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BY FREDERICK R. BURTON. Author of "Her Wedding Interlude," "Josef Helmuth's Goetz," "A Pot of Gold," "The Strange Object of Thornton Wetmore," etc.

CHAPTER II.

THE VISITOR RECALLED. For a moment both Mr. and Mrs. Warren seemed prostrated by the excitement of the brief incident, and and mighty hunters to inattentive no evidence of veneer, even to Will ears. The old man didn't mind. He Spencer's self-conscious eyes, but had two moods; in one he querulously exacted the strictest attention to his remarks; this was the other, in which the memories evoked by his oft-told tales peopled his mind with faces of the past and they and the sound of the past and they are the past are the past and they are the past are the past, and they and the sound of his own voice were all sufficient to him.
"Mantma!" said Elsie, raising her head when the sound of his own process and they are seeking comfort in his arms. head when the pressure of her mother's hands were released; "what is the mat-

It was as if some new trouble had arisen to confront Mrs. Warren, or as mean?" if the strange trouble already before her had appeaed in a new light. She looked at her daughter with tearful eyes and ashen cheeks, responding

"I cannot tell you, Elsie, dear; 1 cannot tell you." Cannot, mamma? Why not? Is it

anything about me and Will?" Mrs. Warren shook her head, but in such a melancholy way that one might have doubted whether she intended to how can I tell. You ought to know reply in the negative to Elsie's last question. The girl interpreted the ges-ture to mean that something underlay appearance of this stranger that did concern her deeply, and her own that black man had almost to be under eyes filled with tears of apprehension. our feet." 'Mamma, you must tell me what it means," she half pleaded, half insist- man was but the fright of a moment." ed. "Don't you see, here's Will waiting for you. He ought to know if stand it."

there is anything wrong."

"And the stand it."
"No me

Mrs. Warren looked up at the young man who was standing near, dismayed man who came in?"
and fearful, and again held out her "I don't know. I didn't see the man hand. It shook noticeably as he took who was here."

"I had not forgotten you, Will," she up the mountain." A moment ago I should have welcomed you as one of us, for I know you love Elsie and will make her a good husband. Now-I hardly know what to say, except that my feeling toward you is exactly the same. I

should like to wish you joy."
"Mamma!" said Elsie, "why shouldn't
you? Oh, dear!" and she gave way to the vaguely-defined but very real fear that oppressed her, and burst into

Warren arose and glancing significantly at Will, walked across the room to her husband, who was leaning against the mantel over the fire-

place, his head upon his arm. Will, the earnest, honest lover, was equal to the emergency. He stooped over Elsie, who was still upon knees and raised her gently, folding er in his arms, pressing his lips upon her hair, and whispering:

Elsie, my dear girl, don't you see that nothing can take you away from

Elsie put her arms up to his neck, and hid her face upon his shoulder. Her sobs came more lightly, but she had been too strangely shaken to re-

cover easily. "I don't see," said Mr. Warren, un-teadily, "that the young folks need o be disturbed, do you, mother? Isn't this something for you and me to think about?"

"Yes," she answered, "for you and She turned her face with a brave attempt at cheer and hope to Will, but even in the growing darkness he could see that she was still suffering acutely

from the shock. Mr. Warren was even more wrought upon than his wife. His brows were fearfully distorted, his eyes wandered

seemed partially numbed: but he, too, tried to speak reassuringly.
"Mother and I'll think it over," he said. "You two-you're young, you've got your own lives to live, you've got a right to happiness—come, mother, let's think this over," and he opened

the door into the kitchen, "Nick," said Will, forgetting all for-mality in the presence of trouble, "you know me. If there's anything to do, you'll call on me, won't you?"
"Yes, lad; you're thinking of that.

the rifle over the fireplace.

Will nodded. Elsie had not seen her father's threatening attitude to the stranger, although she must have known from his words what he had done, and her lover was as little inclined as her father to impress upon her mind the ugly fact that murder had been imminent in the peaceful house-

"There won't be any occasion for that, Will," continued Mr. Warren; "but you might wait a bit. for I may want you. I s'pose vou won't mind waiting?" and a ghost of a smile flitted across the haggard face. "No: I'll wait till morning if you

" replied Will It was not possible for a young man in his situation to feel much depression in his situation to feel much depression back, so I don't want to leave the of being ridiculous should keep hard in the presence of other's troubles. In house just yet. Won't you inquire at work. No one is ridiculous who is this there was no heartlessness. Man returns from the burial of the beloved anything has been seen of him?" dead to the joys of living. From the state of his own heart it may be said his hat. "I'll find him easily enough."

that if he had been told that to obtain sweet Elsie Warren for his wife, he would have to remove Baker Mountain, he would have set about tearing it down that very evening, and would have worked cheerfully, too.

Gran'pa Kirk had nodded off to sleep

and dreams of '25 again, and after the door had closed upon Mr. and Mrs. Warren, Will looked down at the fair head nestied upon his shoulder. How wonderful it seemed that she should be there! Of course he had known her ever since she was a baby; they had been schoolmates in the sense that when he was cutting his initials in the back row, she was dozing over her letters in the front; he had more than once had her in his arms, carrying her across mountain streams or over pools in the road; but, good gracious! that was ages ago, fourteen or fifteen years at least. She was not the same then, not merely that she was a child -she didn't seem to be the same being. As she had grown to maturity the distance between them seemed not to be measured by years, but by something more intangible, more impassable. Then she had been away for more than a year attending the high school at Denby, the nearest large When she returned home Will had found the gulf greater than before. In fact, it was not till then that he

recognized it, and in the crude, honest analysis to which he subjected his emotions and the situation, he made that Elsie was now a woman.

Higher education had not made her affected—far from it. She may have acquired an indefinable repose rather lacking in Granite girls; she was cartainly at ease in the cabin and welcome. I don't want no money from a man like ourselves. And he went up there. You'll find him there now, I guess."

It was perhaps half an hour after will had returned. tainly at ease in company, and there was no doubt, so he thought, that her learning was vast; but beneath it all lay sweet womanliness that must have shone through any veneer of artificial-

Gran'pa Kirk chattered on about bears ity, had she taken it on. There was

seeking comfort in his arms.
The impossible had happened and the greatest prize in life that man Who was that man? What did can strive for was his.
"Will, dear," and Elsie strained upon his neck, "what does all this

"I guess it means that we're pretty much in love," he answered playfully. "Don't be silly!" said Elsie; but she showed no disposition to act any more wisely than her lover acted. In fact, I think she was really convinced that he was behaving with the utmost pro-

"You know what I mean," she added a moment later. "Yes," he responded, gravely; "but

more about it than I do." "Well, I don't know the first thing. It all confuses and frightens me. Just think! We were so happy, and

"I'm happy now, dear. The black "And then this came. I can't under-

"No more can I; but, of course, you don't connect the black man with this

"It wasn't either of the men we saw

What did he look like?' "The man who came here? Why, he was tall, elderly, very dark-" "Sunburned, like the man up the

mountain?" "Yes, but just as other men are sunburned. I'm brown, myself, you know. Look at me."

Elsie shuddered slightly. "Don't say you are like either of hem," she said. "Go on." "Well, this man had a full beard,

streaked with gray. I don't believe I noticed anything else." "Had you never seen him before?" "Never."

Elsie was silent a moment before she

"I thought all manner of strange things. It seemed as if this man had come to take me away from you. Just as soon as I saw that there was trouble of some kind I wanted to run ite Prescription, I find I am entirely to you, but mother held me. There cured of 'female complaint.' I return was danger for me, Will, or she would not have held me so." It was sweet to Will, this confession

that Elsie turned instinctively to him for protection. How he vowed with mighty emphasis that she should never find him lacking in time of need, and how he wished that this unknown trouble would so shape itself that, he could be called upon to battle with it! Some such assurances passed his lips while Gran'pa Kirk slept on, and when the clicking of the latch foretold the return of Mr. and Mrs. Warren from the kitchen, Elsie suddenly discovered that she was sitting down, and so was Will, and yet only two chairs—and she hastily withdrew to the window, leaving Will to rise

awkwardly by himself. "Will," began Mr. Warren, while his fearfully distorted, his eyes wandered wife set a lamp on the table, "we don't restlessly about the room, his faculties need to say, I s'pose, that his matter ought not to be spoken of in the village?"
"No, sir," replied Will, "I won't say a word."

"As for what I did, you must remember that I have been a soldier, lad, and the old habit of dealing shortly with an enemy came upon me when -when I thought there was danger. I shouldn't have touched that," glancing at the rifle, "if I had thought quick enough."

"It was natural enough, Nick," said and he jerked his thumb toward the younger man. "I only thought of the over the fireplace. the danger myself, though, of course, I had no idea of what it was."

startled, that's all. You see-"We hadn't seen this gentleman for many years," interposed Mrs. Warren, quietly, as her husband hesitated. "We didn't know what it might mean, but we both see that we should have received him differently. Both of you, please, do not ask us about it till

we ourselves know more. We'd like to have you help us, Will."
"Yes'm," exclaimed Will, eagerly.
"I want to see that man again," said Mr. Warren. "Like as not he'll come around among the neighbors and see if

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"Tell him we beg that he will come back," said Mrs. Warren.

"Isn't there any danger?" asked El-"None whatever," replied her father emphatically. "Do you suppose an old soldier would send another man on his errand if there was any danger

This answer was conclusive even to Elsie, and Will set forth without de-

It was, indeed, an easy matter to get trace of the stranger. All Granite had seen him walking along the road late that afternoon, and pretty much all the male population of Granite, not counting those with whom we are acquainted, said so when Will inquired at Sam Springer's general store. Better than that, Sam himself was next to certain that he knew where the man had gone, though not a soul knew who he was or had even seen him. Will dodged their questions with honest success, for he knew little more than they did, and learned from Sam Springer that the stranger had tried to hire from him a deserted cabin part way up Baker Mountain for a few

days' shelter. "He said he was used to the forests and didn't tackle kindly to houses, said Sam, "and when I asked him if he was a city chap come up for fishing or shooting, he said he wasn't; and so I told him to take the cabin and

lay on the way to Baker Mountain, that Granite was excited by the arrival of a dusty stranger drawn by a dusty horse. The stranger alighted at Sam's store, and after arranging for accommodation of himself and horse for the night at a neighboring house, asked much the same questions that

Will had asked.

"My name's Golding; Ben Golding,"
he said frankly, "and I want to find
that man. No matter why. Somebody

show me the way."

Two of the villagers volunteered to go with him, but he was in no such hurry that he could not stop for sup-per, and so another half-hour passed before he started on his search. Meantime Mr. Warren, knowing exactly where Sam Springer's cabin was, had left the house and gone up the mountain alone. It was not the same read down which the lovers had come, although it branched from the highway not far from Mr. Warren's house. Will had offered to go with him, but Mrs. Warren had quietly said that it was better that her husband should

go alone. "There is no more danger for him than for you," she added; and so Will remained, to the great content of Elsie, and, I doubt not, of himself.' It had not been more than twenty

minutes before Mr. Warren dashed up the path between the hollyhocks and burst excitedly into the sitting room. His face was more ghastly pale and drawn than when he had driven the visitor forth with his rifle. For a moment he leaned heavily against the door, trying to speak. Then he gasped: "He's dead. Martha; he's dead."
"Dead, Nicholas?" she repeated, in

"Worse!" he continued, with difficulty. "He was killed! Murder has been done up the mountain!"

(To be Continued Tomorrow.) The poets sing of a fountain waters bring back lost youth, But no one has ever found it. Still

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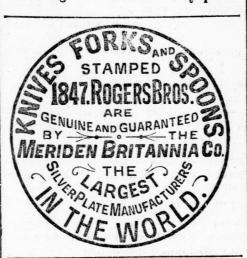
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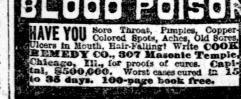
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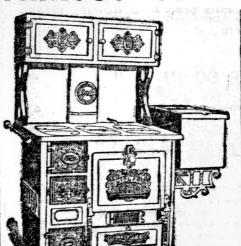
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