

and hung high upon the wall above the mantel was a long racing sweep with the date '85 painted in black across the blade. He had the feeling, coming quite unconsciously, of liking the people who lived in this handsome house.

He straightened and looked about, then got up, as Constance Sherrill came back into the room.

"Father is not here just now," she said. "We weren't sure from your telegram exactly at what hour you would arrive, and that is why I waited at Mr. Corvet's to be sure we wouldn't miss you. I have telephoned father, and he's coming home at once."

She hesitated an instant in the doorway, then turned to go out again.

"Miss Sherrill—" he said.

She halted. "Yes."

"You told me you had been waiting for me to come and explain my connection with Mr. Corvet. Well—I can't do that; that is what I came here hoping to find out."

She came back toward him slowly.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

He was forcing himself to disregard the strangeness which his surroundings and all that had happened in the last half hour had made him feel; leaning his arms on the back of the chair in which he had been sitting, he managed to smile reassuringly; and he fought down and controlled resolutely the excitement in his voice, as he told her rapidly the little he knew about himself.

He could not tell definitely how she was affected by what he said. She flushed slightly, following her first start of surprise after he had begun to speak; when he had finished, he saw that she was a little pale.

"Then you don't know anything about Mr. Corvet at all?" she said.

"No; until I got his letter sending for me here, I'd never seen or heard his name."

She was thoughtful for a moment.

"Thank you for telling me," she said. "I'll tell my father when he comes."

"You father is—?" he ventured.

She understood now that the name of Sherrill had meant nothing to him. "Father is Mr. Corvet's closest friend, and his business partner as well," she explained.

He thought she was going to tell him something more about them; but she seemed then to decide to leave that for her father to do. She crossed to the big chair beside the grate and seated herself. As she sat looking at him, hands clasped beneath her chin, and her elbows resting on the arm of the chair, there was speculation and interest in her gaze; but she did not ask him anything more about himself. She inquired about the Kansas weather that week in comparison with the storm which had just ceased in Chicago, and about Blue Rapids, which she said she had looked up upon the map, and he took this chat for what it was—notification that she did not wish to continue the other topic just then.

SHE, he saw, was listening, like himself, for the sound of Sherrill's arrival at the house; and when it came, she recognized it first, rose, and excused herself. He heard her voice in the hall, then her father's deeper voice which answered; and ten minutes later, he looked up to see the man

these things had told him must be Sherrill standing in the door and looking at him.

He was a tall man, sparely built; his broad shoulders had been those of an athlete in his youth; now, at something over fifty, they had taken on a slight, rather studious stoop, and his brown hair had thinned upon his forehead. His eyes, gray like his daughter's, were thoughtful eyes: just now deep trouble filled them. His look and bearing of a refined and educated gentleman took away all chance of offense from the long, inquiring scrutiny to which he subjected Alan's features and figure before he came into the room.

Alan had risen at sight of him; Sherrill, as he came in, motioned him back to his seat; he did not sit down himself, but crossed to the mantel and leaned against it.

"I am Lawrence Sherrill," he said.

As the tall, graceful, thoughtful man stood looking down at him, Alan could tell nothing of the attitude of this friend of Benjamin Corvet toward himself. His manner had the same reserve toward Alan, the same questioning consideration of him, that Constance Sherrill had had after Alan had told her about himself.

"My daughter has repeated to me what you told her, Mr. Conrad," Sherrill observed. "Is there anything you want to add to me regarding that?"

"There's nothing I can add," Alan answered. "I told her all that I know about myself."

"And about Mr. Corvet?"

"I know nothing at all about Mr. Corvet."

"I am going to tell you some things about Mr. Corvet," Sherrill said. "I had reason—I do not want to explain just yet what that reason was—for thinking you could tell us certain things about Mr. Corvet, which would, perhaps, make plainer what has happened to him. When I tell you about him now, it is in the hope that, in that way, I may awake some forgotten memory of him in you; if not that, you may discover some coincidences of dates or events in Corvet's life with dates or events in your own. Will you tell me frankly, if you do discover anything like that?"

"Yes; certainly."

ALAN leaned forward in the big chair, hands clasped between his knees, his blood tingling sharply in his face and fingertips. So Sherrill expected to make him remember Corvet! There was strange excitement in this, and he waited eagerly for Sherrill to begin. For several moments, Sherrill paced up and down before the fire; then he returned to his place before the mantel.

"I first met Benjamin Corvet," he commenced, "nearly thirty years ago. I had come West for the first time the year before; I was about your own age and had been graduated from college only a short time, and a business opening had offered itself here.

"There was a sentimental reason—I think I must call it that—as well, for my coming to Chicago. Until my generation, the property of our family had always been largely—and generally exclusively—in ships. It is a Salem family; a Sherrill was a sea-captain, living in Salem, they say, when his neighbors—and he, I suppose—hanged witches; we had privateers in 1812 and our clippers went round the Horn in '49. The Alabama ended our ships

in '63, as it ended practically the rest of the American shipping on the Atlantic; and in '73, when our part of the Alabama claims was paid us, my mother put it in bonds waiting for me to grow up.

"Sentiment, when I came of age, made me want to put this money back into ships flying the American flag; but there was small chance of putting it—and keeping it, with profit—in American ships on the sea. In Boston and New York, I had seen the foreign flags on the deep-water ships—British, German, French, Norwegian, Swedish, and Greek; our flag flew mostly on ferries and excursion steamers. But times were booming on the great lakes. Chicago, which had more than recovered from the fire, was doubling its population every decade; Cleveland, Duluth, and Milwaukee were leaping up as ports. Men were growing millions of bushels of grain which they couldn't ship except by lake; hundreds of thousands of tons of ore had to go by water; and there were tens of millions of feet of pine and hardwood from the Michigan forests. Sailing vessels such as the Sherrills had always operated, it is true, had seen their day and were disappearing from the lakes; were being 'sold,' many of them, as the saying is, 'to the insurance companies' by deliberate wrecking. Steamers were taking their place. Towing had come in. The first of the whalebacks was built about that time, and we began to see those processions of a barge and two, three, or four tows which the lake-men called 'the sow and her pigs.' Men of all sorts had come forward, of course, and, serving the situation more or less accidentally, were making themselves rich.

"It was railroading which had brought me West; but I had brought with me the Alabama money to put into ships. I have called it sentiment, but it was not merely that; I felt, young man though I was, that this transportation matter was all one thing, and that in the end the railroads would own the ships. I have never engaged very actively in the operation of the ships; my daughter would like me to be more active in it than I have been; but ever since, I have had money in lake vessels. It was the year that I began that sort of investment that I first met Corvet."

Alan looked up quickly. "Mr. Corvet was—?" he asked.

"Corvet was—is a lakeman," Sherrill said.

Alan sat motionless, as he recollected the strange exaltation that had come to him when he saw the lake for the first time. Should he tell Sherrill of that? He decided it was too vague, too indefinite to be mentioned; no doubt any other man used only to the prairie might have felt the same. "He was a ship owner, then," he said.

"Yes; he was a shipowner—not, however, on a large scale at that time. He had been a master, sailing ships which belonged to others; then he had sailed one of his own. He was operating then, I believe, two vessels; but with the boom times on the lakes, his interests were beginning to expand. I met him frequently in the next few years, and we became close friends."

Sherrill broke off and stared an instant down at the rug. Alan bent forward; he made no interruption but only watched Sherrill attentively.

(To be continued.)

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