

THE INHERITANCE OF JEAN TROUVE

BY NEVIL HENSHAW
Author of "Alone in the Grand Woods," etc.
BOOK TWO.—BAYOU PORTAGE
CHAPTER III.—CONTINUED

As for the children, they were of all ages and sizes, and of such a number that Tante Odile herself was hard put to it to keep the run of them.

At present, despite the fact that there had been a recent exodus of two sons and a daughter, there was still a swarm of children about Tante Odile's door-step.

These then were the folk among whom my lot was cast,—grave, kindly folk who fought their fight each day beside the throttled bayou, and at nightfall thanked le bon Dieu that once again they had escaped the countless pitfalls through which a crafty Nature sought ever to destroy them.

CHAPTER IV
LE BOSSU RETURNS

In the interest of my new-found tasks and duties the days of Le Bossu's departure passed quickly. Indeed, so it seemed to me, I would hardly get a good grip upon the things in hand before the sun, dropping redly below the marsh line, would halt my activities until another day.

Yet for all this, and somewhat to my surprise, I found time in which to miss Le Bossu greatly. Thus far, save in matter of importance, the little man had gone his way in a manner of quiet self-effacement that had made him seem rather an item of the daily life than one who contributed toward it.

Thus, when, upon a morning some six or seven days after his departure, we learned from a passing boat that he would arrive at sunset, the household took on an air of general rejoicing. Toinette, who for the past week had stared longingly at the gap in the little circle about the fire, declared that she would scour the bayou for a pan of the small rainbow-colored perch that the little man loved.

And he must pay for them with the best and newest of all his stories; she added smilingly. "We do not have him often, and I am not to be cheated of what is my due."

Upon Papa Ton, who of late had been seized with a species of restless indecency, the news of his partner's return acted as a very effective stimulant. At once he began to take up the neglected threads of his affairs, going about the matter in a blind hurry of regret that, in one less expert, would have only resulted in the utmost confusion.

"It is ever thus," he confided to me, as he feverishly assorted a tangle of traps that, for two days, had lain in idleness beneath the shed. "When Bossu goes he takes with him, for a time, something that is, perhaps, the best part of me. If he could stay with me always I would be different. Believe me, I am ashamed of myself. Bossu will say nothing, but he will think, and that is the worst of all. I am glad that he will not return until dark for, if I am quick enough, I may yet be able to save my face."

And so Papa Ton went on all day until, with the completion of his labors near sunset, he regained his usual air of good-humored confidence. This was a very cheerful party of three that set out through the early dusk to Papa Ton's landing. That Toinette and I should greet the traveler was what might have been expected. That Papa Ton should do so, however, was only another proof of the great esteem in which he held his partner. The folk came and went with little ceremony at Bayou Portage, and there was seldom any welcome beyond that of the lighted window or open door.

On arriving at the landing Toinette and I seated ourselves upon its outer edge, and watched the reflections of the stars as they bored their tiny yellow shafts into the dark stretch of the water below. Behind us Papa Ton, restless once more by his return to leisure, tramped, impatiently up and down. Save for the creak and rattle of the loose boards beneath his feet, and the harsh chorus from the grass, the twilight was without a sound.

It was the hour of rest and quiet in the camp, the brief space of immunity which its inhabitants allowed the furtive creatures of marsh and stream. Now, from the short line of huts, came an orange glow of firelight from each open door and window, while on the air there hung the sharp and mingled odors of homely cooking, of strong tobacco, and of coarse dragged garments steaming before the open blaze.

Staring out beyond the bend of the bayou, we searched the vague sweep of sky until a dark silhouette of mast and sail appeared upon its grayness. Then Papa Ton put all his strength of voice into a great rumbling shout that awoke, from the marsh, a shrill echo of protest. "Holla, Bossu!" he cried. "Holla, Papa Ton!" piped the thin voice of Le Bossu. "You must stand by since the others will keep on below."

But Papa Ton had already unmoored his pirogue and, long before the boat swung round the bend, he waited impatiently beside the mud flat. Then came the transfer of passenger and packages, the little man's shout of thanks to the departing crew, and a moment later the sharp prow of the pirogue began to cast the shadows upon its return.

"Bossu, Bossu," called Toinette, unable longer to endure her suspense. "You have the books and pencils? You did not forget to bring them?"

"They are in my hand at this very minute, my little Toinette," came the reassuring reply. "I would not trust them with the other things."

As for myself, despite the greater suspense that I endured, I stood tongue-tied and silent. All through the busy week of Le Bossu's departure I had accepted Papa Ton's declaration that Madame Therese would allow me to remain, and had gone my way with no further thought of the matter. With the news of the little man's return, however, had come a doubt, faint at first, but steadily increasing. Then had followed the wait amid the silence of the landing in which this doubt had grown to such proportions that it effectually overshadowed the assurances of Papa Ton. Now, with the arrival of Le Bossu, I was firmly convinced that Madame Therese would refuse her consent.

For the first time I realized that she would look with very different eyes upon the virtues of the camp, and that, although her heart must go out in gratitude to these kindly marsh-folk, her city-trained mind would depreciate their influence upon me. No, Madame Therese would most certainly demand my instant return, while I, no matter how unwillingly, must obey.

Thus I called no greeting to the returned traveler, and it was not until, having landed and embraced Toinette, Le Bossu turned to myself, that I finally found my tongue. Then, with the little man's arms about me, and his shrewd kindly face smiling down into my own, I blurted forth my question.

"You—you have heard from Madame Therese?" I faltered.

The smile faded, and in the little man's sudden gravity I read the answer to my fears. "Releasing me, he began to gather up the various bundles that Papa Ton had unloaded from the pirogue, while I, relieved at his words yet vaguely alarmed at their possible meaning, prepared to follow suit. Then, when all had been laden with the various spoils collected by Le Bossu, we returned through the starlight, Toinette triumphantly leading the way with her precious books and pencils.

CHAPTER V
MY FUTURE IS DECIDED

Upon arriving at the hut I immediately began to question Le Bossu, but the little man was still, apparently loath to part with his news. "All in good time, little Jean," he demurred. "First comes supper, and I see that our little Toinette has not forgotten my fondness for perch. While I eat I will discuss the price of skins with Papa Ton, so that when the meal is finished I will be ready for you."

Thus the little man put me off, but in his voice there was a note of anxiety that heigh the lightness of his words. That his news was ill and that, through his kindness of heart he wished to spare me until the last possible moment, I could not but perceive.

Also, that he had given some hint of what was to come to Papa Ton, I could read in the big man's knitted brow and abstracted stare. All through the discussion that accompanied Le Bossu's meal he kept staring at me with a look in which there was a strange mingling of sympathy and satisfaction.

As for Toinette, absorbed for the moment in the examination of her treasures, she did not at first sense the general air of anxiety. When she did do so, however, she put an abrupt end to my term of impatience.

"Why, what is the matter with you three?" she inquired, looking up from the eager contemplation of a primer. "You are all as solemn as ovis. Is it that you are afraid that I will become too smart, or is it that—"

She paused as the truth of the situation came suddenly home to her, and in an instant she had sprung toward me, scattering her treasures far and wide.

"Jean, Jean," she cried remorsefully. "Of course I know what

it is. I should have thought of it before, had it not been for the enjoyment of my gift. Forgive me, dear Jean, and tell me what you have heard from your Madame Therese. Surely she will let you stay?"

"I do not know," said I. "I am waiting for Bossu to tell me." "Then," said Toinette, and in her voice there was a sudden catch, "his news is bad. It is ever his way to shield others from trouble and disappointment. Come, Bossu, Jean is waiting. As well now as later."

TO BE CONTINUED
TERRY

By Catherine Shannon in The Franciscan

Bob Gibbons took a firm grip on his hand bag as No. 4 began to slow down. He stepped off the train and for a few moments stood in bewilderment at the lack of people. He had forgotten that it was Carbon Station, Grand Gully, and not Grand Central, N. Y., that had received him.

"Well, this is some town," he mused. "No taxis, no people, no houses, no nothing that—"

"Hey, there, Mister, lookin' for somebody in the crowd?" Bob Gibbons wheeled around quickly and came face to face with a smiling youth of about twelve years, perched on a milk can, overalls held by one strap, minus a cap and his hair shading his freckles.

"In the crowd?" the visitor repeated after the man. "Well, that's a hot one. Say, Sonny, what's your name? And Bob Gibbons sized up his questioner, a gleam in his eye. "I'm Terry."

"Terry what?" "Terry? Oh! Terry Barnes, if that's what you mean." And the youngster on the milk can pushed the hair back from his freckled face.

"Was them your trunks that came yesterday? I helped to take them to the hotel." And he pointed to a dirty forefinger away along a dusty road. Bob Gibbons judged by the gesture that civilization lay that way.

"Well, Terry, how do you get to the hotel?" "Spike Heenan's mules generally pass this way every day about this time. An' if Spike's in good humor he generally takes the visitors up to the hotel on his wagon." Terry craned his head from the top of the milk can and looked down the road in the opposite direction. A dusty ribbon, unspooled by the presence of man or mule, lay off towards Yellow Creek mountain.

"Guess Spike must have been drunk last night. The mules ain't comin' today." "And if the mules don't come, what then?" the visitor asked. "Walk," Terry replied slightly bored. "But," he added, "sometimes Marion passes along in her car about this time and she gives them a lift."

"Marion who?" "Marion Nelson, of course," and Terry gave Bob a look of pity. "But who is Marion Nelson?" Bob pushed the question. "Just then the chug of a car was heard coming up from the direction of Yellow Creek mountain. Terry jumped off the milk can. "Here she comes. I'll get her for you," he yelled. And the overall figure planted himself in the middle of the road and started waving his arms.

"Hey there, Marion," he shouted, when the car was yet fifty yards away, "here's a man wants a lift." Bob was deep red by this time. He tumbled with his watch fob. "Jump in, Mister, and don't keep Marion waiting," and Terry reached for Bob's hand bag.

The girl in the simple white dress behind the wheel was smiling slightly. Bob Gibbons took courage from the smile. "Really, Miss, this is not my hold-up."

"That's all right," the girl replied, as she threw in the clutch. "Get in. You're one of Terry's new victims, I suppose?"

When the car had gone a few yards a rabbit bobbed across the road. Terry, without making any apologies, jumped out in the dust and scampered after it, leaving Bob and Marion without an interloper.

A few moments passed in silence. The girl in the simple white dress was the first to break the silence. "How did you meet Terry, Mister—er—?"

"Gibbons is my name, Robert Gibbons," put in Bob. "When I got off the train Terry was perched on a milk can and he called to me." Marion smiled and stepped on the gas. Soon they came in sight of Grand Gully. It was not much to look at; it had plain frame houses, and only the main street was paved. Marion drove straight to the Marble Hotel, and after a few words threw in the clutch and was off.

keep back a smile. "where's the Cedar forest?" "What you gonna do there?" questioned Terry. "Just measure the wood and—"

"Oh! I see," cut in Terry, "you're one of them fellows that looks through a funny big machine on three sticks, and has lots of money."

Bob smiled good naturedly and said, "You win, Terry. You're one too many for me." Bob's first week in Grand Gully passed very quickly. There was so much to do in the way of tracing maps and comparing blue prints that little time remained to spend on any one except Terry, who was always at hand.

The days grew into weeks and weeks began to pile up. Bob and Terry became familiar sights in the village. They worked together in the day and strolled through the hills in the evening. Terry never appeared to tire and Bob's spirits seemed always hopeful and inviting. Only once did Bob feel the twinge of loneliness, and this was expressed only by the soft, pathetic tones that rolled from his favorite cremona.

One evening Bob and Terry were returning home from their stroll in the hills. Everything was quiet. As they came farther down the gully they heard sweet notes of distant music. At first it was a faint echo, but as they turned the bend in the road it became clearer. Terry looked significantly at Bob and then dashed ahead. He returned shortly, leading Marion by the hand. She seemed half reluctant. When she saw Bob she stopped.

"Come on," said Terry, "you must sing for Bob. Here she is," shouted Terry, "she'll sing for you." "You seem to be Terry's property," said Bob, attempting to relieve the strain; for Terry had suddenly become silent. Before Marion could reply, Terry interrupted by a demand that she should sing as he had promised. But for once Terry lost out. He had to be content with walking between Bob and Marion.

They walked on together. Terry kept both of them laughing, and sometimes both of them blushing slightly at his remarks. Then they reached the edge of the woods and Marion excused herself and departed. "Well, Terry," said Bob, after Marion was out of hearing, "you're beginning to mix up things in proper shape. What will Miss Nelson think of me?"

"You mean Marion? Don't you like her, Bob?" asked Terry. Bob shook his head despairingly. "Terry, I think you're hopeless." But Terry had a feeling that Bob would like to talk more about her. And he became exceptionally silent on the point.

For the next few evenings Bob played the violin more than usual. On the third evening he was surprised to receive a letter. It bore a local stamp, and was addressed in feminine hand. He tore it open and read hastily: "Your presence is requested at a supper to be given on the evening of August 2, at 923 Birch Road. Sincerely, RUTH GABLE."

Bob's first impulse was to send his regrets. But he needed the recreation, he argued with himself, and the next morning he penned a few lines of thanks. When the evening came he was surprised by a visit from Marion and Miss Gable. Marion presented Miss Gable and then continued: "We were passing this way and we thought you might not object to riding up with us."

"Surely not, replied Bob. "I was just figuring how I would find Birch Road without Terry's assistance." From that night, Grand Gully seemed to be a different place. How strange that until now he had been dead to its charms! He arrived at the hotel and went directly to his room. He lit a cigar and pulled a chair to the window. It was a beautiful night. What a pity so few were awake to enjoy its beauty! His thoughts were disturbed by the porter.

"Forgive me, give you this before you left, Mr. Gibbons. Hope there's no bad news." Bob was too excited to answer. He tore open the letter and read it. "Confound that old fool, anyhow. I knew he'd make a mess of things. Impossible for me to leave here now. I'll—"

"Any answer, Mr. Gibbons?" "Why, yes, take this," and he hastily wrote a few lines and handed the note to the porter. "See that it goes out immediately. That ought to give him a hint how to run things for a while, anyhow," he muttered to himself when the porter had left.

As agreed, Bob kept his appointment and visited Marion's mother. "Who is it?" called out Edna.

It was only after this visit he began to wonder how he had lived in Grand Gully for six whole weeks without once visiting Marion. "If that confounded letter hadn't come," he sighed. But he did not mention it to Marion.

Weeks passed by and Bob became a regular caller at Marion's home. They were now more than friends and Terry didn't need to set any more traps for bringing them together. One evening in late September they had just returned from a party given by one of Marion's friends. Partings were becoming harder each time. And both were conscious of this.

The next morning Bob was aroused from his sleep by the porter. He held a telegram in his hand; it ran: "Come immediately if you want to save the mines. The men have threatened. Longer delay may mean the loss of many lives." P. J. Ross, Supt.

There was only one thing for Bob to do: He hurriedly packed his bag and told the porter to reserve his room till further notice; he wrote a few lines to Marion and rushed to catch No. 4.

When he arrived at the station there was nobody in sight—except Terry. There he was perched, as he was the first time Bob met him, on the milk can. He looked surprised but did not speak. "Here, Terry," shouted Bob, "be sure and deliver this to Marion," and he handed him the note he had scribbled in his room. Without another word he boarded the train and was off.

Mr. Ross, the superintendent, met Bob at the station. Things at the mine were even worse than he had stated. The miners were on strike. For the next few weeks Bob worked as never before, trying to conciliate the men and the officials. The men were determined. "They would not be fooled this time," they said.

After a week or so matters began to clear up, and Bob was able to see some results. The worst over, he began to think of other about Marion. He would like to have gone to Grand Gully, but he could not think of leaving at present. "But why didn't she write?" He kept asking himself that question. Surely, the note to her explained all. She surely understood. Days passed, and when no letter came Bob began to lose hope.

October was signing faintly through the lonely willows on the hills in front of Marion's home. The young girl looked pale and worn as she gazed out over the open stretches of forest land on which the moonlight fell. She thought and thought, but could not understand. About 10 o'clock she walked slowly to her room, but not to rest. Months that were very lonely for Marion passed. Yet no one heard her complain. Shortly after Christmas she took a heavy cold that kept her in her room. Finally the doctor suggested that she should go some place for a complete rest. Her mother supported the doctor strongly and advised that she go the next day to visit her cousin in Locks Port. The next morning saw her off.

Her first few letters home were not encouraging. Then came one that was a little brighter. She and her cousin were going on a skating party on the lake. She was getting rid of her cold and enjoying her visit very much. The day after Marion's last letter Terry made his appearance. He was looking wilder than ever. "Well, for land's sakes!" burst out Mrs. Nelson, "where on earth have you been for these last few months?"

"I was workin' for Spike Heenan," replied Terry, innocently. "Well, you certainly look it. You'll do anything to be around horses or mules. Come here till I get a good look at you. Give me that coat till I sew a few buttons on it."

Terry was in a bad state, mentally and physically. He didn't like the reference to Spike Heenan and the mules. He took his coat off and roughly threw it at her feet. In doing so an envelope that had once been white dropped to the floor. Terry made a wild dash for it and then turned pale. "What will I do?" he half sobbed. "The morning Mr. Gibbons left he told me to deliver this to Miss Marion and I forgot all about it."

Mrs. Nelson hesitated as the young culprit shivered before her. She wanted to shake some sense into him. She wanted to teach him to do what he was told in the future. She wanted to tell him, how much pain he had caused Marion by this last neglect of his to deliver the letter to her given him by Bob. She restrained herself and said: "What time does the next train leave for Locks Port, Terry?"

While a this was taking place in Grand Gully, Marion was busy preparing for the skating party. She arose early that morning, but still was not ready when her cousin Edna came to her room for her. "Just a second, I can't find my gloves," Marion answered.

It was perfect weather for a skating party. When they drew near the lake they were startled by a cry for help. Everybody was breathless with excitement. The girl hurried from the sleigh and cut through by a shorter foot-path. When they arrived on the scene the victims had been drawn out and a crowd was gathered around.

"Who is it?" called out Edna.

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