



THE PROSPECTOR BY RALPH CONNOR

CHAPTER XXII The Waiting Game. Brown was early astir. He knew that he could not keep Shock so fully employed as to prevent his going home long before ten o'clock, and it was part of his plan that Shock's first meeting with Helen should take place in his own mother's house.

"The first thing we must do," he announced, "is to see a tailor. If you are going to address the General Assembly you have got to get proper togs. And anyway, you may as well get a suit before you go West again. I know a splendid tailor—cheap, too."

"Well, I will see about that," said Brown. So he did, for after some private conversation with the tailor, the prices quoted to Shock were quite within even his small means.

It was half-past nine before they reached Shock's home. Brown took the key out of his pocket, opened the door, and allowed Shock to enter, waiting outside for a few moments.

"When he followed in he found him still standing in the centre of the little room, looking about upon the familiar surroundings, the articles of furniture, the pictures on the wall, his mother's chair beside the table, with her Bible and glasses at hand.

As Brown came in Shock turned to him and said, "Is this some more of your kindness, Brown? Have you taken care of everything?"

"No," said Brown, "that is not my work. Every week since the house was closed Helen has come over and kept things right."

"Without any reply Shock passed into his mother's room, leaving Brown alone. When half an hour had passed, Brown glanced out of the window, saw Helen approaching.

"Thank goodness!" he exclaimed, "here she is at last." He opened the door for her. "Oh, good morning," she exclaimed in surprise. "I am sure this is very kind of you."

Come on. You'll have to get at your speech now." "My speech?" said Shock, rising wearily. "No speech for me!"

"I tell you what, Shock," said Brown, with a touch of impatience, "you think too much of yourself!"

"Do I, Brown?" "Well, perhaps so," said Shock, humbly. "Oh, confound your old carcass!" cried Brown, throwing his arm round Shock's neck.

"I know what this will cost you," the superintendent wrote, "but the cause is not yours nor mine. It is His. And for His sake I believe you will do this."

"I am glad to see you, Miss Fairbanks," he said, taking her hand. "I am glad that you have come here, in this house, that you give such loving and tender care to my dear mother. However long I may live, whatever may come to me, I shall never forget what you did for her through all the year, and at the last."

"His quiet dignity restored to Helen her self-possession. She looked at him and said, "It is this some more of your kindness, Brown? Have you taken care of everything?"

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"Yes, I thought I would help," said Brown in a loud voice. "You see, Shock was anxious to come, and I thought I would come up with him. He is in the next room. He will be out in a minute. We were coming to see you, but you could not get away. The superintendent dropped in, and we talked till it was too late." Brown kept the stream of his remarks flowing as if he feared a pause.

Helen laid the bunch of flowers she was carrying in her hand upon the table. "Oh, Brown," she exclaimed, "how could you! This is very unkind."

Shock's heart gave a leap. "And what did she say?" he inquired in an uneasy voice. "She said you would not marry her without my consent," said Shock.

"And what, then, will you do?" inquired Mrs. Fairbanks. "Shock threw up his head, with joy illumining his face. "I—we—changing the pronoun with a sudden ecstasy of rapture, "we can wait."

"And how long, pray?" inquired Mrs. Fairbanks, scornfully. "How long?" he asked as if pondering the question. "Forever!"

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