

When the War Was Over

BY FREDERICK R. BURTON.
Author of "Her Wedding Interlude,"
"Josef Helmuth's Goetz," "A Pot of
Gold," "The Strange Object of
Thornton Wetmore," etc.

CHAPTER XII.—A COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY.

When at last Mr. Warren descended from the hay loft he was all of a tremble. He sat down on a milking stool and tried to think. The fact that he was unable to find other trace of the intruder than the dead hen was not in itself so disturbing as that it was characteristic of the mystery that surrounded Dutton's diamonds. The man himself was a puzzle with his unexpected return, his unexpected errand into the Adirondack Mountains with apparently the wealth of an Astor in his possession. And then this man, Golding, who hinted much and claimed more, and explained nothing. What could be the history of the diamonds that they should carry crime and tragedy in their course? It was not fear that agitated the old soldier, not fear in the ordinary sense. There had been no trepidation in his ascent to the hay loft to pursue an unseen burglar; there was at fear in him now as he sat an easy target to any foe above who might choose to destroy him. The roots of his trouble lay deeper than in the mere surface that responds to the ordinary causes of fear. The diamonds and the episodes attendant upon them were secondary to the greater drama upon an act of which the curtain had risen when Dutton stepped upon the threshold the evening before.

All this in one form or another occurred to Mr. Warren as he sat with the pebble clenched in his hand, trying to understand how the attempt to break open his tool box had come about. He thought back over the chain of circumstances since he had found the pebble two or three hours earlier, beginning at the time where he had placed it in the box.

Just previous to that he had finished his work in the milk shed, and before that he had talked with his wife, and before that—

There was the critical point! He had sat in the full light of day with the pebble in his hand, working over it with a file in an absurd attempt to test its capacity for brilliancy. Somebody must have seen him then, and it must have been somebody who was cognizant of the diamonds, and who had reason to suspect the farmer of knowing something about them. Else why should he have been on the watch for the inference was inevitable that he had been watched?

Was it Golding? Golding had passed the house after the conflict at the ruined cabin, but he might have come back secretly—he had come back and talked with Martha, and he might have seen Warren groping for the diamond in the grass. He might then have committed the attempt upon the tool chest.

This supposition did not seem satisfactory, reasonable as it was, in the light of other events. Who had borrowed Dr. Nason's horse for a swift ride? Who had swept up the ashes of the cabin? Who had struck down Freeman Dutton?

Mr. Warren rose more troubled than when he had sat down, but he had come to a decision. Diamond as this pebble undoubtedly was, he would restore it to Dutton's pocket, and thus, if possible, elude further anxiety on account of it. He left the barn intending to go directly to the spare room and replace it, even at the cost of exposing his operation to his wife.

Just turning in at the gate were Turner, King and Alvah Newcomb. They met him near the log where he had attempted to file the stone.

"Mornin', Nick," said Turner, "how's the stranger?"

"Pretty comfortable," replied Mr. Warren, "but he ain't been wholly conscious yet."

Their faces were grave, and Warren noticed that they avoided looking directly at him. It was like his neighbors to call early when anything of unusual interest had happened that concerned him; they had strolled in like this on rare occasions of illness in the family, but it was not like them to glance sideways and shift from one foot to the other as if they were debating whether to make some disagreeable announcement.

King sat down on the log, and putting his elbows on his knees, stared with assumed indifference at the milk shed. Turner followed suit, and Newcomb remained standing with one foot on the log and his elbow on his knee.

"Guess we're going to have a clear day," remarked Warren.

"Guess we be," assented Newcomb, breaking off a piece of bark from the log and crumpling it in his fingers. "How'd the thing happen, Nick?"

"You know well enough what I mean—the attack on this man and the burning of Sam's cabin."

"I'm not so sure that I should know what you mean. There's been a good deal happening round here since last evening."

"Well, you know what we mean now."

"I don't know," Mr. Warren meant this remark honestly enough as a reply to the original question, but Newcomb misinterpreted it.

"Nick, you're dodging," he said, almost sternly. "You know we meant to ask you about the attempt to murder the stranger in your house."

"And I told you I don't know."

There was a dissatisfied expression on Newcomb's face as he examined the bark dust on his fingers' ends, and Turner and King remained immovable and glum.

"I don't know what right you've got to say that I'm dodging," said Warren, after a pause. "You've known me here for twenty-five years, and I don't believe there's a man in Granite, or the country either, that will say I ever deceived him or was afraid to face the facts."

"That's right, Nick," assented King, without looking up; "that's the kind of reputation you've got."

"Yes, that's right," admitted Newcomb, sadly; "and I don't say that it's

wholly, but it's partly the reason we come to ask you about this thing."

"I don't deny your neighborly interest in what happened yonder," said Warren, "and I ain't unwilling to tell you what I know, but that's mighty little. I'm as much in the dark as anybody else about it."

"We'll low that, Nick," cautiously remarked Newcomb; "but about this man: Ain't there something you know that the rest of us don't know?"

Warren compressed his lips, and for the first time since the conversation began he caught Newcomb's eyes.

"Yes," he answered, "there is."

Newcomb's eyes fell under the steady gaze of the old soldier.

"Wal," he said awkwardly, "of course every man's got a right to keep his business to himself, but we thought that under the circumstances you'd feel like telling us all about it, and we kind of thought, too, Nick, as how we had a right to know."

"I don't see it," responded Warren, firmly. "What circumstances do you mean, Alvah?"

Newcomb looked appealingly at Turner and King, but one averted his eyes and the other had not changed the direction of his stare into vacancy. Both were silent.

"The fact is, Nick," resumed Newcomb, thus forced to continue as the spokesman, "we live in a little district all by ourselves, where there ain't usually no occasion to break the laws. We get along together as neighbors had always ought to, and we don't have no need of constables or courts. Didn't you never reckon that we have no officer of the law roundabout here?"

"I've thought of it often," replied Warren, "and been proud of it."

"And when there comes along a breaking of the law we're rather hard put to it to know what to do. We can't stand by and see the law broken and not do nothing about it. 'Twouldn't do for the good name of Granite."

"Well, what are you coming to, Alvah?"

"Here's been an attempt at murder," said Newcomb, "and for what we know it may come to be murder. The law demands, and the residents here have a right to demand, that the guilty man shall be found and punished, and to that effect I may say we have a right to know all the facts."

"I have said that I can tell you nothing."

"And we think you can," Newcomb was more positive in his speech now. His prefatory remarks had rolled off better than he had feared they would, and he was now ready to spring the mine he had prepared.

"You was heard to say something powerful harsh about this stranger last night, Nick. These neighbors of yours require explanation."

He stopped as if satisfied that Warren was caught in a corner from whence he could not escape.

"So you heard me, did you," said Warren, with desperate calmness, "and you repeated what you heard. Well, that's natural. It's like you."

King kept his eyes down, but Turner looked up and said:

"We hain't been no tale bearers, Nick. We ain't the only ones who heard you wish the man had died."

"Which some people remarked Newcomb," "would say was a soft kind of saying you was sorry you hadn't killed him."

Warren's eyes flashed indignantly upon his neighbor, and Newcomb drew back, involuntarily, when the old soldier smiled his contempt.

"See here, neighbors," he said, "I've listened patiently to all you've had to say, and I suppose what Alvah says is said for all of you. Now, I'll take my turn, and I shan't keep you long. I regret what I said in the excitement last night, and I give you my solemn word that it had no reference to the attack made on Freeman Dutton."

"What's the name of the man now sick in my house?"

"We understood his name was Dutton," interposed Newcomb.

"Yes; just wait a bit, Alvah. I'm coming to your understanding. You've got a lodger at your house, I believe, whose name is Golding."

"He's stopping with us, yes."

"And he's talked this over with you, and told you how I went up the mountain alone, and how I came back to say that I found Dutton dead, and so on. He's told you all that, hasn't he?"

He naturally gave us the facts, Nick."

"And he felt as keenly as you do, no doubt, that the reputation of Granite would suffer if the assailant of Dutton wasn't caught, and you told him that there wasn't even a constable short of five miles, and him the only one in the township, and he suggested to you that in such a case the village should take the matter into its own hands. So you three appointed yourselves a vigilance committee to come up and see me and get evidence. Don't interrupt. You've read about vigilance committees in the papers, haven't you?"

Perhaps Golding made up the committee for you. Huh! the next thing I suppose will be a return of this committee with the whole village tagging along, and there'll be a trial in my dooryard with Golding for judge, witness and judge advocate, and my neighbors will come with a rope and serve as jury and hanging committee. Now, see here, Alvah, and you, too, Seth, and you, Jim, I've told you I know nothing about the attempted murder on the mountain. If so be that an officer of the law comes to hold me responsible for my deeds, even if he's only Jere Smith, the township constable, I'll go with him peaceably, and answer in any and every court every question that is put to me. But, hear me, neighbors, if you and the rest of the village take it into your heads to so much as touch me, I'll barricade my house, I'll become a soldier again, and the boundary line of my land shall be a dead line, and the first man of you that crosses it, I'll put a charge of lead through him."

Warren's neighbors heard this passionate outburst with bewilderment and consternation. Their jaws dropped, their eyes were staring, and a pallor like something like terror came over their sunburned faces. They had not calculated on this. In fact, for Warren had analyzed their visit with a fair approach to correctness, they had not been a legislative committee of investigation they would have called their trip a fishing excursion, for Golding had encouraged them to think that if they impressed themselves upon

Warren in the manner taken by their spokesman, the old soldier would make admissions, or at least say something that would tend to a breaking down of his reticence as to what had happened between him and Dutton.

Having delivered his ultimatum, and having stood a moment before them with clenched fists and flashing eyes, Warren turned abruptly and strode toward the house, where Elsie, who had been attracted by his rising voice, and who had heard the last part of his speech, stood waiting in a new fright for the strange scene to come to an end. Warren stopped as abruptly as he had started, for Golding was coming around the corner of the house, having entered the premises at the front gate instead of at the side, as the neighbors had done.

"Good morning, Mr. Warren," he said, with serenity; "may I have a word or two with you in private?"

Warren's profound anger was not of the kind that destroys anger as a lightening stroke, and his attitude betrayed frank hostility, but he answered with composure:

"What do you want? Is it some new charge you bring against me, or some new trick?"

"Nothing of the kind," returned Golding, in a low voice. "I hoped to find you alone."

Warren looked him over a moment, and then remarking, "Come along," led the way to the barn. They stood in the open door, while the three neighbors, recovering their senses slowly, as if they had been stunned by a lightning stroke, discussed the extraordinary situation in low voices, and lingered to see what would be the outcome of the new scene.

"I suppose these good people," said Golding, "have been tormenting you with their crude inquiries."

"Instigated by you," interrupted Warren.

Golding bit his lip.

"Hold on," he exclaimed Warren, sternly. "You're going too mighty fast for me to keep up with you. You take it for granted that I'll strike a trade with you to rob a helpless man of his property."

"There's no robbery. The property is as much mine as his."

"I won't dispute you. I don't want anything to do with you. You'll get no help from me. Now, I'll take my property if it is yours, and as for the threat of consequences that you have brought to me through your cowardly torture of my wife and the stirring up of my neighbors, I tell you to go hang yourself with them."

"The hanging will be for another party," suggested Golding, suppressing his disappointment at Warren's attitude.

"I've nothing to say," responded Warren. "There's the doctor. You'll want to talk to him after he comes out of Dutton's room, and when you've had your say with him you'd better clear out. I won't have you in my house again."

He went toward the house, Golding following slowly, and both men were surprised and startled to see a buggy follow the doctor to the gate, and a priest get down from it.

Dr. Nason waited until the reverend man had hitched his horse, and then conducted him to the front door.

(To Be Continued Monday.)

The Age of Niagara Falls.

The savants are having a very interesting time in determining the age of Niagara Falls, and from the most recent papers on the subject it is clear that the greatest diversity of opinion exists among those who have made it a matter of investigation. Life is full of problems. The diversity of our common nature suggests equally interesting questions. Why are things so? Why not otherwise? Now for instance the minor details of life are full of problems. Why should so many fraudulent and flesh-eating substitutes for Putnam's Painless Corn Extractor be imposed upon the people? Putnam's is sure. Putnam's is safe and painless. Putnam's makes no sore spots. Use Putnam's Painless Corn Extractor.

All around us we notice a general sense of uneasiness, and a mental irritation which assumes in one mind the form of grief or anger at the unbearable state of affairs in this world, and in another produces a decided longing for a change in all the conditions of modern life.—Max Nordau.

Give Holloway's Corn Cure a trial. It removed ten corns from one pair of feet without any pain. What it has done once it will do again.

One learns to have compassion for fools by studying them, and the fool, though nature is wise, is next door to nature. He is naked in his simplicity; he can tell us much and suggest more.—George Meredith.

DYSPEPSIA AND INDIGESTION. C. H. AND, Syracuse, N. Y., writes: "Please send us ten gross of Pills. We are selling more of Parmelee's Pills than any other pill we keep. They have a great reputation for the cure of Dyspepsia and Liver Complaint."

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1. The London ADVERTISER Printing Company will pay \$100 in prizes to the readers from whom it receives by mail at the publication office, Richmond street, London, Ont., the most nearly complete and absolute solution of "When the War Was Over," as it shall be disclosed in the final chapter of the story to be published Friday, Nov. 15, in the London ADVERTISER. The following list of prizes is offered to those readers who send us a correct solution of the story on the conditions mentioned below:

1st. Trip to New York and return.....\$25
2nd. Trip to Chicago and return..... 15
3rd. Lady's lambkin collar..... 10
4th. Lady's silver watch..... 12
5th. Set of Tinsley's works, complete..... 8
6th. Six cash prizes, \$5 each..... 30

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2. The first prize awarded will be for the explanation which comes nearest to the true solution; the second prize to the person sending the explanation next nearest, and so on for the third and fourth prizes. The remaining six prizes of \$5 each will be awarded to the persons sending the explanations next nearest to the fifth prize, as the judges may determine their merit.

3. The ADVERTISER is pre-eminently a family newspaper, and its daily installment of a high-grade serial story is a feature intended to specially commend it to the home circle. To emphasize and advertise the fact that the ADVERTISER is a newspaper peculiarly suitable for women's reading, the further condition is made that the prizes shall be only awarded for explanations sent in by women and girls. All may read; but only women and girls may guess—and win the prizes.

"When the War Was Over" will continue in daily installments, from Monday, Oct. 7, until Friday, Nov. 8, on which date all but the final chapter will have been published. The interval between Friday, Nov. 8, and Tuesday, Nov. 12, 6 o'clock p.m., inclusive, will be allowed for forwarding of guesses, and the final chapter will be published in the ADVERTISER on Friday, Nov. 15. Under no consideration whatever will guesses be considered prior to Friday, Nov. 8, or from city readers after 6 o'clock p.m. of Saturday, Nov. 9. Out-of-town readers have a time allowance for mailing, and their guesses must reach the office not later than 6 o'clock p.m. Nov. 12. For no reason whatever will guesses from any source be received or considered after 6 o'clock p.m., Nov. 12.

READ THE RULES OF THE COMPETITION.

1. But one solution can be entered by a reader.

2. All guesses must be sent by mail and in no other way, plainly addressed to "Prize Story Editor," the London ADVERTISER, Richmond street, London, Ont.

3. Inquiries not considered fully answered here will receive proper attention if addressed to "Prize Story Editor," the London ADVERTISER, Richmond street, London, Ont.

4. The prizes will be awarded under the foregoing general conditions, according to the best judgment of the judges appointed by the ADVERTISER, and they will have complete control and final decision in all matters relating to the contest.

5. "A complete and correct solution" can be made in the reader's own language, and in the number of words that he chooses. It must disclose the mystery and such material facts of the plot revealed in the development of the story as may be deemed necessary by the judges to a clear and full explanation of the mystery.

The names and addresses of the winner or winners of the cash prizes will be published in the ADVERTISER at the earliest date possible after publication of the final chapter.

No condition of subscription to the ADVERTISER is imposed on Guessers must be women and girls, and necessarily they must be readers of the ADVERTISER, but they may read the story in the ADVERTISER taken by any member of the family, and need not be regular subscribers themselves in order to enter the competition. While only women and girls may guess and win the prizes, they can receive help as to their guess from any member of their family, or from all the family.

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