace and decide it's worth while you can have it. It's addressed in a woman's handwriting, not a Thomas Smith style of pinching letters out of a penholder and squeezing them off the pen point. Lie down there, man!"

For Jim was sitting up, listening intently. With trembling fingers he took the letter and read it eagerly. Then he looked at Carey with eyes in which listlessness had given place to determination.

"Doctor, I was ready to throw up the game five minutes ago. Now I'll do anything to get back to strength and work."

"You don't seem very joyous, however," the doctor responded.

"Joy don't belong to me. We parted company some years ago. But life is mine."

"Yes, and duty?"

"Yes, and duty. Say, Doctor, if you'd ever cared all there was in you to care for one woman, and then had to give her up, you'd know how I feel. And if, then, a sort of service opened

up before you, you'd know how I welcome this."

Jim's face, white from his illness, was wonderfully handsome now, and he looked at his friend with that eager longing for sympathy men of his kind need deeply. Horace Carey stood up behind the bed and, looking down with a face where intense feeling and self-control were manifest, said in a low voice:

"I have cared, I have had to give up, and I know what service means."

CHAPTER VI.

When the Grasshopper was a Burden.

Although the flintree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stails:

Yet I will rejoice in the Lord.
—Habakkuk.

While Jim Shirley was getting back to health and his physician had many long talks regarding the past and its future; its products and its people. There was only one topic in which Horace Carey was but intermittently interested, namely, Jim's neighbors—the Aydelots. At least, it seemed so to Jim, who had loved Asher from boyhood, and had taken Virginia on sight and paid homage to her for all the years that followed. Jim accepted the doctor's manner at first as a mere personal trait, but, having nothing to do except to lie and think, he grew curiously annoyed over it.

"I wish you'd tell me what ails you!" he blurted out one evening, as the two sat together in the twilight.

"About what?" the doctor inquired.

"If I knew, I might even risk my own medicine to get over it."

"Don't joke, Horace Carey, not with a frail invalid. I've tried all day to talk to you about my neighbors and you turn the subject away as if it was of no consequence, and now, to-night, you settle down and say, 'Tell me about the Aydelots.' Why do you want to hear in the dark what you won't listen to in the daylight?"

"Oh, you are a sick man, Jim, or you wouldn't be so silly," the doctor replied, "but to please you, I'll tell you the truth. I'm homesick."

"Yes?"

"And this Mrs. Aydelot was a Virginia woman."

"Yes?"

"Well, I'm a true son of Virginia, and I thought it might make me happy to hear about somebody from —"

"You are a magnificent liar," Jim broke in.

"Evidently it's better to have you talk about your neighbors than my medical advisor to-night," Carey retorted.

"Oh, I won't say a word more," Jim declared.

"More Ananias magnificence! Do you suppose the Aydelots will be down before we go away?" the doctor asked.

"We?"

"Yes, I am going to take you with me, or give you a quieting powder when I leave here. On your own declaration you'd do anything to get back to strength and work. Now, the only way to get well, with or without a physician, is to get well. And you'll never do that by using up a little more strength every day than you store up the night before. Men haven't sense enough to be invalids. Nothing else is such a menace to human life as the will of the man who owns that life. You'll obey my will for a month or two."

"You are—a doctor, Carey. No, the Aydelots won't be down before we go away, because Virginia has been sick ever since that awful trip to Carey's

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His Prize Winners.