



WORK and love; that is the body and soul of the human being. Happy is he where they are one.

—Auerbach.

The Turning Point

By Philip Verrill Mighels.

THE midnight aspect of Broken Hill mining camp, in the midst of a downpour of rain, was scarcely calculated to inspire the heart with rapturous enthusiasm, especially to a lonely woman traveler, wearied to the last degree by the labored locomotion of the stage, ten hours overdue and finally nearing its goal.

A dozen red lights were visible from the hill that the coach was descending. Two were large and reflected in the mud. They marked the popular saloons. A few shone forth from the Queen Bee Hoisting Works, where an engine pulsed incessantly, like a Titan breathing in toil. The others dotted the blackness here and there like distant stars, too old and worn for radiance. It seemed as if the rain must drown them out.

When the horses swung around the turn the lights were visible no longer. Down through the hollow, and then up a slope, the vehicle wallowed in the mud. Five minutes later the journey was done. Horses and coach were on the sidewalk edge before the rain dripped down from the slanted roof above.

"Hullo!" called the driver, and out from the place came three slow men in the garb of the early-day miner. "Lady inside," the driver told them briefly. "Name, Mrs. Watson. Open the door there, Steve, and help her out."

"A lady!" said two of the thoroughly astounded citizens with visions of some active young beauty instantly conjured in their minds, and they stared at the driver in utter incredulity.

"Steve" was a big, good-natured fellow, gentle as a girl with a woman. He swung off his hat with commendable alacrity and stepped beneath the ceaseless drip, pulling the stage door open vigorously.

Then came a mild surprise. The passenger was a white-haired, frail, little woman, over sixty years of age, with broken black gloves upon her hands and a crushed, dingy bonnet on her head.

Despite the hardships and fatigues of the journey, despite her weariness, the lateness of the hour and the dismal wetness of the desolation, she was rosy with excitement and her eyes were bright with smirks as she looked about at the three rough men in the yellowish light from the store.

"Thank you," she said in a sweet, unfaltering voice to Steve, who assisted her out. "I'm sorry to cause so much trouble and arrive so late. The poor horses couldn't pull any faster."

"No trouble 't all, ma'am," Steve assured her gallantly. "Glad to see a lady in the camp."

of the men, and he divined inside the stage.

The driver threw down the mail and express. Speech was washed out of his being. He knew the men would escort his fare to the warmth of the store-hotel, and was therefore presently urging his team to the nearly stable and comfort.

It was only a step inside the store, and Steve, with the others, soon had the midnight passenger near the stove, in the light of a lamp, at the side of the table, from which their cards had been swept with unusual haste.

Now that the first tongue-loosening



A small beginning in a school yard, which is bound to grow and yield profitable returns. A good suggestion for many of our rural schools. Cultivate a love for plants and flowers in the minds of the children.

surprise of their guest's arrival had subsided, the three men stood about the stove holding their hats in some embarrassment.

"Nice evening," but it looks like rain," said Andy Moss, hotel proprietor, timidly. "Did Charlie say your name was Mrs. Dobson? I didn't quite catch it."

"Mrs. Watson," said the visitor, taking off her gloves to warm her hands. "I—I feel a little bit strange, so far from home. I've come a long way to try to find my boy. He's here, isn't he?"

She smiled as if she felt they knew her boy by the mothering instinct so unbounded in her nature.

"Long way," said Steve. "Sorry they turned on the rain."

"What's his name—your boy?" inquired Andy Moss. "Somebody here in Broken Hill."

"Why, yes—Frank Watson," said the eager and flushed old lady. "Of course, you must know if he's here." Steve, who was standing at the left of the stove, started, ever so slightly, and stared. Then moving a trifle out

of the range of her view, he remained there in silence and waited.

"Watson?" repeated Andy doubtfully. "Sounds sort of half-way familiar, but—Billy, Steve, do you know any Watson in the camp?"

"Not me—nope, I don't," replied the man called Billy. "Know nearly everybody, too."

Mrs. Watson became a trifle aghast. The lines of maternal worry, deep graven by the past few years of silence on the part of her son, who was known to be some where out in this land of the elemental forces, came with the signs of weariness to banish the brightness from her face.

"He must be here—I've hunted everywhere," she answered, attempting a smile. "I was told he was working in this village. This is the only Broken Hill?"

"Only one, I guess," agreed Andy. "Maybe your son has come to these parts recent."

"No, he must have been here a year," said the gray-haired little woman. Her smile faded wistfully, despite her utmost efforts. "Everyone would know him, and like him. He's the kind they like. I'm sure he must be about here somewhere. If he isn't here I don't know where I shall go to look for him."

Steve had been struggling with an impulse. He was silent for a revealing full minute, in which he had a rather sense of the utterly crushing disappointment that would come upon the hopeful little woman.

"Wal, now, perhaps he might be here, ma'am, all the same," he volunteered, a trifle nervously. "I reckon he might be working at the Queen Bee mine, where I know they've got several strangers."

"You've seen him there? He's a good, honest miner," said the son with a worried appeal in her eyes. "You're sure it's Frank?"

"I'm only kind of half-way sure," said Steve uneasily. "Perhaps if you was to lay down and rest yourself a little while, maybe—"

There he halted. He could not find words to carry him further. "I suppose I couldn't expect to see him to-night," said their visitor, once more flushed with hope. I've come so far. I could sleep at last—I know I could sleep if I could see him."

Steve felt a sickening sense of dread and guilt, excited by the untold agonies of mind and spirit which this uncomplaining little woman had suffered.

"It ain't very far to the Queen," he said. "I could go there and see if your son is on the roof."

"It's a very wet night," said Mrs. Watson, her eyes beseeching the favor which she felt she had no right to ask. "I'm afraid it would be so much trouble."

"No trouble 't all," Steve told her stoutly. "I'll bring in some wood before I go."

Pantomiming significantly to the others, he started at once for the shed at the rear, with Moss and Billy at his heels. They had felt something pregnant in the air, but they could not make out what Steve intended to do to ease the little old lady's mind.

"Now what in thunder you goin' to do?" inquired Moss when the trio had come to the shed. "I know every doggone galoot in the Queen and there ain't no Watson in the gang."

"Ain't you?" said Steve by way of answer. "I said Steve Bee, but I meant the Queen of Queens. It's Tawson—Flash Tawson's her boy. Don't you understand that?"

"Tawson?" said the others in a breath. "Tawson?"

"I've known for a year his name was turned around," Steve added informally, "but I never knowed he had a mother."

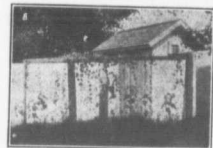
"Smokin' Equimos!" said Andy. "And a sweet, old mother like her! Then what's our game?"

"There's nuthin to do but to let him know she's here," said Steve. "He'll have to run it then to suit himself."

"By jing!" said Billy in astonishment. "Wonder what he'll do?" "You fellows carry on and keep her company," instructed Steve. "I'll break the news to Flash."

They took up some wood, though the box within was nearly full, and returned once more to the store.

Mrs. Watson, exhausted by the long, hard trip, then suddenly disheartened



School closets screened by vines at a cost of 65 cents. Above growth in August. There are fine trees here and the directors have put up a good substantial wire fence. Will other teachers and school officers help to solve this problem?

and once more soothed by a ray of hope, had fallen asleep in her chair. How gray and tired she appeared! Such a look of care had come to take advantage of the sentinels of courage in her eyes that the figure she presented seemed the very symbol of weariness and endless mother yearning.

Billy and Moss sat down and held their stocks of wood in reverent awe. Steve crept out at the front of the store, put down his wood on the sidewalk and headed across and up the street, through mud to the wrinkles of his ankles.

The brightest and gayest of the town's saloons was just a block away. Music of banjos and loud guitars, with hoarse, nasal singing and hawking, came floating forth in the sudden rain on a gush of alcoholic fumes.

Within, as Steve entered, there were groups of rough-dressed men and a number of women. A swarm three deep was clustered about a faro-table far back in the room at the rear.

Steve stooped down, took up a deuce of hearts from among a lot of playing cards strewn upon the floor, produced the stub of a pencil from his pocket and scribbled a message on the pasteboard.

He forced his way inside the ring of players at the faro layout just at the end of a deal. A young-looking fellow with smooth black hair, blue eyes and a chalky, innocent cast of countenance was shuffling the deck, his soft, white hands as deft as a skilled magician's.

He looked up as if in response to something telepathic and caught the light that blazed in Steve Donner's eyes. Steve, in his blunt directness, pushing the deuce of spades across the cloth and Flash took it up and glanced it over.

If the slightest conceivable flush of color came and went across the mask of his face it was seen by none save Steve. Into a pocket went the card carefully and into the deal-box went the deck, and the game was once more ready. The message had apparently melted fire.

Down on the layout showered silver, gold and chips as the bettors prepared for the deal. Then two by two a dozen pairs of cards came forth from the silver box and the gambler's fingers, and bets were raked in and bets were paid as Steve stood there watching his man.

(Continued next week).

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