

THE INHERITANCE OF JEAN TROUVE

By NEVIL HENSHAW
Author of "Allie of the Grand Woods, etc."
BOOK TWO.—BAYOU PORTAGE
CHAPTER VI.
THE BAY

That year the summer did not arrive by gentle stages at Bayou Portage. Rather, so it seemed, it burst upon the heels of the departed winter with the suddenness of a blast from some fiery furnace.

First came the few crisp days of spring, with their scattering of new green blades amid the brown of the marsh, their pages of early blossoms, their pale blue and balmly breezes from the bay. Next there arrived a short drowsy period in which a general feeling of restlessness extended itself throughout the length and breadth of the marsh.

The inhabitants put up their stakes and traps and, having sold the last of their skins, wandered aimlessly about the camp, or lounged in idle groups before the doors of the huts.

Then suddenly, as though at a signal, the long wedge-shaped flights of duck and geese began to sweep the sky upon their journey northward, and began to overlook their place came whirling, chattering clouds of rice birds and redwings, and a scattering of quaint little summer ducks to spare the waterways from utter desolation.

Now the sun began to burn, the breeze came flat and stale, scarce rippling the bayou, the male tints of the marsh became dull and hard, the insect life grew alert and vicious, whining and stinging unceasingly. Mosquitoes, flies, small stinging gnats, they descended upon the camp like a conquering army, and at their approach the inhabitants aroused themselves from their lethargy, and began to overlook their nets and lines, and put their boats in trim. It was a time of general exodus from the heat and discomforts of the marsh and, when all was over, none would be left at the camp.

I know no better way of describing the weeks that followed than by saying that we drifted. Arriving at the bay, we pursued an apparently aimless course upon its broad bosom, and along the tangled network of bayous that flowed into it on every side. We lived aboard the Toinette, camping sometimes in fair weather upon the shores of some sheltered cove or tiny island, and our movements were ever as leisurely as they were uncertain.

It was a free careless life, strangely intermixed with periods of work and idleness, a life far removed from the endless, mechanical routine of the camp. At Bayou Portage the duties of the day had proceeded with the regularity of clock-work. From the rising to the setting of the sun each step in the finding, the removing, the curing of the skins had been followed without interruption. Now, however, all was changed. There were no certain tasks, no regular duties. The great business of the traps was over and, until another season, Papa Ton and Le Bossu were content if, in the struggle of existence, they could merely hold their own from day to day.

Yet supplies of flour, of sugar and of coffee must be bought and, as for the other, costless, food that formed our daily diet, Nature, for all the lavishness of her gifts, was ever prompt to exact her payment in skill and toil. Thus the time of our holiday was leavened with its full amount of work, although, true trappers that they were, Papa Ton and Le Bossu cared little for the business of the nets and lines as a business, and only approached it seriously under the spur of necessity.

Our larder full, we would drift for days from one favored spot to another, idle, care-free, true vagabonds of the marsh. At these times Papa Ton and Le Bossu devoted themselves only to such sport as was necessary for our immediate needs. For the rest, they spent the long bright hours in pure lazy enjoyment, or in instructing me in those duties and accomplishments that would be essential to my life upon the coast.

Under their careful tuition I learned to swim, to dive, to cast a net, to draw the lead lines of a seine. Also I learned to fish, to crab, to tong the summer oysters, to take my toll of the shrimp. And, greatest of all, I came gradually to know something of the management of the boat, of the handling of ropes, and sail, and tiller, even of the laying of some simple course from shore to shore. Of the bay I learned many things, both from my instructors, and from Nature herself. Almost insensibly I came to follow the varied moods and changes of the great sweep of water, reading the meaning of the flava, the rippled, the strong twisting currents, and the tiny dancing waves. Now I began to take heed of the vagaries of wind and cloud, of the warnings of dawns and sunsets, of the whims and pranks of air and water through which the promise of fair or foul weather might be foretold.

If all these things came to me slowly, they also came easily, for I followed a rigid course of instruction. Rather did I learn through

repeated experience, through keeping my eyes open, and through listening to the words of those about me. Now it was Papa Ton who explained some fact or theory, punctuating his remarks with a great forefinger, which he levelled at me pistol-like, as though he were calling upon my attention to stand and deliver. Now it was Le Bossu who, with his love of the deed before for word, performed some feat of skill or patience that I might learn a silent lesson from his actions. And now it was Toinette, gentle and sympathetic, enveloping each secret of Nature in a bright veil of fancy which gave to it all the wonder and mystery of a fairy tale.

But if I learned many things, in Toinette's case at least I was able to do make some repayment. Fortified with Le Bossu's gift we had begun our studies long before leaving the camp, and the little man's prediction that I would find no stupid pupil had been more than verified. Eager, attentive, and with a mind upon which each new step made a lasting impression, Toinette had fairly devoured the contents of her simple text-books. She learned in her own way, and to the task she brought a host of pleasant fancies.

"See, Jean," she would say, pointing to the picture of a small furry creature that adorned her primer. "That is a rat. I know without your telling me, but you must help me catch him. Now I am the trap, a useless, stupid thing that must be set and baited by your knowledge. First give me the letters beneath the picture, thus setting the trap. Then repeat them for the bait. Now I am ready, and you may let M'sieu Rat come along and nibble. R-A-T. Snap! I have him, have I not, Jean? Bien, now let me look at those letters that I may know them when I see them again. They are the skin which I must remove and store away in my memory. This is good trapping, Jean, since we can continue through the summer. Perhaps, when cold weather comes again, the roof of my brain will be packed full of these little words, each one curing nicely upon the clever frame that you have prepared for it."

Thus quick, whimsical little Toinette proceeded with her mental trapping and in a manner which I could not but perceive must soon pass the scant boundaries of my simple instruction. And so, fearful of my reputation as a scholar, I was only too glad, upon the occasion of our visits ashore, to purchase more advanced books and proceed with my own neglected education, thereby verifying Le Bossu's second prediction that, in teaching Toinette, I would also learn much myself.

These visits ashore were intermittent, and were always heralded by a warning from Toinette. Having prepared our breakfast in the purple and gold of the sunrise, she would point meaningfully toward the little closet in which she kept her supplies. "Four more days and you will go hungry, my lazy ones," she would report. "Salt I may get never. Also there are no coffee berries in the marsh. You had best be up and doing."

Then Papa Ton and Le Bossu would set to in earnest, and for the next day or so our hours would be busy enough to atone for all the idleness that had gone before. We fished, we seined, we scoured the bay for crabs and shrimp, and often when we found some flat much frequented by yellowlegs, Le Bossu would get out his gun, and the coarse black powder would roar a dull defiance to the empty marsh. We chose no particular spot, we followed no certain prey. All that was salable we caught, and seined, and shot, moving about among the likely places that Papa Ton and Le Bossu had marked down for such an emergency.

Then, when our catch was sufficient, we would leave the brown waters of the bay for the brown shallows of some bayou, winding up between the tall hedge-like walls of marsh grass toward the scattered civilization that lay beyond. Sometimes it was only a gray settlement of huts nudged along the edge of the sea marsh, backed by a distant stretch of prairie with a faint, purplish line of forest to frame the whole. Sometimes it was a tiny smiling village, set along low wooded banks, with, perhaps, a ragged out-burst of cypress to separate it from the encroaching marsh. Here would be little shops, a coffee-house, a church, a presbytery and white-tombed graveyard. Here would be snug frame houses, well sealed against wind and weather, with glistening panes, and away from which kitchen fires sent up straight, well-behaved columns of smoke. In front each had its fragrant tangle of garden, while in the rear stretched cool green lines of market stuff. Narrow dusty streets led down to the bayou bank where, beneath the shadows of great oaks, the little landings pushed forth like the fingers of some huge welcoming hand.

If our visit were to one of the gray marsh settlements, it would be brief. We would arrive, bargain with the settlement's leader for our catch, replenish our stores from the supply that he had brought in from the prairie, and depart with the first favorable tide. In the villages, however, we proceeded more leisurely. Fresh from the desolation of the bay and marshes, the

simple activities of the village-folk appeared almost city-like to our unaccustomed eyes, and was seldom that we did not hug our landing for a day that we might enjoy to the benefits of this primitive yet, to us, bustling civilization.

To Toinette and myself these visits were wondrous occasions of pure delight for, if life at the camp had been lonely, life upon the bay had at least its few inhabitants, and it was seldom that there was not a neighbor within easy call. Upon the bay, however, we would go sometimes for a week with no sign of other human life beyond the flash of some passing sail. True, the bay was never without its full quota of craft, but these stuck close to the fishing grounds, and for the most part Papa Ton and Le Bossu avoided them. They were well used to the loneliness of great spaces, and they took little interest in the doings of those who were not of their own calling.

Yet, despite the fact that they would sometimes grumble at the necessity of these inland voyages, a new light would come into their eyes when, having unwound the last tangled skein of sea marsh, the village and its fair green setting of field and forest would burst upon them. Le Bossu, plainly eager and excited, would plan some excursion ashore. He knew the cure well, and he had promised him a fine fish upon his first visit.

Papa Ton, interested also, would gaze out at the little scattering of buildings with the faintly uncertain air, half of awe, half of suspicion which he always exhibited in the presence of any considerable gathering of people. "Look little Jean," he would say. "See all the houses, the many roofs and chimneys. It is like your city, eh? Only perhaps a little smaller."

And when I would reply that all of it taken together would not represent one-half of the rue Bourbon, the big man would shake his head in utter mystification. "Perhaps so, perhaps so," he would growl. "But such things are hard to believe."

Upon our arrival we would proceed at once with the disposal of the catch. Then, when the supplies were safely aboard, the long summer afternoon was ours in which to explore the village. We usually started out in full force upon these excursions, Toinette and I racing ahead in our eagerness to see our chosen wonders.

With Toinette it was always the houses, the snug weather-proof houses, with their panes, and curtains, and well-behaved columns of smoke. They usually started out in full force upon these excursions, Toinette and I racing ahead in our eagerness to see our chosen wonders.

TO BE CONTINUED

THE INVISIBLE GUIDE

Father Locke gazed at the beautiful monstrance. He could see new loveliness in it each time he beheld it. It was a poem in gold and precious stones.

Reverently he smiled as he looked it carefully away in a safe specially made for it by the donor, a convert lady now dead.

A few years ago the priest had come to this southern village to tend to its group of scattered Catholics. He chafed at the change from a city, where he had scope for his zeal. Still he had visited diligently his little flock, opened a school for the children, and thus drawn the careless adults to the battered makeshift of a church. By degrees, with perseverance, he had worked a transformation in this lost spot.

His wonderful personality drew one of these, Mrs. Lacy, a stern old Puritan, had spent her last years in the lonely chapel worthy of the Real Presence, and, ere she died had presented Father Locke with the lovely monstrance studded with jewels—her jewels—which she now offered as a gift to beautify the resting place of her loving Saviour.

She had made one stipulation, and that was, that wherever Father Locke went to minister he was to take the monstrance with him. It was to him she had given it, it was a faithful imitator of his Master.

"A call, Father, to the hills," his servant announced, one dark night. "Mr. Gray is dying."

The priest was ready in a few moments. As he placed pyx and oils in his breast, he took the key to the safe which he always kept about him and put it in an inner pocket. Outside he glanced round in hope of seeing Gray's messenger, but there was no one in sight. The hill paths to Gray's home were steep. Several times en route he looked around, so sure was he that he had heard steps on the pathway—yet he saw nothing, and so he concluded that it was his own imagination.

and Father Locke descended the steep pathways in the darkness. Again he heard footsteps, and stopped to listen—he even called out, "Who is there?"—but as no reply was forthcoming, concluded he had been mistaken again.

He could never find out anything concerning the mysterious night call, and eventually it faded from his memory. The years passed on in the quiet southern place, and, when, in time, he was given charge of an important city parish, he brought his beautiful monstrance with him.

During Quarant Ore, amid flowers and lights, how the precious stones blazed. "The stars of Little Jesus," as one small child explained graphically, pointing to the glittering brilliants.

"Any cases today, nurse?" Father Locke asked one morning, entering a ward of the hospital he ministered to spiritually.

"Yes, indeed, sir," answered "Number Nine," pointing to a bed surrounded by a white screen, "is in a bad shape. He entered himself as a Catholic, but when I suggested confession, he refused point blank."

"Leave him to me," smiled the Father, advancing toward the screen. "Good morning!" he said cheerfully.

"Good morning, Father," a distinctly Irish voice answered. The priest sat down. By degrees O'Brien told him his story. He had been in Persia for twenty years in the oil fields, never seeing a priest during all that period.

"Well, now, Father Locke said encouragingly, "you see one. What about the Sacraments?"

"Ah, Father! how could I tell in an hour twenty years' sins?" However, by the time the dinner arrived in the ward, the twenty years' job was finished satisfactorily. O'Brien was beaming, and repeating, in a resounding voice, ejaculatory prayers.

The following morning he received with sentiments of devotion, love and respect the God he had been so long separated from.

Father Locke and he became great friends, and it was arranged that, as soon as he was better, he was to come as sexton to Father Locke's church.

A man in a bed nearby had been an interested spectator while all these events were taking place. He was a morose individual, rarely speaking to anyone.

He broke the silence one day by addressing the priest, to the surprise of all present.

"I wish to speak to you, sir," he said, as the Father passed his cot. The priest paused. The man was not a Catholic, and he did not interfere with patients of another persuasion.

"You were the Padre in the village of Goldenhill in the south, fifteen years ago, were you not?" he inquired jerkily.

"Yes! But I don't remember seeing you there."

"Hardly," the patient replied cynically. "Well, listen to this tale, and see if you can give me a solution to the mystery."

"You had a wonderful vessel prepared to you by old Mrs. Lacy who joined your Church?" He went on.

The priest nodded. "It was studded with diamonds," the patient repeated, as if saying a lesson.

"I was in a safe. That safe was attacked in view. You did not know that! Well, a rue was planned—but me. You were lured up in the hills one night on a bogus call to old Gray."

He ceased to observe the effect of his words. The priest was too astounded to speak. The level voice continued:

"You were shadowed by me—yes, I don't mind you knowing it now! You stopped in a listening attitude several times. I may as well tell you that I meant to knock you on the head, kill you if necessary, in order to get possession of that key, as it was known you always carried it on your person."

He paused, exhausted. The priest held a drink of water to his parched lips and waited for him to continue. As the patient remained quiet, Father Locke asked him quietly: "Why did you not strike or attack?"

"How could I, when you had a guard?" He lay back with closed eyes.

"A guard!" exclaimed Father Locke. "What guard? I was quite alone."

"No, you were not," the dying man said, looking at him fixedly. "There was a wonderful young man keeping step with you all the time. Some light surrounded you both, certainly different from, though not unlike, the most powerful electricity. I tell you, it would require a platoon to approach and attack under such conditions. One man could hardly attempt it."

"It must have been the Angel of the Blessed Sacrament who accompanied me on that journey—all unknown to myself," Father Locke murmured gravely.

"I guess it was something strange," the patient whispered. "Anyhow, I gave up robbing after that incident. I suppose I am finished now?" he continued, gazing questioningly at the priest.

"You may not have long to live, but why not profit by this wonderful experience?" the priest asked him.

"How?" he ironically asked the patient. The Father explained, and eventually took this poor erring soul under instruction. He was a well-educated man, and had no difficulty in grasping the truths of the Church.

"I understand it all now," he told the Father afterwards. "That night you were carrying the Blessed Sacrament in your breast you saw nothing, you believed without seeing, I, a robber, meant to attack you. In my search for the key on your person, I would certainly have come across the Sacred Host. The invisible Heavenly Guard stood by to prevent this sacrilege, and then, in course of time, made us meet here. Why is this?"

"What have I ever done that God should show such mercy and pardon to me, a wretched sinner?"

"God's ways are not our ways," the priest responded gently. "You must have done some good act in your life to merit this blessed ending."

He concluded. "Think, what was it?"

"Some good act?" murmured the dying man. "No—still," thoughtfully, "perhaps you would consider this a good act, though I only did it out of a sense of chivalry."

"Once I was working in the gold fields. 'Twas a rather rough camp. Some nuns—Sisters—came one day to solicit alms for poor folk they took into their homes. Wishing to save these ladies insult or annoyance, I bade them remain outside, while I went in and begged for them. I gathered a goodly sum in their bag, and when I returned with it to them, one of them told me that God would repay me in my hour of need. He has done so—Blessed be His name forever!"

That was his last words. He died that night, and O'Brien, now installed at the church, insisted on "burying him decent," to-wit, providing a coffin, having his body spend the last night above earth near the Blessed Sacrament in the mortuary chapel and following him to the grave in state, as chief mourner, with Father Locke.

"How would I wouldn't have the good luck, Father, ever to see the Angel of the Blessed Sacrament," he said mournfully.

"Few of us, in this life, behold that Invisible Guide," the priest answered, reverently.—Nell Gay in The Newark Monitor.

CURE ATTRIBUTED TO "LITTLE FLOWER"

MOTHER OF BOY TELLS OF MARVELOUS RECOVERY AT CENTRE SQUARE SHRINE

Philadelphia Standard and Times

Typical of the response to prayer which has won for St. Teresa of the Child Jesus a world-wide host of children, and has made her shrine in Centre Square a continuous scene of inspiring devotion, is the remarkable recovery to normal health of a boy of eleven years, crippled for eight years as the result of a fall.

The boy is William Moore, son of Mr. and Mrs. James Moore, of Albion place, Paterson, N. J., and his mother attributes the recovery of her son to prayers offered at the shrine in Centre Square.

Mrs. Moore's account of the cure, as presented in an interview with a representative of the Paterson, N. J., Sunday Chronicle, and recently published in that newspaper is as follows:

"When William was a little tot of three years, he sustained a fall which resulted in serious injury to his spine. He was left absolutely helpless, unable to walk. We tried every place we could to obtain the best medical and surgical help. For the last five years he has been under treatment by eminent doctors in New York. He submitted to three operations, which were without avail, and I refused to consent to the fourth operation. The doctors told me William never would be able to walk again, and I had come to the same conclusion.

"When I heard about the shrine of the 'Little Flower,' in Centre Square, Pennsylvania, and of the miraculous cures there produced, I determined to take William to the shrine. This I did in April last. We both prayed fervently and later I began a novena in St. Bonaventure's Church in Paterson. William seemed to grow stronger as each of the nine Tuesdays of prayer passed, and I took him again to the shrine of the 'Little Flower' in Centre Square on August 14, two weeks ago last Friday. When we made the first visit we had to carry William, while on the second visit he was able to walk with the use of crutches. During our prayers before the shrine two weeks ago, William stood up, unassisted, for the first time in eight years. He was able to walk, and with deep gratitude for the wonderful miracle we offered prayers of thanksgiving, and to give proof of the marvelous cure, William laid the crutches at the altar of St. Teresa's shrine.

"For years William suffered great pain and was unable to sleep at night. Now he is able to enjoy a good night's sleep, has no pain and is a normal boy. He intends to go to school next month and, thanks to the 'Little Flower,' we are confident that he will experience no further trouble."

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