

THE STAR IN THE TREE

(By Ezekiah Butterworth.)

My story has its field in a very strange country.

The Mosquito Coast, a strip of land abounding in bananas, stretches for some two hundred miles between the points that have been assigned by scientists to the digging of the Panama or the Nicaraguan Canal.

To the south of it is Colon, and to the north Georgetown.

It is a strange country, indeed, hot, flat, full of malaria that in some places envelops it like a cloud.

How do the black people live in such a climate? They become immune, that is, they become so inured to the fiery atmosphere that it no longer harms them; they are part of it, and fire does not harm fire.

There is one protection against air-pollution and mosquitoes; it is to live high in the air. But the coast is almost level. There are terrible storms and tempests there, and sometimes earthquake shocks that come from the distant volcanoes.

Here and there a gigantic tree, cottonwood, tamarind or ceiba, looms like a tower over the tangled vegetation. The winds do not topple it over. It is a vegetable castle.

When near the coast we had been assailed by a sudden storm of wind, and knew no whither we were drifting.

The guide was inquisitive. We rested under a tree of trembling leaves at noonday.

"I never understood the heap of words at the beginning of that tree hymn long what you call 'The Star of Bethlehem,'" said he.

"When marshalled on the nightly plain the glittering hosts bestud the sky," and explained to him the early night march of the stars.

"A far lay the sea, a plain of shining silver. It shined and beat in the distance. Was there a tree of rock or coral barrier in the far silvery up-beave? I know not, for I have never studied the topography of the Mosquito Coast."

"We travelled on again in the silent shadows of the afternoon. Here and there were cocoanut-trees of whose water I drank freely to keep away the malaria. My guide would cut off the top of a cocoanut with one or two strokes of his machete, a long hatchet-like knife which all guides carry, and present to me a little bucket of deliciously cool water, fresh from the well-tree."

"Once a blood snake glided before us, a ribbon of red fire, whose bite was almost instantly as deadly as that of the fer de lance of the French Antilles."

"Towards the middle of the afternoon we came in sight of the tree, which curious object filled me with wonder. Half-way up the English sailor Starling had made a kind of room or lookout of boards, with a shutter that opened and closed. This with the space in the interior of the tree constituted a room at the height of a second or third story."

"As we approached the tree, we saw that this curious room was reached by an elevator, or a rope with a counterweight, like the old-fashioned device for drawing water. Above the room was some curious object like a large tin box, painted black."

"We came to the foot of the tree. The latter stood on a slight elevation and faced the far sea."

"Hello!" shouted my guide. "Say, sailor Starling, hello! I've brought a stranger to see you!"

An old man's head projected from the shutter, and looked out, as greatly surprised and somewhat bewildered.

I explained to him that it referred to the blood, heart, and brain, and asked:

"What is the name of the man who lives in the tree?"

"His name is Starling, old Jack Starling, heathwise, that is what I have always heard him called. He can play a bass viol, so it is said; and he has heavy brows, and lifts them when he sings."

"Does he come to the town often?"

"Not often, Christmas days and provision days fetches him some-where at 'bout you 'ou 'on 'sout; old, lonely man."

"The holidays were approaching, and there was to be a Christmas concert in the little church here."

"Do you think that he will come to the concert?" I asked.

"He moit, and he moit not. He seems to be doing something night; nobody can tell what it is. He will never leave the tree for a journey unless a storm night is coming. A mind me, he is a little touched in mind; he lost his only son at sea on the night that he was wrecked. The boy went down in a peculiar way; he will tell you about that. That seemed to break his heart. You can see the tree miles away dark nights, it is lighter than the rest of the trees, but still there does not seem to be any lamp there. But, O, Mr. Starling—his face is beautiful. He looks like a pilgrim to the region beyond."

"And, stranger, he has made the forests friendly around him. The monkeys seem to know him, and parrots and macaws roost up in his window; and they say that an owl watches him there, like a cat. Sometimes the condors, as well the California eagles, alight on the horny branches of that tall tree, and the painter (panther) passes by there with still feet. Mr. Starling has such a heart that the very beasts and birds seem to feel it. The little children run after him on the street."

"One Christmas time, he came to the town, and the children ran out to meet him. He brought some beautiful orchids in his hands to trim the church. All at once he saw something white-like out to sea—a white mist or cloud. He threw up his hands, dropped the orchids and all the beautiful flowers, and said:

"A storm is coming! I must hasten back—or he would never forgive me."

"That was mysterious like; what did he mean by 'he'? Is he hiding some one in that there tree?"

"He ran into the mangoes, and was gone. The air grew black, and the wind rose, and after a while we could see something luminous in the sky. It dwells, like a pillar in the sky. Whom did he mean by 'he'?"

"We will soon know," said I.

"The next day—an early winter brightness, in a humid land where is no winter—we set out on a somewhat long journey, to visit the man who lived in the tree."

"As we passed out of the town of one long street, people gazed at us curiously with distended eyes and wide mouths. The fat, waddling mammas wondered whether I were any relation of 'his.' The children hoped that we would bring him back with us, and that the weather would be fair, for he never came to the town or stopped there in foul, gray weather."

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A VISION OF ROSES

(By Lydia Whitfield Wright.)

There often comes back to my mind, and to my heart as well, a vision of June roses.

How often it is that some phase of nature brings to us with singular distinctness different conditions of life, and the influence thereof.

A trolley ride may prove just as fruitful of happy impressions as a spin in the finest, speediest automobile in the country, if you have eyes to see. But if we have not sight of heart as well as eyes in our heads, we may rest assured neither will bring us many visions. It is as if a trolley tells us, unless we put our hearts into a thing, there is no use of putting our heads. The heart-sight that helps us to see the beauty of nature; that helps us to divine the hidden lives of those who are striving to order their hearts in harmony with divine commands.

It was on a June day, one of those days which seem to put one in the mood of singing over and over the words, "What is so rare as a day in June," and I was one of a party enjoying a trolley ride. As we sped along, many beautiful homes passed before the eyes, like painted vistas of moving pictures. Surrounding many of them stretched fine grounds, laid out with artistic effect, the work of experienced gardeners. On many a green, sloping lawn rose finely wrought trellis frames, supporting masses of roses, aglow with rich profusion of crimson roses.

But we all know that a trolley line is one of the most democratic of things in the world, absolutely no respecter of persons, or neighborhoods. We have scarce time to take in the view of grand and imposing residences, ere the cottage homes of the less wealthy class come in for a share of attention, and so on down the scale. On the particular ride to which I have reference, we soon left behind the more imposing avenues, and passed through streets of pretty cottage homes, with tiny wildernesses of garden flowers nodding and peeping modestly with their bright faces at the passer-by, and on and on till we were passing through a poor and uninviting neighborhood, when suddenly there appeared, as if were, a burst of crimson glory. There over the roof of a little humble dwelling place, waved a regal crown of crimson roses. All up the rough, unimproved sides it had wrought its upward ascent, and a luxuriant green foliage brightened here and there with a bit of color—the roses that had been content to bloom upon the way, and leave the heights to more ambitious climbers.

The neighborhood was a part of the city relegated to factories and rail-road shops and houses presented a sooty, weather-worn appearance. The rose vine in question, all aglow with its thousands of crimson blossoms, seemed so unlooked for, and so needed, that the effect was extremely uplifting. It brought to mind a thought of that Divine Love which is without money and without price.

And as we sped on upon our journey homeward, I carried with me a more lasting vision of that rose vine glorifying its humble surroundings than of all the others that I had seen upon the most beautiful lawns.

I believe that to each and every one of us, there comes the gift of Divine grace, which it received with a heart eager for uplift abides with us, blossoming forth into Christian virtues. And like the rose-vine, it is as transcendently beautiful, amid simple, unlovely surroundings, as amid culture, refinement and the fairest environments. Ah, is it not even more so? Does it not show forth more clearly than the supernatural—the Divine?

When will we be convinced that a lady in the truest sense of the word,—which means truthful, honest womanhood,—may be behind a counter, in a workshop, in a kitchen, just as well as in a higher sphere. I am quite sure that dabbling in paint, thrumming a piano, affecting the literary, are no component parts of true ladyship, however frequently they may be its accompaniments.

We often hear it said, or at least we sometimes hear it said of a man, "He is one of nature's noblemen." That means he is naturally a honest, upright, humane man. A good man. Why should it not be said as frequently of women? One of the truest ladies I ever knew was a girl who never saw inside a college or university. But her mother was a woman of exceptional Christian virtues and practices, and had taught this girl to be truthful and unselfish. These qualities rendered her both trustworthy and attractive. There is no force so majestic in the world as unselfishness. It teaches consideration of others' feelings, which is the primal law of courtesy, the choicest flower of good breeding. My affectionate regard for my young friend, the girl in question, might have unduly influenced me in her favor, but the verdict of a comparative stranger, and one whose decision was above all criticism, since she was the directress in a young woman's college, confirmed my own, when after but a brief acquaintance she pronounced her one of the most ladylike girls she had ever met.

Do you think it possible this girl could have deceived so experienced a judge by any semblance of good-breeding? No, not for a moment. The ease of manner, the air of unaffected, unconscious gracefulness that attracted all, were simply the results of an inner sweetness of disposition, and a spirit at peace with itself and all the world. Whenever I think of her, some act of her truthfulness, or unselfishness come back to me, and although lovely in person, she seems a thousand times lovelier in reality.

There is a force within us greater than all outward charm. We meet those who attract us in the beginning, but soon they weary us, and we wonder that we should have thought so well of them at first. On the other hand, we come to esteem, to hold surprisingly dear, those who were at first little considered. What wrought the change? The force within. First impressions are too often attractiveness. Lasting impressions come from mutual understanding, mutual appreciation, and in some instances, a deep admiration.

A last word. Let us say not, "Ah if I were but different situated, I would do this and so." Think not of the emblem of the Japanese, the lily, of the lily with its feet in the black mud—its heart of gold in a circle of pearl-white petals lifted

THE SEVEN DOLORS

NINTH MONTH 30 DAYS

September

Table with 3 columns: DAY OF MONTH, DAY OF WEEK, COLOR OF VESTMENTS. Lists liturgical events and feast days for September 1904.

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Why the I.O.F. Grows The Western Canadian published at Manitou, Man., in its issue of July 21st, has the following article. It need only be said that the spirit in which the Rev. Mr. Gordon was dealt with is the same as that in which the Supreme Executive deals with all the members of the I.O.F.

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