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**THE INHERITANCE OF JEAN TROUVE**

By NEVIL HENSHAW  
Author of "Aline of the Grand Woods, etc."  
BOOK TWO.—BAYOU PORTAGE

CHAPTER II.—CONTINUED

"Why, of course," said he, "although, unlike Toinette, I did not lack my opportunity. And yet I do not regret it. I know enough for this life of mine. I can read the marsh to its last page, and as for writing, as long as this voice of mine remains clear, I can shout such messages as I need. For the rest I have ten good fingers upon which to count my profits and losses, and when these do not suffice there always remain the cutting of notches upon a stick. I am well content with what knowledge I have, little Jean, yet I am indeed pleased that Toinette is to learn. Why, unlike her father, she should wish to do so I do not know, but she is—"

"Toinette is Toinette," interrupted Le Bossu. "That should be enough for you, Papa Ton. I am as pleased as myself to offer of little Jean's, and I shall see to it that she does not lack the materials with which to begin. Tomorrow I shall buy books together with a supply of paper and pencils."

"Then, turning to me, he added, "One thing I can promise you, little Jean. You will have no stupid pupil. Indeed, unless I am much mistaken, you yourself will learn much from your teaching. And now for the letter if I am to take it with me to the bridge."

The table being cleared, and the pencil sharpened to the finest possible point, I seated myself with the narrow little account-book open before me. Le Bossu, who was to assist with the composition, occupied a place at my right, while upon my left, Toinette waited breathlessly for the wonders that were about to begin. Even Papa Ton relinquished his customary nap for the excitement of the occasion and, from a place in the rear, stared down at me with growing incredulity.

"And he will write all the way to the city—a little one like that?" I mumbled half to myself. "I can scarce believe it. If it were to the bridge now, it might be different. Surely he has sought a task too great for him."

I smiled at this and, with a flourish, began my greetings to Madame Therese, telling her that I was safe and well, and assuring her that I had missed her from the first moment of our separation. Next came the letter to the boys, since leaving her, I had met with numerous adventures, which I proposed to relate in their proper order. I began by touching lightly upon my journey, my arrival at St. Pierre, and then, having finished the first page, I prepared to turn to a fresh one.

Thus far I had given no thought to this difficulty, and the unexpectedness of Le Bossu's question—served to increase my confusion. With a start I saw that this exhibition of my talents must prove my undoing, for to write to Madame Therese of an uncle Jules would be as ridiculous as it would prove disastrous. That she would reply at once with a letter of inquiry I knew beyond doubt, and through these inquiries Le Bossu would learn all that I had tried to hide from him.

There remained, of course, the alternative of telling the true history of my arrival upon the Toinette, but this I determined not to do. The power of my grandfather was still very fresh in my mind, and during my stay at the camp I had heard the marsh-folk speak of him in tones of awe. To give shelter to the cast-off nephew of an uncle Jules was what one might expect from such men as Papa Ton and Le Bossu. To harbor the grandson of General Marsh, however, might prove a very different matter. If Monsieur Dugas, a power himself upon the prairie, had trembled and cringed before the wrath of my grandfather, what would be the attitude of these humble trappers were I to acquaint them with the truth?

"Uncle Jules indeed!" he growled. "As for myself, I would call him no uncle, since he has denied the relationship."

"That is right," I agreed, grasping at this straw. "He is most certainly no longer an uncle of mine."

"But the letter," objected Le Bossu. "If you do not call him an uncle there, how else will Madame Therese know?"

"I will speak of him as the relative," said I, now sure of myself. "Madame Therese will understand. As she sent me to him herself, how can she fail to do so?"

This difficulty settled, the letter once more proceeded triumphantly to its close. When finished it covered five sheets of the yellow paper upon which I had given a brief but complete account of what had befallen me. Of my health and happiness I spoke in glowing terms, and I ended with a fervent appeal that I might be allowed to remain where I was through the summer.

When I had signed with a simple John, Le Bossu took my place at the table, and through the leaves a second time before cutting them carefully from his book.

"Bien," said he, as he finally rose with the letter folded into a neat little square. "This is all right, little Jean. Your Madame should be proud of you. Of course there is no envelope, but I will get one tomorrow, putting the name and address upon it myself. Also, if Madame answers at once, I will bring the reply back with me. And if she says yes, as she will, I promise you that I will remain with you through the summer."

At this Papa Ton gave a great groan of approval, while Toinette squealed with delight.

"You have heard, Jean?" she cried. "Bossu has promised to go with us to the bay—for all the summer. It will be a holiday indeed. The bathing, the fishing, the lessons—above all the lessons."

"Do not forget the books and the pencils, Bossu. I can hardly wait for you to bring them, for warm weather to come. Jean, Jean, it is almost too good to be true."

And, seizing me in a second embrace, she began a wild joyous dance about the room.

CHAPTER III.  
I TAKE UP THE DUTIES OF THE MARSH

Next morning Le Bossu hailed a boat going up the bayou, and with his departure I at once took my place in the permanent life of the household. Before I had been ill, my stay had been uncertain, and I had been looked upon by all as a temporary guest. Now, however, with the long period of warm weather before me, my position became different. That I was, for a time at least, to become a member of his little family Papa Ton felt assured, for never for a moment did he doubt that Madame Therese would give her consent. Le Bossu said so, and she would, and Le Bossu's word was the big man's law.

Therefore Papa Ton lost little time in acquainting me with my altered position, which he did by explaining the several duties that I was now expected to perform. That I would accept them gladly he took as a matter of course, nor could one of twice my years and sensitiveness have doubted his hospitality. Even had he desired it he could have found no place for a useless idler amid the busy life of the camp.

"Now for a beginning, little Jean," he said to me this first morning, "you must join me in my round of the traps. In this way you will learn the marsh, a thing which you should have been taught before now, but for Bossu. You see he cured you, and he is not one to give up easily that which he has gained. No, no," he said to me, "only when he is entirely well again." And it was not until last night that he declared you so.

"As for the skinning, you will pick that up in time, and if, when you return from the bay, you are not a fisherman, the fault will be your own. For the rest, for all the things inside, you must go to Toinette. She will have you a cook in a week, and she will surprise you with the art that one can put into the washing of clothes."

Thus I slipped quite easily into the groove that had been made for me, and in it I found much content. That the work was hard and endless, I soon realized, but at that time, through its very newness, it became a pleasure. Each morning I accompanied Papa Ton upon his rounds, learning of slides and run-aways, of the setting of traps, and the thousand other lessons of the marsh. To my surprise I found that with care, one could walk quite easily upon the treacherous surface of the mud, and I practiced this art until I could move ankle free beneath even the heaviest burden of game.

With the removing of the skins from the limp dripping bodies that we brought home each day I proceeded more slowly, for with Papa Ton the botching of a pelt was the one unforgivable crime. Thus he had me watch him closely whenever he performed this task, filling in the time by explaining the business to its last minute detail.

"It looks easy, I know, little Jean," he would say, "but it is the ease that is born of long practice. A slip, a cut, and you have accomplished something that will ruin your price. Perhaps you will say that it is not a pretty business, but you must remember that it is a very

profitable one. With fish and birds the market is often overstocked. With skins, never. Red-handed you may be, but it is with good clean blood that you have won by your own skill."

So the big man would rumble on for, slow as he was in most matters, in the affairs of his calling he was never at loss for a word.

When not employed with the traps and skins, I helped Toinette about the hut. Small though it was there was always much to do, and the feeding of the great bulk of Papa Ton was, in itself, no trifling task. Perhaps, in another environment, I would have resented doing this woman's work, but at Bayou Portage, save for two exceptions, each man was his own housewife, attending to these duties in the intervals between the ever-important business of the traps.

Thus from Toinette I learned to cook, to wash, to make up the bunks, to coax a cheerful blaze from even the dampest of drift-wood. These things, like the others, did not come in a day or a week, and I doubt that, with another instructor, I would have gained any very great proficiency in them. But Toinette, knowing what the task was, always irrefragable. She never criticized. She ever hid her superiority. Quiet, smiling, she greeted each fresh blunder with a laugh of pure delight, and by her very good nature denied me that sullen resentment which is the only solace of the beginner.

As Le Bossu had predicted, I learned many things from Toinette, the greatest of which were not the humble duties that were her portion. Through her I came to know the value of patience, of industry, of cheerfulness under hardship. Also she brought to me some part of her hope in the future, of her trust that, through a kindly Providence, all things would be well.

Of the others at the camp I now began to see a good deal, and, as they played no small part in my life at this time, it is only just that I should say a word of them.

Above Papa Ton lived Pierre Valsan, a dried, wooden old man, whose wife had been caught by a trap and had died of blood poisoning. Now old Pierre dwelt alone in the smallest of the huts and, being through age and rheumatism unable to make the rounds of the marsh, employed himself as a general assistant in the business of the skins.

Beyond him lived P'tit Pierre, his son, a lank melancholy youth, who, having married a girl from the mainland the year before, was fast becoming frantic in his efforts to content her with the camp. Being thrifty by nature and possessed of a nervous spasmodic industry, he had, in financial matters, risen a little above his neighbors, a fact which his less fortunate father neglected no chance to mention.

"He is a miser, my son Pierre," the old man would complain. "He would see his own father starve for the loan of a penny, and to what end? Where he is going one drop of cold water will be far more precious than all the treasures of the world."

Below Papa Ton dwelt the partners Dalfrey and Borges, two quiet, bearded men whose names, at Bayou Portage, were the synonyms of honesty and application. Each was single, each was a master in his calling, and, if either had an ambition, it was that the present catch should surpass the ones that had gone before. Grave and silent, the partners mixed little in the general life of the camp although, through their reticence, their opinions were rather looked up to by their more loquacious companions. In time of trouble they were always the first to come forward, and their word, once given, was a thing that no man had been known to condemn.

Beyond them, in the last of the huts, lived the Lasalles, a tremendous family that swarmed about their tiny dwelling like a nest of ants. Father Lasalle was one of those great, red, jovial creatures that are so rare upon the lower coast. The trials, the dangers of his calling seemed only to increase his good humor, and but for him Bayou Portage would have been a sadder place indeed. In time of famine or disaster he alone among the elders struck the one note of happiness, for Papa Ton, true to his childish nature, was apt to sulk and gloom upon the first appearance of trouble.

Mother Lasalle occupied a position in the camp that might be termed a feminine counterpart of Papa Ton's. As the big man was the general father, so was she the general aunt; all calling her Tante Odile with the exception of her very youngest children. She was a small withered woman, with sharp black eyes, a chattering tongue, and a firm conviction that, but for his careless good nature, her husband would be at least the first man upon the coast. She always called him "M'sieu Lasalle," and as he invariably replied with Tante Odile, a stranger would scarcely have thought them man and wife. Yet a more devoted couple could not have been found, for, if Tante Odile eternally respected and praised the talents of her husband, Father Lasalle was wont to declare each hour of the day that no man on earth had ever been blessed with such a wonderful and thoroughly satisfactory partner.

**THE GYPSY CHIEF'S SECRET**

By Cyril Richardson in the Ave Marie

They were seated near an open window in an old chateau,—the Countess de Sudy and her guest, the Abbe Denef. The bright morning sunshine shed a brilliant luster on the rich draperies and costly ornaments, and were scattered about the apartment, and cast golden rays on the silver hair of the Countess, whose classic features still showed signs of her former beauty. The priest, the new cure of the little village of Sudy, which might be seen in the distance, was a young man, barely thirty years old, whose bright mind and kindling manner had won for him many friends in the short time he had been there. The spiritual care of his little flock always received his most earnest attention. But he soon discovered that many important material improvements were also necessary, as the church, which was very old, was now in an almost dangerous condition; and a desire of his, the Sisters informed him, was to accommodate all the children who came to them.

The Abbe Denef was a frequent visitor at the chateau, where the Countess always received him with cordial welcome. She was ever ready to help him in his works of charity; but, best of all, her ample means would be of most valuable assistance in realizing the ambitious dream he had conceived—the building of a fine new church.

It was on this all-important subject they were just now conversing, and Madame de Sudy listened with a deepest interest to the description of the plans just received from an architect in Paris. The Abbe was completely absorbed in this, the cherished desire of his heart. He described so minutely every detail of the beautiful Gothic church, which as yet existed only on the paper before him, that the Countess could not refrain from smiling at his enthusiasm.

"I wish that I could see our new church as distinctly as you do, my dear Abbe! But so far, you know, we have barely reached the foundations."

Nothing, however, could dampen his ardor; and when, in his apostolic zeal, he told his kind old friend of the higher work, the spiritual transformation he hoped to accomplish in the parish, she could find no more appropriate words of encouragement than these:

"God bless you, Father, and all that you do for Him!"

Both were silent for a few moments; then she turned to him and said suddenly:

"Is your mother living, Father?"

"I never knew my mother," and she noted the tone of sadness in his voice.

"How proud she would have been of her son!" thought the gray-haired woman, whose eyes filled with tears in memory of a long-hidden sorrow of her own.

The young priest's face also seemed clouded by painful recollections; and the motherly heart of the Countess read, in the far-away look of sadness in his eyes, the loneliness of his childhood days. Not wishing, however, to force his confidence, or to burden him with her own secret sorrow, she soon resumed her usual cheerful smile.

"Then, in her sweet, low voice, as he was leaving, she said:

"Father, in our new church I wish to place two memorial windows in memory of our dear dead."

A gypsy van was slowly moving along the road that led from Nice to Sudy. The poor, half-starved horses seemed too weary to go farther, and made frequent halts to nibble the grass that grew by the roadside.

"The lazy beasts!" a voice from the wagon was heard to exclaim. "At this rate, we'll not reach Sudy before sunset."

Sudy—the pretty village, with its green trees, and the running brook which came from the hillside beyond—seemed like an oasis in the desert to these poor people, who had been traveling four days on the dusty highway, with the scorching rays of the July sun beating down upon them. But at last the longed for goal was reached. At the outskirts of the village the horses were unhitched; and the gypsies, young and old, tumbled from the wagon like a flock of birds let loose from a cage.

"Take care of Pere Fenor, Pinson! Move him gently."

An old man with a long gray beard, still handsome in his tatters of faded finery, was lifted from the wagon with tender care by the arms of a young giant.

"Sudy!" exclaimed Pere Fenor, with a look which seemed to recall memories of the past. "Yes, this is the place. Remember it well."

"Then you are satisfied at last," said Pinson, the young athlete. "This is where you have longed to be for many days. And certainly your choice of a camping ground was a good one."

The old gypsy smiled sadly. It was the smile of one in pain.

"Pinson, I am going to die soon, and there is something I must do before I go. Old Fenor, your chief, who for years has led his band through many lands, can not start on his last journey without having done at least one good deed."

Pinson looked surprised and a little skeptical, but, seeing the earnestness of the old man, he felt sure that he meant what he said.

"Room for our chief," Pinson cried, as he laid Fenor gently on the grass, the midst of the busy group, who were making preparations for the evening meal.

Fenor watched them in silence for some time as they moved about him, and he seemed to be dreaming. At last, pulling himself up with an effort which showed his great weakness, and calling a boy who was playing near by, he whispered something to him, adding many times over, Abbe Denef, Abbe Denef,—making the child repeat the name after him to be sure that he understood.

The little messenger started running down the road, then turned into the fields, leaping the hedges as he went, seeming to understand that there was no time to lose.

Turning to the gypsies who had gathered about him, old Fenor said: "Make haste with your supper. We are going to have a visitor. They looked at one another in astonishment. Surely the old man must be raving. What could he mean?"

"Yes, my children, we are going to entertain an honored guest. It is not of us that we are visited by one of this kind."

"A priest?"

"Yes, the Cure of Sudy, whom I knew long ago, and whom I have sent for."

"What was your reason for sending for him?" they asked.

A very important reason, though it may appear strange to you, your old chief feels that he is going to die, and wishes to go to confession."

Not a word was said; not even a smile flitted across the face of a single one who stood about the old man. Their chief had spoken, and his word was their law. But they all turned to the road where the child had disappeared, watching with eager interest for the arrival of the guests. This would surely be a novel sight to them—a priest in their midst, hearing the confession of their old chief.

They had not long to wait. The Abbe soon appeared at a turn in the road, with the little boy at his side, pointing to the camp, which was hidden in the trees. Fenor called Pinson to raise him to receive the priest, and after having presented his hand each in turn to the cure, he said to his companion: "I highly honored that his call should have been answered. He then proceeded to explain why he had sent for him."

Being seriously ill, and feeling that he was about to die, he wished to go to confession, to obtain forgiveness from God, and to atone for his sins—for one sin in particular, he wished to make his confession in public, to humble himself, and to give good example to his companions at least once in his life. "I have often enough taught them evil," he said, with an expression of deep regret.

"We are listening, my friend," observed the cure.

"I was baptized and made my First Communion; but after that I never thought of God or of my religious duties. I broke the Commandments; I often, very often, stole what belonged to others. One sin, however, I never committed; I never took the life of another. In this respect I am innocent. And yet there is something,—the greatest crime of my life. I do not wish to die with this sin on my soul."

"In spite of my vagrant, restless life, I had adopted a child—a little girl—whose parents had been gypsies like myself. This child, my beautiful Carmen, was my joy and my pride. When she was twenty years of age, she married a handsome, though worthless, young fellow, whose dissipated habits caused her much sorrow and misery. He died shortly after the birth of their child. The care of this innocent babe was now her greatest joy, and she might well be proud of the beauty her little Liguil. But when he was three years old, death robbed Carmen of this treasure.

"Oh, I can not recall without a shudder those dreadful days! The poor mother, distracted with grief, took her dead child in her arms, and said that she would end her own life, as she did not care to live without him. I did all I could to quiet her and to soothe her grief, but my efforts were in vain. She was really crazed by the loss of her child. She did not know any of us, and sat for a whole day rocking her dead baby in her arms. Any attempt to take it from her made her wild.

"Then a dreadful thought came into my mind: I remembered that a short time before, as we halted near a little village, we had seen a beautiful child—a little boy—playing in the garden of an old chateau; and, strange, but true, this child bore a striking resemblance to our little Liguil. So great was this likeness that Carmen, calling to her the little stranger, and placing the children side by side, said to me: 'Pere Fenor, see how alike they are! They might easily be taken one for the other.'

"And she clasped her hands with delight that her child, the little gypsy boy, should have been favored by nature as the heir of an aristocratic family.

"And then, as this forgotten incident was recalled, I resolved to make a desperate effort to save the mind of the grief-stricken mother. Messengers were sent to the village where we had seen this child. He was stolen from his home, and put in Carmen's arms in the place of the little corpse she had been clasping

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