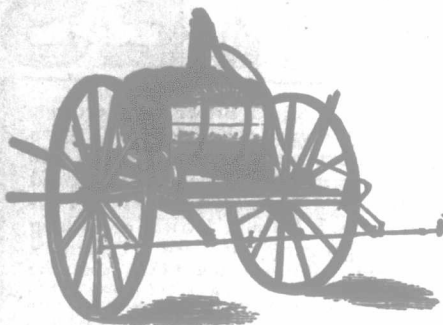


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"Peace, be still; peace, be still."

Rob listened with downcast head. He could not look at her—he dared not, so full was his heart.

"Come een, Meester Hilton," said Gar', more respectfully at the door whither Rob had escorted Cuby; "come een, have leetle 'musement, eh? Sure, that ees tam good way," and he winked suggestively of a recruited jug.

"No," said Rob, "I must be up yonder, ready for my work in the morning." He turned suddenly to Cuby. "I will work for our home with all my might, little girl," he said.

Cuby nodded assent, but she was distinctly weary of Rob. His easy smiles, his ready laughter, with its complement of glittering white teeth, the accustomed swagger of his gait—all these amiable qualities seemed to have left him, as if some mysterious wand of hate had touched and changed him in an hour into the form of withering eld.

"You act funnee," she adured him. "You act lak' you was walkin' 'round in you' sleep, lak' you was in your baid asleep." She tried the effect of her own merry laugh.

Rob smiled wanly; but it seemed to him, as he climbed the hill, that her words were not inapt. To his own soul, he seemed to be, walking in his sleep.

CHAPTER XII.

The Fight With Beasts.

The slow Leevya Potter had sailed off at last with her cargo of wood. In the faithful processes of time she returned, like the proverbial bad penny, to her native shore—the signal for a gala night among the rum-loving of the River.

Both Cuby and her father counted upon this as a means of rallying Rob once more. The vain girl, ignorant and impetuous as she was innocent, instead of congratulating herself on his sustained habit of temperance and condoning his moods of sorrowful dignity, was alert with suspicion; and for very pride's sake, in the face of her small world, would rather have him fallen and her own.

The "Hill" was all too plainly the haven where he would be. He worked doggedly and unfalteringly; his calls at the River grew fewer and more brief. Then, after the slow sliding in of the Leevya, Bate approached Rob in that ingratiating style which boded only ill to its victim.

"I was down to the River this mornin'," he said. "Cuby sent up word she wanted to see ye particular."

Rob went at once. On entering Gar' Tee-bo's door he fell at once upon the purpose of his summons, and a singular group, seated in intense devotion around a table on which stood a profusion of bottles, some with labels which he recognized as of distinction of quality and well approved in his revels of old. Bate, he observed with some surprise, had arrived before him, and was already seated at the table.

"Take a cheer," cried a convivial voice. "Come on, Bobby, an' have a little o' the hummin' bird. S-s-sh. Ain't this the purtiest mess o' booze ye ever did see? A man can't allus be a parson. 'All work an' no play makes Jack—'"

Rob surveyed the scene and turned white, not with the struggle of self-denial, but with the very demon of anger. He turned on his heel, slammed the door behind him, and walked away.

Cuby called to him, Gar' shouted after him with an oath, but he tramped on sturdily, and the outline of his shoulders was forbidding. He had become physically a problem which the denizens of the River had no disposition to tackle, and his insolent, broad back was allowed to disappear into the dusk, unmolested.

"Heen no good. Heen fool," said Gar', maliciously.

"Ma'y Sting'ree has made of her self a witch to him, she has him bewitch''," averred Cuby, in a high

passion of mortification and disappointment.

"Look here, Cuby," said Bate, once an acknowledged suitor for her hand who had been despised for the sake of the fair-haired Rob, "look here, Ma'y ain't no witch. The 'is witches that I know of, but it ain't her."

He winked at her as he met her eye, with an assumption of the old-time license to render her her due of admiration.

Rob marched on up the hill; and he had now no bewildered sense of walking in his sleep. His spirit was afire, his soul was resolute. Once he paused in exultation, and shook his fist in the direction of the low orgies at the River.

"You did not trap me this time, no. You laid some honey for the bear—and the bear did not care a d—n for it, did he? You baited up your old hooks—and the fish swum past 'em without a nibble. You've met your man, now, you devils, and we'll have it out. You'll find what I'm made of. You'll find whether I've forgotten, or can ever forget the blood—the good blood—the high blood—that runs in my veins—you; why, my grandfather, my father, would have looked at you as all of a mess with the dirt under their feet."

Rob's nostrils quivered, his head towered high; he scarcely felt the tedium of the ascent as he turned again to climb. He stood on the summit, looking seaward. The moon had risen, and the holy splendor of the world beat in awesomely upon his consciousness.

"Say, it's wonderful, just living, up here," he breathed to himself; "it's—it's—interesting. Just living and looking 'round is interesting enough, up here, by Jove."

The night was by far too glorious to ignore, and the Stingaree house was dark; Mary, calling on some of the neighbors, probably. Rob, high of heart, feared nothing. The sense was upon him that he could march anywhere, even over the brink of a precipice, scathless.

"There must be a superb view over at 'Spook House' to-night," he murmured. "I'll go over there and take a peek at it."

Through ditch and brush and along the edge of ledges he made his way, for he was unfamiliar with the trail known to the natives, along which only once Cuby had directed his steps when, absorbed in her pretty merriment, he had gone with her to hear the "knockin's" at Spook House.

There had dwelt at one time at Power Lot and the River a purely English element, so far inspired by religious and æsthetic sense as to rear a little church on the commanding pinnacle toward which Rob was now advancing. That little band of worshippers—expatriate in this strange land—had long since ceased to assemble at any earthly summons, though the bell in the old steeple called weirdly for them on certain nights when the wind was high. And there were some who said they did assemble, all in wedding-white, amid the aisles of the crazy old church now called "Spook House"—where no other congregation had gathered for many a long year. Only the lovelorn, for lack of any more cheerful or definite entertainment, were accustomed to wander thither through the sentimental shades of evening to listen to the "knockings" made by the supernatural visitors within.

Meanwhile, whatever single item of the wild and tragic had been lacking to the landscape of Power Lot was supplied by this old hulk of an edifice, standing towerlike, wind-beaten and desolate, on its forlorn height, a thrilling reminder of transcendental reverie to all the country round.

Rob had forgotten about the knockings. The night drew him, and the moonlight, and the awful isolation and grandeur of the site. It was farther than he had imagined, but he walked on stoutly, coming up at the rear of the church, and intending to

(Continued on next page.)