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A FINANCIAL COURTSHIP

BY FRANK W. ROLLINS



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CHAPTER XXXVI.—(Cont'd.)

Steve watched in the room beside Davey.

His shrunken, crippled limbs ached. His head sank on his breast. He drooped and slept forgetfully. The Schoolmaster strode the length of the kitchen. The fire smouldered low. He threw some wood on it. The crackling flames flashed and played freakishly across the room. He wondered if Conal would come—where he was. The hours passed. There was no sound or sign of late riders from the Wirree. He opened the door of the hut. The night was very still. Only a mopeke called plaintively in the distance.

There was a stir in the room in which Davey was sleeping. Farrel heard Steve's voice in startled and sleepy protest. The door opened, Davey stood on the threshold, his eyes with a delicious brightness in them.

"What have you done about those calves?" he asked, his voice quick and clear.

"We are going to let 'em go," Steve gasped. "You go back and lie down now, Davey."

"You can't do that with the new brands on them," Davey brushed him aside, irritably. "I'm all right now. I can take them to the Valley. It's a bit of luck M'Laughlin hasn't turned up yet. Praps I upset his calculations—his and McNab's. He's not so fond of gettin' a move on, Johnny Mac. Might've guessed I'd got a notion he was going to be busy when I went round asking for Conal. Thought we'd give him the slip anyway and he'd save himself the trouble of coming!"

He laughed a little unsteadily. "Think I'll get the calves along to the Valley, all the same."

The Schoolmaster took his arm. "Go and lie down, Davey," he said. "If you go wandering about like this, you'll bring on the bleeding again. Besides, Deirdre—"

"Where is she?" His eyes flew searching the room for her.

"She—it seemed difficult to say—she has gone down to the Valley, so it'll be all right," he said.

Davey turned towards the door. "Don't be a fool, Davey!" The Schoolmaster intercepted him.

Davey pushed him aside. He strode into the stable yard as though nothing had happened to disable him. A moment later the Schoolmaster heard the rattle of hoofs on the road.

Every fibre of him shivered at the

boy's contempt, the blazing amazement of his eyes. He sank into a chair, covering his face with his hands.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Deirdre and the black boy drove their straggling herd into the stock-yard in the narrow bush clearing, walled by trees, an hour or two before dawn.

The stock-yards which Conal had put up at the end of Narrow Valley were invisible to any but those who knew the winding track that led over the brow of the hill and through the heavy timber on the spur, to the old hut at the foot of it. Teddy was pulling the rails of the outer-yard into place and Deirdre was going towards the hut, Socks at her heels, his bridle over her arm, when a horseman rode out of the opening into the valley, by which they had come.

She recognized the red horse, but did not know that it was Davey riding till he was almost level, and dropping to his feet. He swayed against the horse's side, clutching his reins.

"It's a shame . . . no one to bring the brutes but you," he said weakly. "I came—soon as I knew."

Deirdre put her arm out to him. They walked slowly towards the hut. Davey became weaker. She drew the horses by their reins behind them, keeping her eyes on him. The ground rocked under his feet.

"We're just there—another minute and it'll be all right," she said, and called Teddy.

He had seen Davey Cameron's red horse coming into the clearing, and ran up to her, chattering with fright at the sight of Davey's limp figure.

"Put the horses up in the shed—leave the saddles on," she said quickly. "You go back, tell boss—cows all right—Davey very sick man, here."

Although an hour earlier nothing would have induced the boy to brave the darkness alone, it was not many moments before he was up on his weedy, half-wild nag and streaking away towards the cover of the trees and the thread-like track which wound uphill along the spur.

Deirdre opened the door of the hut. Davey took a step or two into it and fell forward. She set the brushwood on the hearth alight, and threw some broken branches over it to make a blaze. There was no stir in Davey when she knelt beside him, and a pool of blood lay on the floor where he had fallen.

She ran out of doors for water. In the semi-darkness of the hut it was difficult to find anything to put water in, but there was a pannikin near the water barrel and she filled that, and tore pieces of calico from her petticoat to bathe his wound.

Groping along the shelves near the fireplace she found the end of a thick rush and tallow candle. She did not light it at first because the fire had sprung up and was lighting the room, showing its meagre equipment, the branding irons and a saddle slung down in a corner, a bunk against the wall with a couple of sheepskins over it, a table with two or three pannikins and a black bottle on it. There was a drain of some spirit in the bottle.

She poured it carefully into a pannikin and held it to Davey's lips. His immobility frightened her. She lit the candle and held it close to his face. Under the leaping yellow flames it had the mask-like stillness and pallor of death.

"Davey! Davey!" she screamed with terror, creeping up beside his heavy, still body.

"Oh, you mustn't die, Davey—you mustn't!" Even as she sobbed she thought he was dead.

She put the spirit on his lips again. "Oh, I've done all that I can—all that I know to do. Won't you look at me, Davey? My heart's breaking. You've not gone, Davey? You wouldn't leave me. It's me, Deirdre, your sweetheart, that's with you! Won't you look at me? . . . Won't you open your eyes? I can't bear it—if you don't speak to me."

"Davey!" She caught him by the shoulder, shaking him roughly. "I won't let you go! I won't let you die!" she cried.

He fell back from her hands.

She threw herself across him, sobbing brokenly. Pressing her face close to his, she leant over him, murmuring and trying to revive him with a breathless agony of grief and tenderness.

"Oh, come back to me! Oh, you will not die. You will not die and leave me," she moaned. "Deirdre, that loves you. Your sweetheart, Davey!"

The cry died away.

In her frenzy she had not heard the door open. Spent with anguish, she laid her head against Davey's still one. She felt rather than saw that someone was there—in the hut behind her. She turned. Conal was standing in the doorway.

She stared at him. He might have been an apparition, so strange he looked, there in the doorway, with the glimmering night behind him. There was something stricken, aghast, about him. He gazed at her as if the tragic woe of her face were a revelation to him.

"He's dead—and it's you that have killed him, Conal," she said, at length. "You—love—him, Deirdre?" Conal asked.

So slow and dreary their voices were that they seemed to be talking in their sleep.

"Yes," she said, "and it's my heart that's dead with him."

"I didn't know you felt like that—about him," Deirdre, Conal said, a humble, awkward air about him.

That it was Davey lay there dead did not seem to trouble him. It was of Deirdre he was thinking in a mazed, dazed way, and the thing she had said to him.

"You've done what no woman could forgive you, Conal." A vibrating passion had come to her voice. "I never want to see you again as long as I live."

Conal stared at her a moment; then he swung heavily out of the hut into the yard. He had the gait of a drunken man. She heard him stumble over something in the yard, strike his head against a post. Then the sound of his horse's hoof-beats in the clearing died.

Deirdre looked down at the still figure beside her. In spite of what she had said she could not believe that Davey was dead—that all that young, strong body would not move again, that Davey's eyes would not open and look at her with the eager, questioning glance she had known. Something of the horror of his stillness had passed; she moistened his lips with the spirit. Putting her arms round him she gazed over him against her will, put his head on her bosom and leant over him, crooning softly, as though he were asleep. She begged herself by saying that he was only asleep and would waken presently.

"What a long time it is," she murmured. "Do you remember, Davey dear, the night before father and I went away, and I ran over the paddock to the corner of the road to see you? I was angry you had gone away without wanting to see me, yourself . . . You kissed me and I kissed you, and I promised to come back and be your sweetheart and we'd be married some day. . . . And the birds laughed. And the red-runners were out by the road. There was a beautiful sunset, and it got dark soon. You said it was me you loved and not Jessie. Then I went away . . . and it has never been the same since. But it will be . . . when you are well and I can tell you

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how much I want you to love me again."

She laughed softly.

"Do you remember how we used to go home in the cart from school together, and how we used to trot Lass up the hillside to make her poor old sides go like bellows, and you showed me how to blow birds' eggs, and Jess said I wasn't a little lady to blow birds' eggs?"

Her voice ran on with a brooklike tenderness.

"If you'd come back, we could have all those times again, Davey," she whispered, looking down into his face beneath hers.

Just when there was the faintest shimmer of dawn in the dim windows, a fluttering breath caught her face. She put the spirit to his lips again. So, chafing his hands and calling him, with tearful and eager little cries, she led him as a mother leads a child just learning to walk, from the valley of the shadows.

Davey opened his eyes. They dwelt on her with a deep, serene gaze. She smiled and went on crooning to him, half singing, half sighing that beguiling little melody of tenderness and entreaty. Warmth came back to him. His breath fell regularly and sweetly. Deirdre took the sheepskins out of the bunk and put them under him on the floor.

He slept. A faint smile on his mouth, his hand sought hers, the fingers curled round it. She sat watching him, a mist of awe and joy and thankfulness gathering in her eyes, because it seemed to her that a miracle had been accomplished that night in Narrow Valley hut.

(To be continued.)

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About the House

Dishes You Will Like.

Liberty raisin bread—1 cup butter-milk, 1 egg, 1 cup whole wheat flour, 1 cup corn meal, 1 tsp. salt, ¼ cup sugar, ½ tsp. baking powder, 1 cup seedless raisins (floured), ½ tsp. soda (with 1 tsp. flour). Mix and sift dry ingredients. Add well-beaten egg, buttermilk, and shortening. Blend well. Add raisins. Beat vigorously. Bake in a shallow pan for 30 minutes.

Bran muffins—1 cup flour, 1 tsp. shortening (melted), 1 tsp. salt, 1 tsp. soda, ½ to 2 cups sour milk, 2 cups clean bran, ¼ cup seeded raisins and chopped nuts, ¼ to ½ cup sweetener. Sift together the flour, salt and soda and mix with this the bran. Add together the sweetener, melted shortening and part of the milk; then mix with the dry materials. Add the raisins and nuts dusted with flour, and enough milk to form a batter of such consistency that it will drop but not pour from a spoon. Bake in greased muffin pans about one-half hour.

Excellent lemon mincemeat—½ cup shortening, 2 large lemons, 1 tsp. powdered cinnamon, 4 apples, 1 tsp. powdered ginger, 2 cups currants, 1 tsp. salt, ½ cup chopped nut meats, ¼ pound chopped and candied lemon peel, ½ tsp. powdered allspice, ½ tsp. grated nutmeg, 1½ cups sugar, ¼ tsp. powdered cloves, ¼ cup seeded raisins. Extract juice from lemons and remove pips. Now put lemons into saucepan, cover with cold water, and boil until lemon feels quite tender. Change water at least twice, drain and pound peel to a paste, add apples (cored, peeled and chopped), lemon peel, shortening, currants, raisins, salt, spices, lemon juice, nut meats and sugar. Put into a jar and cover. This mincemeat is excellent for pies and tarts. Sufficient for four pies. All measurements are level.

Down town veal stew—1½ pounds lean veal, 4 tsp. vinegar, ¼ tsp. ground cloves, 2 tsp. horseradish, ½

tsp. ground cinnamon, seasoning of salt and pepper, ½ cup seeded raisins, buttered bread crumbs. Place the veal, which has been cut into inch pieces, in a casserole and stew slowly so that it will cook in its own juice without burning. When it is nearly done, add the vinegar, raisins, cloves, cinnamon, horseradish and seasoning of salt and pepper. Thicken the sauce with the buttered bread crumbs.

Date salad—1 cup dates, 1 cup diced celery, 2 tsp. seeded raisins, 1-3 cup cheese (grated Amer.), 3 tsp. walnut meats, ¼ cup boiled dressing. Mix together the cheese and the chopped nut meats and raisins. Stuff the dates with this and allow to stand for several hours. Slice the dates, dice a cupful of celery and add all to the dressing, mixing thoroughly. Serve in nests of lettuce. An equal quantity of sweet or sour cream may be combined with the dressing if desired.

Fruit tapioca—½ cup pearl tapioca, ¼ cup almonds, 2½ cups cold water, ¼ tsp. salt, 1 inch stick cinnamon, ¼ cup sugar, ½ cup currant jelly, ¼ cup citron, ¼ cup sherry wine or fruit juice, ¼ cup seeded raisins. Soak tapioca in cold water over night or for several hours. Cook in same water in double boiler with salt and cinnamon until transparent. Remove from range and add currant jelly, sherry wine or fruit juice, almonds (blanched and shredded), raisins (cut in pieces) and citron (cut in thin slices). Sweeten to taste. Turn into a serving dish, cool slightly, and serve with thin cream.

The Child Born Deaf.

It is hard to say which is the greater handicap to a child, total blindness or total deafness. Fortunately, neither congenital deafness nor deafness acquired in infancy from any disease except meningitis, which destroys the nervous mechanism of sound-wave appreciation, is ever total. Though sufferers may hear no ordinary sounds at a distance of more than a few inches from the ear almost all of them can hear words spoken clearly an inch or two away.

People who have to do with the education of deaf children usually classify them according to the age at which the deafness began; those who are born deaf, in which group are in-

cluded those who become deaf before acquiring speech and intelligence; those who become deaf between the ages of six and sixteen; and those who become deaf after the age of sixteen.

Children of the first class will grow up to be deaf-mutes unless taken in hand early and taught by scientific methods to articulate. Members of the family should speak to them loud and distinctly close to the ear. The whole family must be made to realize that here is an opportunity to do great good, and that, if they selfishly refuse to take the trouble to speak loud and distinctly, the child will grow up with the enormously greater handicap of inability to talk properly—and they will be responsible for his condition just as much as if they had cut out his tongue!

Those who become deaf during school age will have learned to speak, but if neglected will never learn the speech of educated adults and may even forget much that they have acquired. Those who become deaf after sixteen or seventeen are in the class of the adult deaf and must in general look to themselves to acquire new knowledge and to retain what they already possess.

Tips to Canna Growers.

My cannas make much more beautiful plants if I start them early. The bulbs do best if they are growing well before being set out. They are heat lovers, and will not grow to amount to anything if planted while the soil is cold. If started in pots or flats and allowed to get a good start they will make blooming plants just that much sooner. A canna clump is increasing in size all the time while growing. Each flowering stalk sends out two side shoots, with eyes at their end, as soon as the parent shoot is well launched on its way, so this increase in size is pretty rapid. The more of these side shoots I can get to blooming size the more flowers I have. The plant will keep on sending up blooming stalks and forming new eyes until frost stops it. It follows that even a little start ahead of the time you can get the bulbs to grow outside, which is not earlier than you plant the started plants, will make your cannas much more effective during the whole blooming season. It is not that it makes them a little earlier, but that it makes them correspondingly more beautiful for the whole summer after they begin blooming.

Cannas are so hardy and so easy to start and transplant that you do not have to pamper them any. I have placed a clump on the ground where there was a fair light and warmth, and watered it well, and the new shoots

started at once, and soon were sturdy. I divided the clump when they had leaves eighteen inches long on many of the shoots. I just cut them apart so each plant had some roots and a piece of the rizom on it. It went on growing without showing any serious check. I prefer, though, to cut the bulbs out when dormant, and put up in four-inch pots, and then shake them out and plant when the time comes. I sometimes have had plants two feet high this way.—Agnes Hilco.

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