

THE CONQUERING HILL.

BY SILAS K. HOOKING.

Author of "God's Outcast," "In Spite of Fate," "To Play the Price," "For Such is Life," "The Heart of Man," "For Life and Liberty," "A Son of Reuben," etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.—Basil Pendarvis, a clever young artist who finds it easier to get pictures praised than bought, receives a commission to paint the portrait of Dorothy Cleveland, at her father's house at Sandhurst, Kent. He accepts the more readily as cash is very scarce with him at the time. Basil finds himself hospitably welcomed, as, indeed, his friend, Phil Duncan, who is a neighbor of Cleveland's, assured him he would find Basil a charming visitor. Basil is a girl not only of great beauty, but of a sweet and dispassionate nature. Her sister Elizabeth strikes him less favorably. She is a professed invalid, with nervous prostration and a disposition to quarrel with an imperious jealousy. After several weeks' work the picture is finished and Basil is charmed with his studies in London. He now finds himself happily in love with Dorothy. The picture is exhibited in the Academy, and is acclaimed as the work of the year. Basil and Dorothy, and Basil and Elizabeth, are reunited. For the time the pair are dwellers in Paradise. Then Basil receives a strange letter from Dorothy, written with tears, breaking off the engagement in the name of duty.

CHAPTER XI.

A Fruitless Quest.

"Will you come this way, sir," Mr. Cleveland called to Basil. "I have a letter for you." Basil's heart sank like lead as he followed the servant out of the room and across the hall to the library. Most likely he had come on a bootless errand. If he failed to get an interview with Dorothy he might just as well have stayed at home. Having if she had resolved, with no likelihood of his knowing that she would not see him he knew that nothing would shake her purpose.

Hope, however, is a hardy plant and will live through winters that kill all other blooms. Mr. Cleveland received him quietly, but in a distinctly friendly manner. "I understand why you have come, and I must say I am sorry for you."

"Then Dorothy is not to see you?" Basil, trying hard to keep his voice steady. "She has told me everything. She has faced the matter calmly and resolutely, and she has made up her mind."

"Yes," he answered, shortly. "I can do no good by staying here. I shall cure the day I first saw this place."

"I hope not—I hope not," was Mr. Cleveland's reply. Basil put open the door and marched out of the room. His anger was by this time getting the better of him. He felt that he dared not stay longer under that roof. When he reached the open air a gentler breeze possessed him for a few minutes. It was here he first saw Dorothy, and the remembrance of her beauty and gentleness stole over him like a breath of fresh air, and he knew she was within his grasp.

"Well, in the first place, I don't think she feels equal to seeing anyone. She has not left her room for the last two days."

"She seems to have fallen very suddenly ill," Basil said, indignantly. "Well, yes. The truth is we have had a very trying time. Elizabeth seems to be the worse of the two."

"I never knew how much Elizabeth loved Dorothy until the other day. I fancy she has feared something for some time. But a few days ago she taxed Dorothy by a point-blank question, and the child was too truthful to equivocate; and then—well, then—"

"What effort?" Basil asked, cynically. "The effort to hide her grief. You see, she loved Dodo as her very life, and the thought of losing her, of being left alone as it were, seemed to crush her very heart. But she made a desperate struggle."

"Did she?" "You see, she did not want Dodo to see that she was suffering, that in fact, her heart was broken, and the very effort to appear calm exhausted her strength she had, and she fell down in a swoon."

"I wish to Heaven she had!" Basil said with sudden energy. "Sir," exclaimed Mr. Cleveland, "I have a cigar case in a moment, then threw himself into an easy chair and waited. He saw clearly enough that Basil had something on his mind, and he knew that it would come out by-and-by, and he could patiently wait until he was in the humor to talk."

"I wish to Heaven she had!" Basil said with sudden energy. "Sir," exclaimed Mr. Cleveland, "I have a cigar case in a moment, then threw himself into an easy chair and waited. He saw clearly enough that Basil had something on his mind, and he knew that it would come out by-and-by, and he could patiently wait until he was in the humor to talk."

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"Anyhow, Dodo has quite made up her mind that marrying you would mean the death of Elizabeth."

"But we had scarcely talked of marriage," Basil said. "Elizabeth presupposes marriage."

"You do not know her, Mr. Pendarvis. You do not understand how intensely nature like hers feel."

"Could you get me an interview with her?" Mr. Cleveland laughed. "I fear that would be scarcely politic," he said.

"I would like to talk to her for her own good," Basil said, quickly. "However, if you can get the question, will you ask her to let me see her?"

"I will take her your request," Mr. Cleveland answered, and he rose at once and left the room. "He was not away many minutes, and during the interval Basil paced up and down like a caged lion."

"Well?" he inquired, pausing suddenly in his walk as Mr. Cleveland entered. "She says she cannot see you," was the reply.

"She says it is best for you both," Mr. Cleveland went on. "It is that," Basil questioned.

"Tell him," she said, "that it is because I love him so much that I cannot see him. Also that if he loves me he will leave me alone and not add to the burden of my sorrow that, did she?"

"Those were her words as well as I remember."

"And she said nothing else?" "No, but I left her weeping bitterly."

"For a while neither of us could find words to say. Basil felt stunned and bewildered. It would have been a relief to him if he could have stormed and raved and used violent language, but even that small comfort was denied him."

Mr. Cleveland stood with his elbow on the mantelpiece and regarded him sympathetically. In his heart he was sorry for the young man. He regretted leaving the course events had taken. Having if she had resolved, with no likelihood of his knowing that she would not see him he knew that nothing would shake her purpose.

"You are going?" Mr. Cleveland questioned. "Yes," he answered, shortly. "I can do no good by staying here. I shall cure the day I first saw this place."

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"That I will tell you later on. You do not know, perhaps, that she was the inspiration of my picture."

"I saw that you had caught her likeness in your central figure," Phil answered. "Well, the truth is I should never have painted it but for her; she haunted my dreams and filled my heart and inspired my imagination. So, instead of forgetting her, my passion burnt all the more intensely the longer I remained away from her, and when at length she came to London and I found myself alone with her one morning in the Embankment Gardens, like an impatient fool, I blurted out all the truth in a moment."

"And her answer?" Phil questioned after a pause. "Oh, her answer was all that I could desire; but, then, what dependence is one able to put on the words of a woman?"

"For the moment she seemed pleased and flattered; she allowed me to speak to her father, and Mr. Cleveland gave his consent, and for a couple of months I have lived in a fool's paradise, and imagined that the world was one great garden of beauty, and that life was all that my dreams had pictured it."

"Well?" Phil questioned after a pause. "Oh, well, we wrote to each other regularly, and I was full of hope. I imagined that her love would continue. But yesterday I got a letter after she had kept me two days waiting, to say that the dream we had cherished had ended. She professed to be inspired by some high sense of duty. Her sister Elizabeth thinks she would die if Dorothy were to leave her, and so Dorothy concludes that her place is by her sister's side."

"And you have failed?" "No, no," he would say, bitterly, "she is like the rest of her sex; they are all of the same pattern, they never know their own minds two days on the stretch. Very likely she fancied that she loved me, and then discovered that it was only a passing mood. All this talk about duty, about obedience to a higher sense of honor and responsibility, is only a mere excuse to get out of the engagement. Well, it's a mercy for me it went no further. I am well rid of a shallow and heartless woman."

In his better moments he knew that he was doing Dorothy an injustice. His heart told him that she was not shallow. She was not flippant, that she was not of the kind who rejoice in making conquests. But if he had listened to his heart he would have moped and yielded to grief and despair.

Nevertheless, in the long run, his heart proved the victor. It was easy enough to strut about his studio and rave at

blow huge volumes of smoke from his mouth. After a while he spoke again: "You have done well, Phil," he said, "in never having anything to do with women. Unhappy is the man that loses his heart to any daughter of Eve!"

"No, don't say that, Basil," Phil answered, quietly and gently; "you are feeling bitter and angry just now, one cannot wonder at that; but you must be careful that you do not throw the blame on the wrong shoulders."

"I know you think highly of Dorothy," Basil said, "and perhaps she is no worse than the rest of her sex. They are all well enough at a distance, but if you once get into their toils, then we betide you."

"Don't be impatient, Basil," Phil replied, "perhaps the tangle will straighten itself out after a while. I am sure that Dorothy would not act in any mean or capricious fashion."

"If she had treated you as she has treated me, I don't think you would be quite so charitable," Basil answered, bitterly. "Yes, I think I should," Phil answered, quietly. "It is with her a choice of paths, and she has chosen the one which commands itself to her conscience. Possibly, my friend, she is suffering far more to-day than you are suffering. It is where the heroism of her nature comes in. She is ready to sacrifice her happiness on the altar of right and duty."

"Right and duty be hanged!" Basil said, angrily. "She told me that she loved me, she promised to be my wife; her duty lay there, her promise to me should have been held sacred."

"I do not deny that she may be mistaken in her judgment," Phil answered. "I think she is; but don't blame her harshly, Basil, or you may regret it in the time to come."

Basil took the stump of his cigar from his mouth and dropped it into the ash-tray. An angry retort rose to his lips, but he checked himself, and a moment later the song sounded for lunch.

During the rest of the day the name of Dorothy was not mentioned. The two friends discussed pictures and politics and the weather. They took a walk together in the park, and the subject that was uppermost in the thoughts of both was not alluded to.

On the following morning Basil returned to London. CHAPTER XII. To Be, or Not to Be. When Basil got back to his studio he

again into the obscurity from which he had suddenly emerged; and he knew, also, that if he thus failed it would be harder than ever for him to climb again into prominence.

So his success became a tyrant and a nightmare. Had he never painted "My Lady Bonifant" he would still be able to do good, conscientious work that would find a fairly ready sale, sufficient any rate to keep him from starvation. But to be compelled to live up to his success, to reach high water-mark in every successive effort, appeared to him a task altogether beyond his strength. So he became depressed and despondent.

He knew well enough where the difficulty lay—that he lacked that something which men called inspiration. He was ambitious still. He still took pains with his work, but he lacked the secret of his first success. Last year Dorothy filled his heart and his life. She was before him constantly; she was his hope and his inspiration. But now he was a sad and a lonely man. It seemed a strange and bitter irony that she who had inspired his work and made it great should now rob him of his power and render him almost helpless. He felt angry at times that any woman could so influence a man's life, that by a mere whim of caprice she could make him or mar him. He had often heard his friends speak of women as "our masters," and in the days before he knew Dorothy he had scorned the idea, and treated the remark as unworthy of serious thought or consideration. But he began to realize now how completely true it was. Whether she loved him or rejected him, whether she favored him or repelled him, she was still his master.

It was a humbling confession to make even to himself, but he knew it was true; and the very fact that it was a truth that could not be gainsaid, made him angry. It seemed so humiliating; and he hated himself with such a deep mark of weakness and almost inferiority that he resented the very suggestion, and yet there was no escape from it. Whether he liked it or disliked it, whether he felt honored or humiliated, the fact remained that Dorothy was his master still. Whether she loved her or whether he hated her, whether he cherished her memory or tried to put her out of his heart, she was still the dominating factor in his life.

She first made him strong, and then reduced him to weakness. By her love she made him great; by withdrawing it she made him almost contemptible.

Day by day and week by week he struggled to paint some picture that should be worthy of himself, and day by day he felt that he was a failure. He

could not rise to his own level, and before Christmas came he felt that he would never be able to do anything worthy again. It seemed to him as though his imagination were dead, as though skill had left his fingers, as though the power to do anything great had departed from him. His eyes had lost their vision, their sense of proportion. At best he was but a craftsman.

Critics might say that he was doing good and honest work, but he felt that there was no life in it, no soul, no vision. With the advent of winter Phil came up to town again and every few days he walked across to Basil's studio to have a chat or smoke, or to watch in silence his friend working before his easel.

Now and then Basil longed to make inquiries about Dorothy, but with respect he refused to brook the subject, nor did Phil volunteer any information. Hence, whether Dorothy was ill or well, whether she smiled or wept, Basil still lived in a state of suspense. He knew of the best he did not know, and he tried to persuade himself that he did not care. Yet he did care all the while, and Dorothy was as often in his thoughts as in the first days of their acquaintance.

It is true that at this time passed away the poignancy of his grief and humiliation was somewhat dulled. His pain took some of the sting out of his pain. He was able to contemplate the past with more calmness of mind and with somewhat less bitterness of heart.

One day Phil said to him as he sat smoking in his studio: "Where is your picture for next year's Academy, Basil?" "I have not begun it yet," was the reply. "Have you fixed upon a subject?" Phil inquired.

"No, and I am afraid I shall find nothing. The truth is I have no imagination, my power of vision seems to have left me completely."

"Oh, that is nonsense," Phil replied, cheerfully. "You will find something soon, though if you are to get it ready for the Academy you ought to be at work on it by this time."

"I fear I shall have nothing to send," Basil answered, moodily. "To tell you the honest truth I am losing heart."

"Oh, that will never do," replied his friend. "That is what I say to myself," Basil answered, wearily, "and I do try my best, but somehow nothing suggests itself. I keep haunting and dreaming and making sketches, but nothing comes of it all. You see, I manage to paint a few pot-boilers, and that is the extent of it."

cause the least distress to his friends. The doctor sent his tonic, but Basil did not even look at it. What did it matter? He had got beyond tonics and all other nostrums. He knew a cure could all ill. Death was the great healer, the universal friend if we only recognized it. He had a few things to do. A few arrangements to make that would simplify the work of those who would have to administer his estate. He listened kindly and quietly go away into the great silence and be forgotten.

He smiled frequently now, for there was something positively fascinating in the idea that possessed him. Moreover, all his worry was over. He listened kindly and quietly go away into the great silence and be forgotten.

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"Your work is as good as ever it was," Phil said, cheerfully; "but, of course, you will have to live up to your last year's success."

"That is what bothers me," Basil replied. "I sometimes wish that that picture were at the bottom of the sea."

"Oh, nonsense! It ought to be a great inspiration to you."

"It is not like you to grow despondent, old fellow," said Phil. "Besides, it is a very dangerous feeling to give way to."

"I know it, Phil," was the reply. "I am as conscious of it as anybody, and, really, I do fight my hardest and do my best. But what is the use? The power has gone out of me, and I am beginning to think seriously that the only way to preserve my reputation is to shuffle off this mortal coil and pass out quietly into the great silence where the struggle ends, where there is no more hope, nor fear, nor ambition."

"Oh, nonsense! That is the talk of a sick man," said Phil.

"My dear fellow I am sick—sick in mind and sick in body," Basil said, in a hoarse, unsteady voice. "I had hoped that Basil had quite got over his disappointment, but it was very evident that the wound was rankling still."

A few days later Basil called he found Basil a good deal more cheerful. He was sketching on a large canvas with a piece of charcoal.

"I've got an idea for a picture, Phil," he said, brightly. "I'm not certain yet but I will come to anything, but as I see it in my mind it looks promising."

"I've no doubt it will come out all right," Phil answered, cheerfully. "You only want a good subject and then you'll go ahead."

"I hope so, old man. But I shall be better able to judge in a week's time."

Before the week was out, however, he found himself stranded by an attack of influenza. He thought little of it at first, and concluded he was suffering from a too liberal allowance of Christmas fare. Phil had gone back to Lynbrook and was entertaining a little house party there, and did not expect to be back to town again till the end of January.

As soon as Basil was able to get out of bed he tried to work again, but he quickly threw down his brushes. It seemed to him as though all the power had gone out of his fingers. He made two or three attempts during the next few days, but with the same result.

"I wonder what ails me?" he said to himself, staring at the canvas. "I don't seem to know exactly what I want to do, the thing was clear enough in my mind before I went to bed, but now I'm hazy if I know what I'm driving at."

So it came about that he would sit for hours staring at the rough outline on the canvas wondering what could be done with it.

Physically he felt no worse than he had felt many times before. He was still weak and listless, and his appetite was nothing to boast of, but a curious feeling that he could not define was creeping steadily over him.

Life was gradually losing its attraction, existence was becoming a burden. He felt that he was losing interest in everything. Nothing mattered, nothing was worth worrying about. Fame, riches, power, love were but vapours in the brain of a sick man, the foolish dreams of a demented world. The only people to be envied were the dead. The only place to be desired was the serene quiet of the grave.

His doctor found him one day with a big brush dabbing out some sketches he had made. "Have you turned idiotic?" "It is the only useful work I can do," he answered, with a pathetic smile. "Not get back to par yet?" "Oh, yes, I think so. I've no pain anywhere."

"But you've made no progress with your picture."

"Oh, no, I shall never finish it."

"Oh, yes, you will. It's the old story of influenza. But you'll get over the depression in a few weeks. If it wasn't the dead of winter I'd order you away for change of air. But just now you are as well here as anywhere else."

"Oh, I'm all right here," Basil answered, wearily.

"But you think you'll never be able to work again?"

"As sure of it."

The doctor laughed. "A third of my patients say the same thing when they are getting better. Don't alarm yourself a bit; you'll be as right as ever in a few weeks."

"I'm not alarming myself," Basil answered. "I'm so profoundly indifferent that I don't care what happens."

"Just so, just so," the doctor answered, looking grave. "It's the curse of this disease that it knocks all the nerve out of people."

"Oh, I don't know about that," Basil answered, quietly. "I feel in some respects as though I had more nerve than ever I had before in my life."

The doctor looked at him suspiciously, but for several moments said nothing. He knew only too well the dangers attending the mental depression that follows influenza, and he did not quite like the form it was assuming in Basil.

"I will send you a tonic," he said at length, "and in the meantime get out of doors as much as you can. Don't mope, get into company. Go to the theatre and don't attempt to paint pictures until you feel equal to the task."

Basil smiled when the doctor had gone; but it was a pathetic smile, such as steals over the faces of the sorrowful and broken-hearted.

For several days an idea had been slowly shaping itself in his mind. At first he thought it was a suggestion of the Evil One, and he fought against it as well he could, but it grew in spite of himself. He had no strength for battle. He had no power of resistance left.

Moreover, as the days passed away that which at the first made him shudder now wore an enticing face. To die! Ah! he remembered how once he shrank in terror from the bare idea. Life seemed everything and death a great horror from which he instinctively recoiled. But all that was changed now. Life was a horrible thing and death a gentle friend in whose soft bosom he would sleep in peace for ever.

He could easily end his life. There were a hundred ways of doing it, only it must be done in a way that would

Provincial News.

VANCOUVER.

A very pretty wedding was privately solemnized on Wednesday, when Mr. James Cameron Barton, of His Majesty's customs staff, in this city, was united in the bonds of holy matrimony to Miss Helen Forder Johnson, the Rev. J. M. McLeod officiating. Directly after the ceremony a daintily prepared luncheon was partaken of, after which the newly wedded couple went aboard the Victoria steamer and sailed for the Capital, where the honeymoon will be spent.

Rev. J. Knox Wright officiated on Tuesday evening at the nuptials of Mr. Andrew Thompson Brown, one of the engineers of the R. M. S. Empress of India, and Miss Isabel Ann Henderson, daughter of Mr. T. B. Henderson, of Chilliwack. Miss Aitchison attended the bride, while Mr. Weir, of the Empress of India, was best man.

The preliminary hearing in the Japanese infanticide case was concluded in the police court on Wednesday, when the man Haro, and Mrs. Haro's wife, were committed for trial at the next criminal assizes. When the case for the crown was closed, Mr. Bowser said that so far as Haro and his wife were concerned, he did not propose to put in any defence. That stage as to Suikei, the woman Masunaka, he submitted that they should be dismissed, as there was no evidence against them other than that they were in the house, which was a heading place, occupied by a large number of Japs. Mr. Cane said he would not press for the committal of Suijiki and Masunaka, and they were accordingly dismissed from custody. The magistrate held that a case had been made out against Mrs. Haro, and she was committed to the police on Nov. 27. The two accused were thereupon asked through an interpreter if they had anything to say in answer to the charge, and replied that they had nothing to say.

The Japs were arrested near Hainan and held at New Westminster, were released on Thursday under orders from Victoria.

WELSON.—Mr. Justice Marshall on Thursday upset the verdict given by the jury in the Heskins-Le Roi case. The jury found in answer to one question asked by the judge that the omission which caused the accident was the faulty plan of the company. The jury also found in answer to another question that the company was responsible for negligence. The judge claimed that the fault of the survivor was the fault of a fellow-servant of the deceased, and under the common law that the company was not responsible. He gave judgment with costs against plaintiff. The case is to be appealed to the Full Court.

Jacob Dover has announced his intention of presenting ten watches and seven other prizes to the pupils of the public schools.

The local Socialists are reorganizing. They will probably revive their "pleasant Sunday afternoons" for discussion purposes.

A Property Owners' Association and a Citizens' League have been formed here.

GREENWOOD.

Gust. Erickson, an employee at the R. C. Copper Company's smelter; Greenwood, is now in hospital, having special treatment for one of his eyes. Last year the eye was accidentally burned by molten slag whilst Olsen was at his work around the furnace. He went to Spokane and later to Minneapolis, getting temporary relief, afterwards returning to work at his usual occupation. Now the eye is giving him so much trouble that it is feared it will have to be taken out.

The men, Green and Dixon, on remand on a charge of killing deer in excess of the number allowed under the Game Protection Act, appeared again before Police Magistrate Hallett. Owing to the difficulty in obtaining conclusive evidence, the prosecution decided to withdraw the charge for the time, intending to bring it on later, should the necessary testimony against the accused be forthcoming.

NEW WESTMINSTER.

On Sunday, Rev. A. E. Vert, pastor of St. Andrew's Presbyterian church in this city, announced that he had tendered his resignation to the church officers, and desired its acceptance. It is likely that the resignation will be dealt with in the usual course, and would therefore be effective in the latter part of next month.

KASLO.

It is stated that Ald. Archer will, after several years' municipal experience, run for the mayoralty.

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