

THE INHERITANCE OF JEAN TROUVE

By NEVIL HENSHAW

Author of "Allie of the Grand Woods, etc."

CHAPTER II.—CONTINUED

It was Madame Therese who interrupted our talk by coming in at dusk and insisting that her patient should be kept quiet.

My father laughed at her. He was all right again, he assured her. In fact he felt better than he had for some time. Also there would be all the next day to rest up in. It was providential that he had fallen ill upon the eve of Mardi Gras.

No, he had no idea of leaving his room. As he had told her, he felt much better and he was tired of lying in bed. He would simply put on his dressing-gown and sit in the big armchair by the fire. Later, when the parade went by, he would try to see what he could through the windows. He understood that the floats were to be especially gorgeous.

Scolding furiously yet immensely relieved, Madame Therese finally consented to this plan. It was perhaps as much as M'sieu's life was worth, she said, but what could one do at Mardi Gras? And those older visitors who were unwilling to fight their way through the crowded streets? Would it annoy M'sieu if they were to accept the little one's invitation and view the parade from the balcony? They could go through the window of the little room, and she herself would see that they made no noise.

Again my father laughed at her. Of course the visitors must use the balcony. Why, what would the maskers think if they were to find it deserted? They knew that balcony as well as they did the one at the Boston Club where King Rex stopped his float each year and drank from the great loving-cup of silver. Some day little John might have a cup himself, and then perhaps Proteus or Comus would halt his pageant in the rue Bourbon that he might sip from it. One could never tell.

Thus, in a spirit of affectionate banter my father arose and, with my assistance, got into his dressing-gown and the big armchair by the fireplace. Once seated, however, he fell suddenly silent, staring down into the glowing coals with eyes that seemed to pierce far through them into the beyond.

Still tingling with the memory of our recent companionship, I questioned him timidly about those long-past days upon the plantation. But he seemed not to hear me, although he reached for my hand and, placing it upon his knee, stroked it absently in his meditation. So presently I became silent also, and thus we sat while the darkness fell and the street light upon the corner came buzzing aglow to cast queer writing shadows through the long French windows.

That night, for the first time in my life, I was late at my place upon the balcony. Always before it had been my custom to hurry from my supper to the little stool, there to sit and strain my eyes toward the far-distant corner of Canal Street that I might catch the first faint glow from the torches of the approaching parade.

Why upon this occasion I lingered at the fireside I can not say. Perhaps it was that I might enjoy to the fullest the memory of that morning talk. Perhaps I had a foreboding of that which hovered so near. At all events it was not until the last of the visitors had gathered upon the balcony, and Madame Therese had peeped in unseeingly, that my father roused me from my reverie.

"Come, John," said he. "They will be here soon. You must not neglect your guests, you know." I arose now impatiently enough, especially as the faint strains of a march were borne in from outside. "I must have been asleep," said I, amazed at my inaction. "And you, father? Shall I move your chair to the window? The visitors will gladly make a space for you to see through."

My father shook his head. "No, John," he replied. "Somehow I do not care for it—tonight. Hand me the little picture upon the writing-table and run along." Laying the picture of my mother upon his lap, I was about to hurry away when he suddenly placed a hand beneath my chin, tilting my face upon a level with his own. Intently he gazed at the portrait, nodding his head as though in confirmation of some thought.

"Yes," he muttered. "You are like her, John. You are like her, in many ways. Then his expression changed to one of infinite sadness, and his hand beneath my chin slipped down and around until it rested upon my shoulder. "Kiss me, my son," said my father. And I did so, going out to the revelry of the carnival with the fondness of his caress still warm upon my lips.

who in the parishes responded only to the formal "Monsieur," exchanged greetings with the crowd beneath them, laughing uproariously at the quaint titles that they received. And up the street, a gorgeous, tuneful fairy-land of light and beauty, the parade moved majestically forward.

Pushing a way through the ranks of my guests, I arrived at my stool only to find it occupied. During my absence it had been appropriated by one of the visitors, a squat stoop-shouldered man who pressed his short body against the iron railing as though he expected at any moment to be forcibly removed from the spot.

"Pardon, M'sieu," said I in French, "but you have my place. I am the owner of the balcony." By way of reply the man only planted himself the firmer, but he glanced at me inquiringly so that I had a glimpse of his face—a dull, mean, glint-lipped face, ending in a ragged wisp of beard.

"Be quiet," he ordered roughly. "For two hours I have held this position so that none could take it. If it is yours, you should have come before." It was the climax of that eventful day. I choked. I gasped. The tears rushed into my eyes. Never before had I been treated so discourteously, I, the owner of the balcony, the one who had invited them all. It was incredible. It was enormous. But far more poignant than my injured feelings was the thought that I must see the parade from another spot.

A rage rose up in me such as in all my lonely life I had never known. I set my teeth. I seized the poacher by the slack of his trousers and, firm-planted though he was, began to shake him like some small but energetic terrier. "You must move, M'sieu," I panted. "It is my place, and I will see the parade from nowhere else."

This time the man turned round abruptly, his attention attracted not so much by my words, as by the fact that, together with the slack of his trousers, I had also grasped two generous handfuls of skin. "Let go, you little beast," he snarled. "Would you have me strike you?"

It is probable that he would have done so, as I was firmly resolved to stick to my hold. But at this moment old Monsieur Verette, a visitor of long standing, thrust his way between us. Evidently he had witnessed what had occurred, for, laying a hand upon the angry man's shoulder, he drew him quietly away from the coveted spot.

"For shame, Dugas," said he in a low voice. "That is little M'sieu Marah who invited you here, as you must have known. This is no way for one to act upon a first visit. Believe me, lodgings such as those of Madame Therese are hard to find."

Scowling, declaring falsely that he had not known who I was, Monsieur Dugas permitted himself to be led away. An instant I stared after him, still shaking with the fury of the encounter, before I slipped into my hard-won place, and craned my neck beyond the railing. Then, in a blaze of light from torches, from jewels, and from glittering tinsel, the parade arrived before me.

Slowly, proudly Proteus swept past upon his throne of gold, waving his jeweled scepter at the cheering crowds. The visitors shouted. Also I must have realized its meaning for, without a moment's hesitation, I turned my back upon the wondrous spectacle below me, and slipped through the window of the little room. Out into the hall and straight to my father's door I hurried as though led by some invisible guide. And there I paused upon the threshold to gaze upon that which, in some unaccountable manner, I already knew I must see.

My father, seated in the big armchair by the fire, just as I had left him, except that his eyes were now closed. In one hand he held my mother's picture, the fingers clasping it lightly, as though even death itself had been unable to conquer that tender, reverent touch. Upon his lips there lay the faint shadow of a smile, and the peace of his quiet face was glorified by the fire-light as with a halo. Kneeling beside the armchair, her face buried in her hands, was Madame Therese. That she wept I could tell by her quick strangled breathing, but otherwise she made no sound. And this was Madame Therese, French, excitable Madame Therese, who, at the death of a pet canary, had been known to shrill the neighborhood with the shrillness of her wails.

Afterward, alone in Madame Therese's room, I sought my accustomed refuge in the center of the bed, and listened to the strange unaccustomed sounds that came from the other side of the folding-doors—the low grave voices of the hastily assembled visitors, the broken explanations of Madame Therese, the slow measured tramp of men bearing a heavy weight, the rustling creak of springs and mattress as they received their burden. And through it all, as bright and as elusive as the fairy-land of which it was a part, ran a faint thread of music from outside.

As I listened I was seized with a great choking terror, a terror that even the sanctuary of the bed-clothes could not assuage. I wrapped my head in the covers. I wrung my fingers into my ears. And even then the memory of what I had heard throbbled into my brain with a persistency far more horrible than that of the sounds themselves.

Slipping out from beneath the covers, I sprang to the door and down the stairs. There was but one thought in my terrified mind—to get away from it all. The dim bleak hall upon the lower floor appeared a possible refuge, but even as I crouched there the muffled footsteps came thudding from above. I glanced toward the street and shrank back as the music, the stately creak and rustle of the passing floats all of them seemed to mock me in my misery. With a cry I turned and ran toward the little door in the rear, slipping through it into the chill blackness of the demon court. Straight toward the old pump I groped my way, clasping it in my arms, and laying my burning cheek against the grateful coolness of its metal. And strange though it may seem, this place of terror became for me a quiet haven in the greater terror that I had known.

Poor little waif of the rue Bourbon! How I sobbed out my grief against the rusty handle of that unused pump, while the stars winked sympathetically in the dark square of sky above me, and the sounds of the carnival came faintly from the distance like some soft accompaniment to my tears.

Then Madame Therese discovered me in her frantic search and, lifting me in tender motherly arms, bore me back to her room and to bed.

TO BE CONTINUED

THE POOL OF THE SHADOWS

By George O'Brien in The Franciscan

It was one of those days on which all good trout-fishers rejoice and give thanks. The mountain-stream leaped and sparkled over rocks and boulders as it swept onward to the sea; it gleamed between heather-covered banks; it rolled slowly past coves and under the shadows of wooded mountains; and now and then it assumed, did this little stream, an air of dignity as it swelled out into lakelets among low-lying meadows.

Both of them had been fishing upstream—and within a hundred yards of each other—since morning. Yet neither knew of the other's presence; in fact, it was only in a very impersonal and historical way that the one knew of the other's existence. And besides, they were on opposite banks. Both seemed to be heading for a definite point, for they passed in turn invitingly into pools and noticed them merely with an avaricious wave of their fishing-rods—the girl reached the place first.

She had traveled with certainty. He had stopped here and there as if going by instructions and searching for some place that had been described to him. There had been about her an air of uniform enjoying for, without a moment's hesitation, he turned my back upon the wondrous spectacle below me, and slipped through the window of the little room. Out into the hall and straight to my father's door I hurried as though led by some invisible guide. And there I paused upon the threshold to gaze upon that which, in some unaccountable manner, I already knew I must see.

My father, seated in the big armchair by the fire, just as I had left him, except that his eyes were now closed. In one hand he held my mother's picture, the fingers clasping it lightly, as though even death itself had been unable to conquer that tender, reverent touch. Upon his lips there lay the faint shadow of a smile, and the peace of his quiet face was glorified by the fire-light as with a halo. Kneeling beside the armchair, her face buried in her hands, was Madame Therese. That she wept I could tell by her quick strangled breathing, but otherwise she made no sound. And this was Madame Therese, French, excitable Madame Therese, who, at the death of a pet canary, had been known to shrill the neighborhood with the shrillness of her wails.

heart of a willow and proceed to gather a trout into her basket.

Desmond stood and stared, much as Adam must have done when he awoke from his first nap to find Eve gathering flowers on the lawn.

Every one who fishes your pool is your enemy. Desmond was tall and graceful. Her face was pale, or at least seemed so in the setting of dark ringlets that hung down her bosom. She wore a dark, tailor-made skirt, and a plain, white waist.

A sprig of woodbine was caught in the strap of her fishing basket. Desmond was given to quick decisions in all things. He stepped into the stream and walked across. "He told me to come to the Pool of the Shadows and to cast my line across into the eddies at the opposite side, and to let it float down under the willow bush, and that I would catch one every time," he explained.

"He taught me to come to the Pool of the Shadows and hide in the willow bush and let my flies float down the side nearest me. And I have caught one every time." There was just a trace of amusement in her voice.

"I mean Father O'Neil told me," he said. "I mean Father O'Neil taught me," she replied.

"But I mean Father O'Neil of Holy Cross Cathedral, Boston," he wrinkled.

"But I mean Father O'Neil of Holy Cross Cathedral, Boston," she smiled.

"Yes, I'm Maureen McVeigh," she assented when the fragments had settled somewhat. "And I'm Desmond Walsh," he declared. "But who on—?"

She held up her hand. "Now Mr., er—Walsh, since we have both established our rights to this pool, don't you think it is a pity to let that cloud pass? I am sure to catch one with my new hare's ear."

And she waved the cat-gut menacingly. "But, Miss McVeigh, you are the one person in the world I want most to talk to."

"Indeed! Watch out for the flies, Mr. Walsh. I warned you once already that sometimes the piece of flesh has to be bitten out."

"But I want to ask you so many things about the Pool of the Shadows and about this place, and about Father O'Neil—that was his name, wasn't it?" And he pointed to the old ruins he had so recently cried over.

"Yes, that was his home," she answered. "But don't you think it is a pity to spoil a day's fishing just for the sake of talk? There you are, I missed that one, and it was all your fault. I pulled too soon, and now he won't bite again today."

"Miss McVeigh," and he leaned across and caught the fishing-rod. My father runs a fish market in Boston, and if you stop fishing just long enough to answer my questions I'll send you a cargo of halibut as soon as I get back."

"Roally, but, Mr. Walsh, I don't fish for a living, you know, and if you don't mind—" but he had slipped the rod from her hand.

"Well, Mr. Question-box, let us get it over with. I always heard Americans were rather energetic in the pursuit of anything they wanted, but I did think the James Brothers were dead. Just what you can have to ask is beyond me, since you seem to know all about me already."

"Yes, I am that little girl Father O'Neil told you so much about. I am that little creature he used to take with him on all his fishing trips and whom he taught to fish, when I screamed every time he impaled a worm on a hook. And, oh, yes, the fairy tales; yes, I was very fond of them. I am the little girl of all those other things he told you. And now, may I have back my fishing rod?" she concluded submissively.

"Then you were with him that day at the Pool of the Shadows?" he asked.

"The most seriousness left her voice, and a shadow crossed her face. "I was with them," she corrected.

"Will you tell me the story, Miss McVeigh? You know, I was a little fellow then, and when Father O'Neil left Ireland just after the affair that happened on this spot he came to us. We were the only relations he had, and during his vacations he and I used to go fishing. It was during those trips he told me all about you and the great fisherman you were, and how you liked fairy tales; and that his mother always told him he would make a pagan out of you. In all the years that have followed he has been my friend and adviser; he told me most everything about Ireland, but he never would tell me what happened at the Pool of the Shadows. He said it was a secret, and that you were the only one who shared it with him. But he said if ever I met you I might ask you to tell it to me. Won't you tell me the story, Maureen?"

She liked the frank, gray eyes of this stranger; and she liked the mouth that could be so boyishly putting in its requests. So she told him the story.

"You will promise me never to tell it to anyone?" she asked.

"If you so wish, I promise," he answered.

And as they started to walk along the old bridge-path that led through the mountains and the woods—and finally came out at the house where Maureen was staying—she told him

what had happened at the Pool of the Shadows.

"You see," the girl began, "the O'Neills were wealthy farmers once, and owned all this land you now see; and their home was that old ruin that lies across the river. The family was known throughout the valley for their hospitality and generosity to the poor. Never a winter passed but they helped some poor family, and in spring paid their rent, and thus saved them from being evicted by the landlord. Lord Ashley, who was the landlord of all this section, hated them for this, for he wanted to get all the farms around here for plantation purposes. He had long set his heart into a deer park for the entertainment of his English cousins in the hunting season, and while the struggling farmers could find somebody to tide them over a bad winter, his plans were being continually frustrated. But fate stepped in at last and solved the problem for him.

"The potato blight came and brought everybody to starvation. Still the O'Neills had enough, and during that long winter their house was filled with poor, borrowers, and suffering peasantry in general. "Still they never shut the door against anyone, but gave while they had anything to give. And at length they had to go a-borrowing themselves.

"Their lands were worth thousands of pounds, but they had to mortgage them for a few hundred. Still they managed to remain in the old place.

"At length the famine passed, but all the smaller farmers were gone from the upper end of the valley. A few broken families had survived. The O'Neill family was one of them.

"At length, when no more money could be raised to meet the creditors, they foreclosed, and Lord Ashley bought in the O'Neill's lands at a fraction of their value. The family was able to retain the old homestead and a few acres. The old couple had died leaving one son with a young wife; these were the parents of Charles and George O'Neill. Charles was the elder."

Here the young man broke in: "You say there were two sons. But I always understood that Father O'Neill was an only child."

The girl raised her hand for silence. "I am coming to that," she said, and continued: "The father died young and left Mrs. O'Neill to raise the two boys. She faced the problem manfully, and eked out a livelihood till the boys were able to help her. Charles was a steady youth and by degrees the family got back on its feet somewhat. They became sufficiently well off to be able to send George to college to study for the priesthood. He was a number of years at college before I was old enough to remember anything. His favorite pastime was fishing, and ever since I was a tot he would take me with him on all his fishing trips. You see, Mr. Walsh, I was not one of the family, but a waif they adopted. I lost my father and mother when I was a baby."

The old Lord Ashley had died, but his son pursued the father's plans, and the O'Neills were an eyesore to the young lord. The deer park could not be completed till they would be removed. He used every mean device to drive them out, and goaded them on to desperation. He raised their rent every March. He brought his friends and hounds and rode over their young crops. He set his dogs on their cattle and sheep and the poor farmer had no appeal.

"At length one day in early summer—it was the year before George's ordination—Lord Ashley came riding up the valley. He rode in among the young cattle, and his dogs killed a couple of them. Charles was working in the meadow that runs down to the Pool of the Shadows. George was showing me how to let my flies drift in under the willow bush in which we were concealed. I was ten years old then.

"Young Lord Ashley rode up to Charles and told him he was coming to look over the meadow with a view to start plantation. I heard angry words and then Lord Ashley rode towards the pool, where we were fishing. Charles followed him, and still he carried the pick-axe he had been working with. Lord Ashley jumped off his horse, and the angry words were continued. Suddenly I saw Charles raise the pick-axe and strike at the landlord. As he did so Lord Ashley pulled a revolver from his pocket and fired. Charles fell, and rolled into the water. Lord Ashley jumped on his horse and rode away.

"George sprang from the willow bush and rushed across to his brother. He lifted him back to the bank, but Charles was shot through the heart.

"George was almost beside himself with grief—and then the thought of telling his mother! I know what we did was wrong, but God will forgive us; we hid the body in the willow bush, and that same night we buried it under the old Cherry Tree at the head of the pool. We told his mother that Charles had slipped off to America."

"Of course, Lord Ashley never revealed what had happened. And George's mother died the following winter. George sold the homestead and Lord Ashley bought it, and people wondered why he never started planting. George was ordained the next year and went to America."

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