

those who live constantly in her vicinity, for it strikes me that she is a woman of superior constancy. With her, the old friends would be the valued friends, the ones she held dearest.

"I would marry her to-morrow if Carline would speak the word; yes, if she would speak the word. But women are bafflin'-bafflin' as the wind, sir."

"For some of us, that is true; but not for you, sir—not for you. Do not tell her that Nell and Gid have gone to the River," advised Doctor Margate clearly; "tell her that you broke away. Women adore boldness. They love it. Just say that you broke away."

Jacob surveyed the medical man, the dawn of a hitherto unrelated continent opening in his dun-brown eyes, and was speechless. At this juncture Nell and Gid advanced over the hill, having performed a sort of ruse to entrap their ancient in his amorous designs.

"Go right on and make your call"—the hearty voice of the doctor reassured him. "Mrs. Treet is looking out from her window yonder, and she will see for herself that, for her sake, you have broken away."

Jacob Trawles set out for Mrs. Treet's house at a gait unsurpassed in any recent events of his history, not excepting the time when Mrs. Byjo's prize steer gave him a chase across the fields. Nell and Gid were a good half mile to the rear. The view was large at Power Lot. They came up, panting, crossing the doctor's bows, so to speak, just as Jacob stepped safe, with a singularly valiant mien, onto Mrs. Treet's doorstep—and further pursuit was hopeless.

Doctor Margate, seemingly engrossed in a book, glanced up pleasantly at the sound of Nell's insistent loud breathing, and saw her fanning her pert, insolent face with her hat, while Gid, with affected ease of manner, stood stuffing some newly-whittled tobacco into the crater of his pipe. Nell was as worldly a girl as city or country ever bred. She had heard that the doctor was rich; and the delightful romance of elderly men stepping off the stage and leaving their fortunes to young wives was one of the most pleasing of her occasional literary diversions.

So she smirked at the distinguished gentleman without one saving gleam of bashfulness or timidity.

"A very breezy day," she simpered. "Baffling—extremely so," replied the doctor, gallantly, and gave back his attention to the pages of his book.

A moment later, when no human travesty was imposed upon the greatness of the scene about him, he pondered why, since scenery and environment were said to have such a vital influence upon character, Power Lot should have produced late Stingaree, and Nell and Gid, and some others. But his heart turned to Mary Stingaree, and all nature rose in confirmation of its offspring; and even of poor Rob Hilton, too, city-ridden, pleasure-spoiled—and so late adopted, yet whom the magnitude of the sea and the priestly glory of the hills—and love, perhaps, hopeless love of the sweet woman, for whom his own love, too, was hopeless—had awakened to infinite aspirations.

CHAPTER XX.

Side-saddling the Log.

Of the diplomacy of Captain Stu Belcher there had never been any doubt.

With a hail and a roar he brought his oxen up past Mrs. Byjo's, and when he discovered Doctor Margate taking a stroll farther down the road he drove his chariot of four wheels and a log in that direction with a mighty rattling and a swifter advance than usually appertains to such a vehicle.

"Git on, sir. Git on. Lemme give ye a lift. You're young enough ter side-saddle on a log, by Humfrey, an' will be fr twenty years to come. Whoa, you golden wireless telegraphers, you," he bellowed at

his oxen, who found it as difficult to stay their pace as it had been in the first place to acquire it. "Git right up—call it side-saddlin', tho' we ain't got no saddies; jest the other side o' that knot, unless ye want ter put a slylight through yer trowse's. You ain't got nobody ter mend 'em for ye. I have, an' I done well, too, Doctor Margate—I done d—n well."

"That's good," said the doctor, riding the log skillfully, and enjoying a most unaccountable elation therefore; it may have been the atmosphere, it may have been the world around him, but the cushions of his victoria and the padding of his electric cab, as his mind reverted to them, seemed base and discommodious in comparison. "I'm glad you found a good mate. I hope you deserve her. And now look here, Captain Belcher, don't you let Robert Hilton bring Cuby Tee-bo up here on the hills and carry out that fake marriage to her. I expect you to look out for that, or there'll be sad consequences for you. Mind what I say—that must not be done."

"Why, now, what you got ag'in that pretty little Kanuck?"

"Nothing whatever; she's a treasure, she a beauty, with a man of her heart to guide her along; but Rob Hilton is not that man, and she is not the girl of his heart. That was a little escapade; they have never really chosen each other; the marriage was a fake, and they've both got a haunting suspicion of that fact, too."

The great Belcher looked stoutly, boldly, at the doctor; the doctor's keen eyes did not flinch.

"Look a' what your Rob Hilton was when he come here," at last spoke Belcher, in a tone of unappreciated merit that could not help but thrill his listener with its wonder and reproach, "an' then look a' what I've made of him."

"You made of him?"

"Sure as herrin' for breakfast. Sure. He come here, out o' the booze settlements thar' to his native town, a natterally struttin' Shang-hi rooster with Bantam lightness o' dispersion an' a goose giggle. An' me, or somebody else—call it me—tied him down to this dull 'arth with a sense o' responsibilities an' duties an' sorrers, an' all sech drippin' from the mother cow necessary ter raise up a healthy calf. Ain't that so?"

The doctor bit his lip and briefly nodded.

"He was a derelic', he was," continued Belcher, "on the drift, ef ever the' was one; an' somebody—call it me—took an' anchored o' 'im so tight he's been grubbin' away contented ever sence, sweatin' all the microbes an' tomfollery out o' his system, an' raisin' pertaters three dozen to the hill. An' now you come over from New York an' want ter heave over all his ballas an' lighten up on his moorin's an' send him bumpin' an' careenin' like a durn tram o' the seas ag'in. My Humfrey, but you got a gall on ye."

Doctor Margate laughed hilariously, but Belcher regarded him with a steady reprobation and made not the slightest acknowledgment of the ring of sympathy in his tones.

"The Senate misses you, Captain Belcher—you don't miss the Senate"

any. As a matter of fact, though, it was I who sent Robert Hilton to grubbing in the earth, and a certain Captain Jim—a—Jim Turbine has been a sort of hovering—a—decent fellow, with a weather eye out for poor Rob and Mary in this Beulah-land to see that the wolves did not get them quite; and you, Captain Belcher, you, being in a humorous mood, practiced some of your tremendous pleasantries on poor Rob, putting him in an insufferably false position. It was what I call a dastardly piece of work."

"Git out," said Belcher coolly; "you a man o' science, by Tamarack, and don't know what the ropes is that fairly cove a man an' knocks all the gale outer him, so's what friskiness he has left is no more 'n a sucklin' lamb, jumpin' on all fours an' kickin' out his hin' legs at nothin'." You don't know—that your kentry air an' your honest 'til an' all yer corneal mush an' moonshine wouldn't 'a' proved a rope ter holt that derelic', no more 'n a strand o' knittin' cotton. No sir, it was me done it. Joke or 'arnest, it was me hove out the right size o' cable—it was that thar' marriage-tie done the job."

The broad smile on Dr. Margate's hypnotized countenance again culminated in explosive laughter.

"The world of political rivalry, of commercial activity, misses you, Captain Belcher—but you do not miss it. How admirably, for instance, you ride on a log. The pounding over rocks and ruts seems to give you only a firmer seat and a more graceful carriage, while I joggle about like a cork, in comparison, and am sometimes compelled to clutch out wildly. Well, what shall we do about Rob? Will you see to it—will you aid Captain Jim Turbine in seeing to it (for I regret to say that I am called away, and must leave Power Lot to-morrow)—that housekeeping for Rob and Cuby on the hill shall never begin? Will you step in at the needful moment and in full good season, and deliver Rob of the false burden he is bearing? I could make you considerable trouble if I chose to do so. I shall be proud to be your friend and act in unison with you if you will engage fairly to do what I ask."

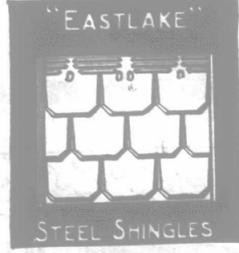
Captain Belcher glowered severely at the doctor, then looked off to the fir trees and sniffed a snuff of scorn.

"Ye couldn't drag Cuby Tee-bo up to the hill to housekeep along o' Rob. The' ain't no kind o' hawser ye could fashion 'd haul that gal up there ter wash out 'er fryin'pan an' hang out 'er clo's accordin' as Rob Hilton an' Ma'y Sting'ree an' Widder Treet an' the rest of 'em thinks fryin'pans ought ter be washed an' clo's hung. No, sir. An' I don't blame 'er. She'd fling 'er fryin'pan an' 'er suds straight inter the faces o' the whole caboodle of 'em. An' I'd do the same of I was her. Don't you worry. Cuby Tee-bo ain't ketched yet."

(To be continued.)

An English lord and his Irish valet were riding along a country road, when they passed a gibbet. The Englishman said jokingly: "Pat, if the gallows had its due, where would you be?" Pat immediately retorted: "Faith, an' I'd be riding alone, sor'!"

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