

SIX

# The Last House

By JESSIE M. WHITTAKER

The florist's workshop was tropical with the fragrance of flowers and greenery and the heat from the glowing stove, though outside the snow whirled and drifted at the mercy of the wind, and now and then a gust of wind sent a shiver along the unheated floor.

Close to the fire sat two men, middle-aged, thick-walleted, prosperous, and a boy of twenty, waiting none too patiently the end of their errand. When they spoke at all it was in subdued tones, for the presence of the dead, and the spell in the house of mourning was still upon them.

A little apart, to catch the heat of the gray light, Louis Labrie sat weaving upon a foundation of wood and tinsel a great cross of ferns and flowers, a cross that he said that he listened, he merely heard the tributes to the dead and felt the presence of a profound and irrepressible bereavement. In silence and apparent apathy, he heard the interchange of low broken sentences, adding no word of praise or regret, then suddenly, like a smouldering ash-covered log that, eaten through the heart by fire, falls apart with a tongue of sparks and fierce, he began to speak rapidly and scornfully.

"Gentlemen, to hear you talk, one might believe that you had thought your friend above all mortal weakness, even immune from death itself. Had you never thought when his hand clasped yours, how cold that hand must have been? Had you never thought when he walked among you—a leader of men—to what idleness he must sooner or later have come? Your grief amuses me. I can only wonder at it."

He laid the finished cross upon the table, and gathered about him the material for an anchor of violets. "What is life?" he resumed, "but a long death? And yet, when the process is finished, you cry out in awe or horror or grief, as if something unexpected, unprecedented and unknown had befallen you or your fellow creatures. Bah! Are men hypocrites or fools, I watch your endless, forever-new, eternally-old panorama of life and death, and I sometimes think there is no grief, no sorrow, no despair; it is all some fine, unconscious dislocation, or it is the attenuated inheritance of the first man's consternation and frenzy at the first death."

"Your loss is real? Your sorrow is sincere? You are sure of that? Then do you belong to the other category?" "Today, perhaps, you hold your arms, warm and sweet and clinging, your wife. Tomorrow that soft body lies dumb and cold, at the mercy of what a touch, what an embrace, or tomorrow you teach your child that 'God is good,' that 'God is love,' and the next day he watches the heavy curtain of clay spread over you, and with all his feeble might he flings your dogma into the face of the universe as a lie."

"Yet, day by day, year by year, you bind yourself to life as a banian tree, drops its roots to the earth, and it is the only thing you do know—that one by one, soon or late, every wrench or slow disintegration at the cost of what wounds, what pain! Is it a wonder that I maintain that my fellow-men are either fools or stooges?"

At first the men by the fire had received Labrie's storm of denunciation with silent forbearance, offering neither protest nor defence, but now the older man, a stranger to the florist, turned his keen eyes upon him.

"And which of the two, my friend, are you?" he asked. But his scorn fell short of its mark. Labrie tossed back from his forehead a lock of hair, and singularly gray among the brown, and returned the questioner's gaze.

"By the grace of my own strength, I am neither," he retorted on the instant. "I was not a fool, and I could not be a stone, so I became the wise man."

"The end of desire is the beginning of wisdom," quoted the man by the fire. "Perhaps you are one of the mortals who can attest the truth of that."

"I will not pretend that it was the beginning of mine," replied Labrie, though the thrust brought the blood to his face in dull splashes. "I suppose that you are not made of the same quality of clay as the rest of us," pursued Labrie's ardent victim.

"I am forced to believe that I am not," returned the man by the fire, and looking down on his little audience with an expression on his rugged features that justified his haughty assumption. "Do you wish to know why I think so?" he continued; "do you wish to know? It is because I could not live as Mr. Wainwright there lives, as young Harold there lives, as you, perhaps, live, and keep sane. You have hearts, your friends, your ambitions, your dearly-bought successes; and I maintain that if you are not the stones I suspect you of being, you tread hard by the brink of such a life as would drive me mad. Call it cowardice, call it heartlessness, call it what you will, for myself, I chose a different road."

"And may I ask what that road was?" "Will you prove it was a wise choice?" asked the stranger.

"I chose the path that thwarts your pursuer at every turn save one. I will not live in your demon world of guilt, elation, and I will not live in your ghost world of memories."

"The thing that robs and chains and mocks and defies you, that maims and sears and tortures you from your first breath till your last, has no terrors for me. I yield him but one victim—

this!" He made a swift gesture that embraced his own superb body. "What are we but sheep huddled in the shambles I wait my turn—there, there! If I am ever happy it is at the thought that in all this spinning world not a heart shall ache, not an eye shall dim when I fall! Still standing, he finished covering the wire and moss anchor with violets.

"You have no mother?" queried the stranger.

"No."

"No wife nor child?"

"No."

"Nor friends nor ambitions?"

"None."

"Why do you live?" he persisted.

"Why should I die?" came the calm response.

Wainwright, seeking to break the tension of the uncanny dialogue, interrupted with: "Did it ever occur to you what an incongruous trade you follow?"

"Growing flowers for your fetes and dinners and weddings and funerals? I think you would find that in its very incongruity lies the exquisite appropriateness of my occupation. Here are your flowers to celebrate another victory of your arch-enemy. Go give them to your dead mayor, and pretend they are for him. Here you are, wreath, cross anchor: I have wrapped them well. The drive will not injure them, I think."

Wainwright received the parcels silently, with a sort of patient dignity; it was no time for words. But "Tahet" lingered a moment, he had been touched by what Wainwright was repugnant braggadoocio. "We were both mistaken," said he, "at a time more favorable for talking."

"Thank you," said Labrie, but something in his tone brought a swift revulsion of feeling to Tahet's face. "We were both mistaken," he said sternly; "you are not made of clay, either coarse or fine. You are black diamonds."

"Which is all the rarer and more valuable," retorted Labrie.

The two men passed the late afternoon, but in a moment the boy came back, made a pretense of looking for his gloves, flushed, stammered, and finally blurted out: "I want to tell you how glad I am that I came out this afternoon. I want to thank you for what you said. I think I understand. I have thought about these things so much, but I could never understand it until you said it. You are the bravest man I have ever known. I wish I could be like you, but I'm afraid I can't. I'm a fool—or a stone. I don't know whether I can be strong or not."

He held out his hand that trembled a little, to Labrie, but the florist retreated to his table, thrusting his hands behind him.

"That would be against my creed," he said slowly.

The admiration in the boy's eyes only deepened. "May I come out to see you sometimes?" he ventured.

## GERMAN WARSHIP RUNS DOWN FISHING SCHOONER

### CAPTAIN AND EIGHT OF HIS CREW DROWNED

Collision Occurred Near Halifax

FOG PREVAILED

With Fearful Crash, Warship Strikes Frail Fishing Craft

HALIFAX, N. S., Aug. 9.—The Gloucester, Mass., fishing schooner Maggie and May, Captain Eric McEachern, was run down and sunk by the German school ship Freya, Captain Masa, thirty miles south east of Halifax at 11.30 p. m. on Saturday night. The Freya was on a voyage to the United States and was carrying a cargo of fish. The collision occurred in a fog, and the Freya was unable to see the schooner. The schooner was struck on the bow and sank in a few minutes. The captain and eight of his crew were drowned.

The saved are: Len Farn, Bellarmine, Conception Bay, Nfld.; Ruben Porter, Del Brook, Yarmouth, N. S.; John Musie, Del Brook, Yarmouth, N. S.; William Musie, Del Brook, Yarmouth, N. S.

The drowned are: Captain Eric McEachern, Gloucester, Mass.; Koch Wentzell, Lunenburg, N. S.; Walter Plender, Conception Bay, Nfld.; Ruben Porter, Del Brook, Yarmouth, N. S.; John Musie, Del Brook, Yarmouth, N. S.; John Musie, Del Brook, Yarmouth, N. S.; Gustus Ludger, Del Brook, Yarmouth, N. S.

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### SUPPLY OF LABOR EQUALS DEMAND

Canada Doesn't Want Any More New Railway Constructors

OTTAWA, Aug. 9.—Some time ago the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway Company asked permission of the government to bring into Canada about 1,500 men under contract to work on sections of the road now under construction in the West. Similar requests have also been made by various railway contractors who wish to take advantage of the present slack labor market in the United States and other foreign countries and who asked that the restrictive regulations regarding the importation of railway laborers into Canada be withdrawn.

The government, after careful inquiry by the immigration branch, has decided that the supply of labor now in Canada is equal to the reasonable demands of all railway construction work now in progress, and the request to suspend the regulations governing the importation of alien labor has not been granted.

The post office department sent out notice yesterday to all postmasters in cities possessing a letter carrier service notifying them that the act passed last session giving a one cent rate on drop letters will come into immediate effect. Hereafter the rate on letters posted in cities for local delivery by letter carrier service has been two cents. The reduction in taxation in custody over the rate of one cent is estimated to amount to several hundred thousand dollars. As an instance of this saving, which will be effected under the new law, it may be noted that one local company, the Ottawa Gas Company, will contribute about \$2,000 to the postal revenue of the country.

### FATHER AND DAUGHTER STUFFED PAY ROLLS

Daughter Arrested but Father Makes His Escape

MONTRÉAL, Aug. 9.—Definite action was taken by the police to-day with the Charest payroll stuffing scandal on Saturday evening, when Miss Anita Charest was arrested, charged with aiding and abetting her father in stuffing the city payrolls and stealing the proceeds. The young lady was held in custody over night, but was liberated on bail this morning. Charest was a foreman on the city public works and is accused of having sent in fictitious names on the payroll lists, while his daughter drew the money. It is also alleged that Charest was building a house for himself with material stolen from the city. The father has left the city and cannot be found.

A horse driven by A. Farrer, driver at the Clifton House, became unmanageable on Mill street yesterday afternoon and ran over a woman. The carriage was badly broken, but the occupants escaped without injury.

The floating wreckage, but none of the bodies were found. The Freya remained in the vicinity of the collision and early this morning another search was made for the bodies. It is believed that many of the bodies were still aboard the German ship. They will be landed in the morning. The Freya was badly damaged and was unable to proceed. The schooner was struck between fifteen and twenty feet from the bow and the impact was so great that it was felt all over the warship. The Maggie and May registered 116 tons, was built in 1881 at Essex, Mass., and was owned by George Dennis. A marine inquiry will be held as soon as possible.

The Freya will remain here until August 20th.

The German sailors worked heroically to rescue the men on the ill-fated craft and it was no fault of theirs that more were not saved. The warship cruised around for several hours and boats searched the waters with hopes of rescuing some of the crew whom it was thought might be clinging to some

of the floating wreckage, but none of the bodies were found. The Freya remained in the vicinity of the collision and early this morning another search was made for the bodies. It is believed that many of the bodies were still aboard the German ship. They will be landed in the morning. The Freya was badly damaged and was unable to proceed. The schooner was struck between fifteen and twenty feet from the bow and the impact was so great that it was felt all over the warship. The Maggie and May registered 116 tons, was built in 1881 at Essex, Mass., and was owned by George Dennis. A marine inquiry will be held as soon as possible.

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### FIVE HUNDRED BOTTLES OF ALE ARE DESTROYED

Moncton Scott Act Officers Are Rather Busy Just Now

MONCTON, Aug. 9.—James Clyke, a 17 year old negro bootblack, was arrested here by L. C. B. officers this morning and is being held on suspicion of being connected in the New-castle burglary. Clyke had a ticket from Newcastle to Truro and six dollars in money.

Saturday evening the police raided a hotel kept by Damien Bourgeois and seized therefrom two large casks of ale. Bourgeois was arrested on a warrant only Friday charged with Scott Act violation.

Saturday evening five hundred bottles of ale and two casks were destroyed, these being a consignment recently seized from the Windsor Hotel. The casks were taken to the wharf, their heads knocked out and the contents dumped into the river. The bottles were smashed on the floor of the jail. Wm. McLaughlin, proprietor of the Minto, was on Saturday given a fifty dollar fine in his case.

### METHUEN OFFICERS BRUTALLY MURDERED

Bodies Found in a Peat Meadow Near the Town

METHUEN, Mass., Aug. 9.—Brutally beaten to death in the performance of their duty the bodies of Chas. H. Emerson and Frank McDermott, members of the Methuen police department, were found in a peat meadow on the outskirts of this town, after a search of several hours, today. The two officers were sent out last night in an effort to catch petty marauders who for some time past had been causing great annoyance and loss to the farmers of the vicinity by numerous robberies of hen yards and vegetable gardens. The officers failed to report duty this morning, and fearing some mishap, Chief of Police Amos G. Jones at once organized a search party. The contrabands were thoroughly gone over, but it was not until late in the afternoon that one of the posse stumbled across the bodies of the two officers. The bodies were lying in a ditch, and were accompanied by a head was crushed in and there were other ugly bruises about his body, as if he had been beaten to death by some blunt implement, presumably the blood-stained rocks. Close beside him was Emerson's body. This, too, was battered with blood, and trampled, evidently by a struggle, but from the nature of the spot and the position in which the bodies were lying it was thought that while the two officers were following the man or men they suspected of stealing they were attacked violently from the bushes. As soon as the discovery of the crime was made known to Chief Jones he immediately sent out a posse of police to work upon the case. There were few clues to go by. Tracks were seen in the peat from the place, but the immediate vicinity was so thoroughly tracked over by the searching parties before the bodies were discovered that it was impossible to trace the steps. The most intense excitement has been caused in the neighborhood countryside, for instead of having to deal with petty thieves, as they at first supposed, the citizens and officers now find themselves confronted with the task of capturing desperate criminals, and with the memory of the pistol fight between Boston officers and yegmen in Jamaica Plain a few weeks before there is great anxiety on all sides.

Attention is called to the following clauses in the form of contract: "All mechanics, labourers, or other persons who perform labour for the purpose of the construction of the works hereby contracted for, shall be paid such wages as are generally accepted for competent workmen in the district in which the work is being performed, and if there is no current rate in such district then a fair and reasonable rate, and, in the event of a dispute arising as to what is the current or a fair and reasonable rate, it shall be determined by the Commissioners whose decision shall be final."

"This agreement is subjected to the regulations now in force, or which may at any time hereafter be in force during the construction of the works hereby contracted for, made under the authority of the Department of Labour, and which are, or shall be, applicable to such works." (The schedule of minimum wages determined upon by said Department will form part of the contract.)

The contractor shall in connection with the whole of the said work, as far as practicable, use only material, machinery, plant, supplies and rolling stock manufactured or produced in Canada as cheaply and upon as good terms in Canada as elsewhere, having

regard to quality and price. The contractor shall conform to the regulations adopted by the Commissioners and also to the laws and regulations respecting fire in the different provinces wherein the work is being performed. The right is reserved to reject any or all tenders.

By order, P. E. RYAN, Secretary. The Commissioners of the Transcontinental Railway, Ottawa, 15th July, 1903.

Newspapers inserting this advertisement without the authority of the Commissioners, will not be paid for it.

NOTICE TO CONTRACTORS. SEALED TENDERS addressed to the undersigned, marked on the envelope "Tender for Construction," will be received at the office of the Commissioners of the Transcontinental Railway, at Ottawa, until twelve o'clock noon of Thursday, the 20th day of August, 1903, for the work required for the construction, in accordance with the plans, profiles and specifications of the Commissioners, of the following sections of the Transcontinental Railway, viz:—

(1) District "C"—From a point designated on the plans of the Commissioners near Weymontachene, in the Province of Quebec, 196.38 miles west of the north abutment of the Quebec bridge, (each point being on the boundary between Districts "C" and "D") westerly for a distance of about 107 miles. Date of completion, 31st December, 1910.

(2) District "C"—From a point designated on the plans of the Commissioners near Weymontachene, in the Province of Quebec, westerly to the end of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway Company's contract, a distance of about 114.37 miles. Date of completion, 31st December, 1910.

(3) District "D"—From a point designated on the plans of the Commissioners, about sixty miles west of the eastern boundary of District "D" in the Province of Ontario, easterly to the end of the "Fauquier Bros." contract, north of Lake Nepigon, a distance of about 100 miles. Date of completion, 31st December, 1910.

(4) District "D"—From a point designated on the plans of the Commissioners, about sixty miles west of the eastern boundary of District "D" in the Province of Ontario, easterly to the end of the "Fauquier Bros." contract, north of Lake Nepigon, a distance of about 100 miles. Date of completion, 31st December, 1910.

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### NO ANNOUNCEMENT UNTIL NEXT MONTH

Election Talk, But That Is All

PRINTING LISTS

Ministers Preparing to Visit Constituencies—Cutting of Wheat

OTTAWA, Aug. 9.—A telegram received yesterday by the department of agriculture from Dr. William Saunders, director of experimental farms, who is now on his autumn tour of the West, states that cutting of wheat will be general in Manitoba in a week or ten days. All grain is likely to be of excellent quality. The quantity of the yield depends on the character of the soil and the method of farming. Where the soil is light and poorly worked the straw is very short and the yield will be low.

The cabinet ministers will separate this week for a fortnight or so after a final meeting of council on Tuesday next.

Hon. Messrs. Fielding and Sir Frederick Borden will go to Nova Scotia, Hon. Mr. Pughley to New Brunswick, Hon. Mr. Templeman to the Pacific coast, Hon. Frank Oliver to Alberta, and the Ontario and Quebec ministers will each visit their respective constituencies.

During their absence from the capital it is probable that each of the Ministers will be asked to address political meetings in their respective provinces.

No announcement has yet been made in government circles as to whether there will be a general election in autumn. It is unlikely that anything definite in that respect will be known until next month. Meanwhile, however, the printing bureau are busy printing the voters' lists for each constituency, and it will take at least six weeks to complete the work. The lists are ready and distributed of course no election can be held. The printing of the lists is by no means a certain sign of a pending election, as the law provides for periodical printing of the lists.

In 1903 when the lists were gotten ready the appeal to the county was put off until 1904. The present government does not expire by effluxion of time until February 1910.

### SIX BURNED TO DEATH

NEW YORK, Aug. 9.—Six persons were burned to death in a tenement house fire at 33 East 112th street, four children between the ages of eight and twelve, an infant of two months and an aged man. Other occupants of the