

Northern Messenger

Wm Bronscombe 30/06

VOLUME XL. No. 36

MONTREAL, SEPTEMBER 8, 1905.

40 Cts. For An. Post-Paid

Why Jack Burton Never Married.

(‘Friendly Greetings.’)

‘You won’t marry me? Then your uncle will have you to thank for finding himself in prison.’

Ruth turned away, sick at heart. Since her father’s death she and her mother had found a home with Ben Green, her mother’s brother. Ruth, with her pretty face and good-nature, soon became a favorite among the neighbors, and two young men in particular had her fre-

But Jack Burton did not find favor in Ruth’s eyes. Both he and his father were known to be somewhat heavy drinkers; they attended no place of worship, making fun of those who did. While, to crown all, Jack Burton behaved as if Ruth would jump at the chance of becoming his wife, thereby setting her mind against him more strongly than ever.

Ruth’s mother and uncle did their utmost to induce her to accept Burton. Ben Green was heavily in debt to Burton, and had in consequence been forced to aid the latter in some very shady affairs. Many a keg of spirits which had not paid duty had he helped to

tion, and she had made up her mind to marry no one else.

So when Jack Burton, in a condescending manner, one day offered her himself and a share of his goods, she decidedly refused him. At first he thought she misunderstood him, but when the matter became quite clear his anger knew no bounds, and he let fall words which frightened Ruth, though she did not understand them. But the girl held fast to her resolve.

Will Bevan was away on a voyage, and the cheering news had come home that at last he seemed to have set his foot on the ladder of success, having been appointed second mate.

But one day a terrific storm arose in the North Sea. The fishing smacks ran for their lives, but many of them foundered with all hands. One boat with three Pebbleton men in it was driven ashore a mile or two from home, and the crew set out to walk along the beach to let their friends know of their safety. Suddenly they were brought to a stop by a tremendous landslip. Tons of earth had fallen from the cliffs above, and lay blocking the way. ‘Overlook!’ said one of them, aghast.

It was but too true. In many parts of the east coast, where the cliffs are not protected by a sea wall, they become undermined by the sea, and fall. Buildings that once stood far inland are now at the edge of the cliff, while many have fallen with the earth on which they stood. Such a fate had now befallen ‘Overlook.’ The house itself had fallen; only some of the outbuildings at the back remained.

‘Suppose the Burtons are buried in the rubbish?’ asked the youngest of the men.

‘If they are, we can do nothing to dig ‘em out,’ was the reply. ‘Do you swarm up the cliff, Joe, and fetch help from the village—ropes, and such things. Our old bones will have a hard job to get to the top.’

Joe met a frightened crowd swarming out to where ‘Overlook’ had stood, Farmer Burton in their midst.

‘Jack! my son! my son!’ the latter was moaning. Search for the missing man was at once begun. For a time it was in vain, but at length Joe, peering over the cliff, heard a slight groan. Lowering himself by a rope, he found Jack Burton lying amid masses of soil, unable to move. Hastily returning, Joe told Farmer Burton that his son still lived; and then, with great difficulty, the wounded man was hauled up. He no longer had a home to which he could be taken, so he was carried to the nearest cottage—that of Ben Green.

There he lay for many weary weeks, and there, forgetting her dislike of him, Ruth herself nursed him back to health. Much of the property was gone for ever, though some of the stock had been saved. But, lying there in his helplessness, Jack Burton found that there were other things besides property worthy of a man’s attention. The God whom he had slighted had spared his life, and brought him back from the very brink of the grave. Was he going to spend his future life as he had done his past, seeking nothing but his own pleasure?

He looked at Ruth as she moved quietly



JACK BURTON WAS LYING AMID MASSES OF SOIL, UNABLE TO MOVE.

quently in their thoughts. Will Bevan was a well-built, good-looking young seaman, but without a penny to call his own. He had good abilities, but never seemed to get a chance to make the most of them. He was, moreover, as honest as the day, and really tried to live as a Christian should.

Jack Burton, on the other hand, was the son of a well-to-do farmer. The Burtons had come to the place as strangers, having bought an old manor house which stood at the top of the cliff, near Pebbleton, overlooking the sea—hence its name ‘Overlook.’ The owner of ‘Overlook’ was looked up to with envy by his poorer neighbors, and many a girl in the village would have been glad of Ruth’s chance of one day becoming its mistress.

carry to ‘Overlook.’ He felt himself completely in Burton’s power, but he had the young man’s word that on the day of the latter’s marriage with Ruth he would cancel all his debts to him. Ben Green therefore told Ruth plainly that, unless she consented to marry Burton, he would turn her and her mother out of doors.

But in spite of all, Ruth had made up her mind not to marry a man whom she knew to be godless, and who was in a fair way to become a drunkard. She knew that even the worldly prosperity of such men seldom lasts long, and she shrank from uniting her life with that of a man who scoffed at the God she tried to serve. Poor though he might be, Will Bevan had won her respect and affec-