

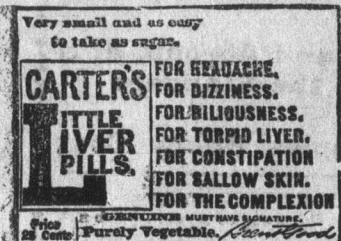
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DARREL OF THE BLESSED ISLES

By IRVING BACHELLER,
Author of "Eben Holden,"
"Dri and I," Etc.

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He got down upon his hands and knees and watched the little black tiger, now hurrying for his lair. In a moment he was joined by others, and presently they came into a smooth little avenue under the grass. It took them into the edge of the meadow, around a stalk of mullein, where there were a number of webs.

"There's where she lived—the hairy old woman," said the teacher—"up there in that tower. See her snares in the grass—four of them?"

He rapped on the stalk of mullein with a stick, peering into the dusty little cavern of silk near the top of it.

"Sure enough! Here is where she lived, for the house is empty and there's living prey in the snares."

"What a weird old thing!" said Polly. "Can you tell us more about her?"

"Well, every summer," said Trove, "a great city grows up in the field. There are shady streets in it, no wider than a cricket's back, and millions living in neat and tower and cave and cavern. Among its people are tollers and idlers, laws and lawbreakers, thieves and highwaymen, grand folk and plain folk. Here is the home of the greatest criminal in the city of the field. See! It is between two leaves, one serving as roof, the other as floor and portico. Here is a long cable that comes out of her sitting room and slopes away to the big snare below. Look at her sheets of silk in the grass. It's like a washing that's been hung out to dry. From each a slender cord of silk runs to the main cable. Even a fly's kick or a stroke of his tiny wing must have gone up the tower and shaken the floor of the old lady, maybe, with a sort of thunder. Then she ran out and down the cable to rush upon her helpless prey."

"She was an arrant highwayman, this old lady—a creature of craft and violence. She was no sooner married than she slew her husband—a timid thing smaller than she—and ate him at one meal. You know the ants are a busy people. This road was probably a thoroughfare for their freight—eggs and cattle and wild rice. I'll warrant she used to lie and wait for them, and woe to the little traveler if she caught him unawares, for she could nip him in two with a single thrust of her knives. Then she would seize the egg he bore and make off with it. Now, the ants are cunning. They found her downstairs and cut her off from her home and drove her away into the grass jungle. I've no doubt she faced a score of them, but, being a swift climber, with lots of rope in her pocket, was able to get away. The soldier ants began to beat the jungle. They separated, content to meet her singly, knowing she would refuse to fight if confronted by more than one. And you know what happened to her."

All that afternoon they spent in the city of the field. The life of the birds in the great maple interested them most of all. In the evening he played



"It's your move," said she.

checkers with Polly and told her of school life in the village of Hillsborough—the work and play of the students.

"Oh, I do wish I could go," said she presently, with a deep sigh. He thought of the \$82 in his pocket and longed to tell her all that he was planning for her sake.

Mrs. Vaughn went above stairs with the children. Then Trove took Polly's hand. They looked deeply into each other's eyes a moment, both smiling.

"It's your move," said she, smiling as her glance fell.

He moved all the checkers. There came a breath of silence and a great surge of happiness that washed every checker off the board and left the two with flushed faces. Then, as Mrs. Vaughn was coming downstairs, the checkers began to rattle into position.

"I won," said he as the door opened. "But he didn't play fair," said Polly. "Children, I'm afraid you're playing more love than checkers," said the widow. "You're both too young to think of marriage."

Those two looked thoughtfully at the checkerboard, Polly's chin resting on her hand. She had begun to smile.

"I'm sure Mr. Trove has no such thought in his head," said she, still looking at the board.

"Your mother is right. We're both very young," said Trove.

"I believe you're afraid of her," said



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Polly, looking up at him with a smile. "I'm only thinking of your welfare," said Mrs. Vaughn gently. "Young love should be stored away, and if it keeps why, then it's all right."

"Like preserves!" said Polly soberly, as if she were not able to see the point. Against the protest of Polly and he, mother Trove went to sleep in the sugar shanty, a quarter of a mile or so back in the woods. On his first trip with the dove he had developed fondness for sleeping out of doors. The shanty was a rude structure of logs with an open front. Tunk went ahead, bearing a pine torch, while Trove followed, the blanket over his shoulder.

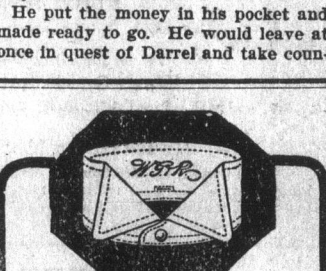
CHAPTER XXI.
WHEN Trove woke in the morning a package covered with white paper lay on the blanket near his hand. He rose and picked it up and saw his own name in a strange handwriting on the wrapper. He turned it, looking curiously at seal and superscription. Tearing it open, he found to his great surprise a brief note and a roll of money. "Herein is a gift for Mr. Sidney Trove," said the note. "The gift is from a friend unknown, who prays God that wisdom may go with it, so it prove a blessing to both."

Trove counted the money carefully. There were \$3,000 in bank bills. He sat a moment thinking; then he rose and began searching for tracks around the shanty. He found none, however, in the dead leaves which he could distinguish from those of Tunk and himself.

"It must be from my father," said he—a thought that troubled him deeply, for it seemed to bring ill news—that his father would never make himself known.

"He must have seen me last night," Trove went on. "He must even have been near me—so near he could have touched me with his hand. If I had only awakened!"

He put the money in his pocket and made ready to go. He would leave at once in quest of Darrel and take coun-



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sel of him. It was early, and he could see the first light of the sun high in the tall towers of hemlock. The forest rang with bird songs. He went to the brook near by and drank of its clear, cold water and bathed in it. Then he walked slowly to Robin's Inn, where Mrs. Vaughn had begun building a fire. She observed the troubled look in his face, but said nothing of it then. Trove greeted her and went to the stable to feed his mare.

Then he went in to breakfast. An hour later he bade them all goodby and set out for Allen's. A new fear began to weigh upon him as he traveled. Was this a part of that evil sun, and had his father begun now to scatter what he had never any right to touch? Whoever brought him that big roll of money had robbed him of his peace. Even his ribs, against which it chafed as he rode along, began to feel sore. Home at last, he put up the mare and went to tell his mother that he must be off for Hillsborough.

"My son," said she, her arms about his neck, "our eyes are growing dim and for a long time have seen little of you."

"And I feel the loss," Trove answered. "I have things to do there and shall return tonight."

"You look troubled," was her answer. "Poor boy! I pray God to keep you unspotted of the world." She was ever fearing unhappy news of the mystery—that something evil would come out of it.

As Trove rode away he took account of all he owed those good people who had been mother and father to him. What a pleasure it would give him to lay that goodly sum in the lap of his mother and bid her spend it with no thought of economy.

The mare knew him as one may know a brother. There was in her manner some subtle understanding of his mood. Her master saw it in the poise of her head, in the shift of her ears and in her tender way of feeling for his hand. She, too, was looking right and left in the fields. There were the scenes of a boyhood newly but forever gone. "That's where you overtook me on the way to school," said he to Phyllis, for so the tinker had named her.

She drew at the rein, starting fully as she heard his voice and shaking his hand as if to say: "Oh, master, give me the rein. I will bear you swiftly to happiness."

Trove looked down at her proudly, patting the silken arch of her neck. If, as Darrel had once told him, God took note of the look of one's horses, she was fit for the last journey. Arriving at Hillsborough, he tied her in the sheds and took his way to the Sign of the Dial. Darrel was working at his little bench. He turned wearily, his face paler than Trove had ever seen it, his eyes deeper under their fringe of silver hair.

"An' God be praised, the boy!" said he, rising quickly. "Canst thou make a jest, boy—a merry jest?"

"Not until you have told me what's the matter."

"Illness an' the food o' bitter fancy," said the tinker, with a sad face. "Bitter fancy?"

"Yes, an' o' thee, boy. Had I gathered care in the broad fields all me life an' heaped it on thy back I could not have done worse by thee."

Darrel put his hand upon the boy's shoulder, surveying him from head to foot.

"But, marry," he added, "tis a mighty thigh an' a broad back." "Have you seen my father?"

"Yes." "There was a moment of silence, and Trove began to change color. "And what did he say?"

"That he will bear his burden alone." Then for a moment silence and the ticking of the clocks.

"And I shall never know my father?" said Trove presently, his lips trembling. "God, sir, I insist upon it! I have a right to his name and to his shame also." The young man sank upon a chair, covering his face.

"Nay, boy, it is not wise," said Darrel tenderly. "Take thought of it. Thou'rt young. The time is near when thy father can make restitution, aye, an' acknowledge his sin before the world. All very near to him, saving thyself, are dead. Now, whatever comes, it can do thee no harm."

"But I care not for disgrace, and often you have told me that I should live and speak the truth, even though it burn me to the bone."

"So have I, boy, so have I. But suppose it burn others to the bone. It will burn thy wife an' thy children an' thy children's children and them that have reared thee, an' it would burn thy father most of all."

Trove was utterly silenced. His father was bent on keeping his own disgrace.

To Be Continued.

A Queer Fact About Vision.
In the eye itself certain things may go on which give us wrong sensations, which, although not truly illusions, are very much like them. Thus, when we suddenly strike our heads or faces against something in the dark we see "stars," or bright sparks, which we know are not real lights, though they are quite as bright and sparkling as if they were. When we close one eye and look straight ahead at some word or letter in the middle of this page, for example, we seem to see not only the thing we are looking at, but everything else immediately about it and for a long way on each side. But the truth is there is a large round spot somewhere near the point at which we are looking in which we see nothing. Curiously enough, the existence of this blind spot was not discovered by accident, and nobody every suspected it until Mariotte reasoned from the construction of the eyeball that it must exist and proceeded to find it.

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Toronto, Jan. 12.—The appointment of W. K. Snider, manager of the McIntosh Brick Machine Co. of Goderich, and brother of Judge Snider of Hamilton, as Conservative organizer for the Province of Ontario, was announced yesterday.

Although Mr. Snider has had little campaign experience, he is looked upon by members of the party as one man who can awaken to life some of the Conservative associations throughout the province which have been growing more or less dormant, and get the party stalwarts into line.

He will have his headquarters in the Crown Life building, Queen and Victoria streets, and will have a permanent staff of assistants.

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