# A KNIGHT OF THE HIGHWAY

By CLINTON SCOLLARD,
Author of "A Man at Arms," "The Son of a Tory," Etc.

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a pretty long fast."

There was nothing further to be discovered, so they ascended the bank and entered the forest. After a time, as Parmelee had predicted, they encountered the logging-road, and were back at the farm before the dinner hour. That afternoon they reported the finding of the remains of the fire to Mr. Merton's manager.

"Of course, there's no tellin' who it might have been," Parmelee said. "We'll keep watch anyhow. That blamed monkey may still be hangin' about after all."

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE DIP IN THE BLUE CREEK ROAD.

Hop-picking at the Merton farm was drawing to a close. It was Wednesday afternoon, and by mid-afternoon of the day following Jack Parmelee calculated that the last pole would be stripped.

During these final days of the harvest Miss Densmore had contrived to learn much of the story of Rossiter's life, not directly, but by inference, and by patching together such facts in regard to him as he had let fall intentionally or by accident. She managed to break in upon his reserve, and had often been upon the point of asking him certain questions regarding himself, yet had never done so. Of Rossiter's admiration for her she was aware, perhaps in a measure by intuition, for he had scrupulously endeavored not to let his feelings be manifest, and she doubted if even her cousin had observed anything in his demeanor to indicate that he had a preference between them. Her state of mind towards him she had not seriously tried to analyze. Of a lively interest in him she was conscious, but had any one suggested that she cherished a deeper or a warmer feeling she would have repelled the idea vehemently. The discovery of weaknesses in his character had not lowered him in her estimation. Indeed, her sympathies, for that very reason, went out towards him more strongly. She fancied she discerned the battle he was fighting with himself, and longed somehow, if he would but let her, to give him encouragement and help.

On Wednesday morning the girls had been at their box as usual, but they did not come into the yard to pick in the afternoon. About three o'clock, as Rossiter was stripping a pole in that portion of the field nearest the house, he caught sight of Miss Merton hastening towards him.

"Where is Jack—Mr. Parmelee?" she called, much perturbed, as soon as she came within speaking distance.

Rossiter looked about but could see nothing of the farm manager. Finally, however, he descried him engaged in emptying a box of hops in a remote part of the field.

"There he is," he said, "way out yonder."

"Oh, won't you go and fetch him? I'm all out of breath. And hurry, do, for what I have to tell him may be very important."

Rossiter set out at a sharp run, and presently he and Parmelee came back together. The pole-puller was about to retire when Miss Merton stopped him.

"Won't you listen, too, Mr. Rossiter," she said, "for if there's any trouble perhaps you can help us."

He acquiesced, and the two men stood regarding the girl in expectation and wonder.

"First tell me," she said, addressing Parmelee, "if Simpson is in the yard, for if he is, perhaps I've had my fright for nothing."

"Simpson!" exclaimed Parmelee; "no, he's not. I've been lookin' for him this long time. I sent him over to the kiln on an errand more than half an hour ago."

"Then I'm afraid there's something wrong," said Miss Merton, growing more agitated, "and, oh, I wish I'd come sooner! I happened to go out on the porch a while ago," she went on, speaking rapidly, "and saw a man running far down in the lower orchard. He stopped under a tree, and then I noticed there were two other men there. I thought they were some of the pickers after apples—you know they're in the habit of getting them—and didn't pay much more attention, but when I got back in the house it came to me that the first man seemed like Simpson, and that one of the others, though, of course, I couldn't really see much at that distance, had a face like that creature who frightened us at the hop-dance. I went out to look again and they were gone, so I came to the conclusion that they must have leaped the fence and taken a short cut back to the yard, but when I got to thinking about it later, I couldn't help feeling that it was strange, so I hurried over to tell you."

Parmelee pursed his lips and seemed incredulous.

"If it wa'n't for Simpson's absence," said he, "I should set all this down as foolishness, Miriam."

"Wasn't Simpson by when father started for Hintonville?" she asked, "and didn't he hear father speak about going to the bank for money to pay the pickers, and say he meant to return by Blue Creek road because he wanted to speak with Ezra Merriman a minute?"

"He was there, by the Eternal!" cried Parmelee, "for he brought the horse out."

"And you know Simpson owes father a grudge for having him discharged last spring. Father said he never would have let you take him back if help hadn't been so scarce," continued Miss Merton, growing more animated.

"If there's anythin' wrong," said Parmelee, now awakening to the possible seriousness of the situation, "we're losin' valuable time. You'll come?" he asked, turning to Rossiter. "I'd rather have you along than anyone else I know."

"I'm at your service," said Rossiter.

"You find Dick Whittlesey, Miriam, and tell him to hitch on to the light wagon with the yellow gear, and drive towards Merriman's by the Blue Creek road as fast as he can. We'll go across lots. If anythin's goin' to happen it'll be at the dip."

Parmelee had suddenly thought of the remains of the fire which Rossiter and Becraft had seen near this depression in the road.

"You know Sylvia went with father," said Miss Merton as she hurried away.

"By thunder, so she did!" cried Parmelee.

Rossiter's face grew very grave at this news.

"You haven't a revolver, have you?" he asked.

"No; I wish to heaven I had!" exclaimed the farm manager. "There's a shotgun at the kiln, but it's so heavy it'd be more hindrance than use."

Parmelee paused long enough at the barn to catch up the ox-goad, then he led the way down through the orchard. The dog-trot pace he set hardly satisfied the impatient Rossiter, but he ventured no comment, realizing that Parmelee was the better judge of time and distance. The latter was inclined to drink at the spring, but his companion restrained him, telling him water was a poor stay for what they might have in hand. Swerving from the logging-road at the glade, they struck off almost at right angles. Progress was slower now, yet they did not relax into a walk until they approached a fence beyond which the bank of the branch of the Blue Creek glen pitched abruptly. Up to this time they had exchanged but few words.

"I've been thinkin' it out," said Parmelee, leaning for a breathing space against the top fence-rail, "an' I guess we'd better part here, so that you can hit the dip on one side and I on the other. If you follow this fence you'll come out in a pasture about 300 yards from the road; then if they're in sight you can shout, and wave 'em to stop. I'll cross the glen here, and that'll land me on the other side of the dip. In case everythin's not all right, it may advantage us more to have you appearin' from one way an' me from the other. You'll have a little farther to go, but I take it you're a good bit speedier than I am. How does the plan strike you?"

"As excellent," answered Rossiter.

"All right, then," said Parmelee, "we're off!" and he put his foot upon the lower rail.

Here and there, as Rossiter sped on, the sunlight lay in little golden splashes upon moss and bracken, but mostly his track lay through soft, cool, green shade. The ground was high and dry, and, though the trees set thickly, there was scarcely any undergrowth to impede his progress. His blood sang in his veins, and he was keyed to the height of action. He leaped across hollows, sprang over fallen logs and vaulted cross-fences with the light-heartedness of one hastening to a tryst. His thought did not include Mr. Merton, nor did it take into account the possibility of harm befalling the one whom he was speeding to guard. Neither did he harbor any dream in his mind that to him aught could accrue from any aid he might give to the girl whose gracious loveliness had grown to be so much to him. He was filled with the pure joy of serving. That alone impelled him.

At length the forest grew thinner, and he saw before him the open field and beyond it the Blue Creek road. As he emerged from the trees he discovered that a short distance from the dip the highway took a sharp turn, so that in reality he had but a few rods of it in view. He had traversed perhaps half of the stretch of pasture when he descried a horse and buggy rounding the bend. Was it Mr. Merton and his niece? An instant, and he knew it was, and Mr. Merton was driving rapidly. Rossiter set up a shout and began waving his cap, but evidently the noise of the wheels drowned his cries, and against the dark background of trees skirting the glen his figure was not seen, for the occupants of the carriage did not appear to be looking toward him, and there was no diminution in the speed of the horse. He redoubled his shouts, and yet without effect. Then it occurred to him that his proximity to the fence and foliage might be the cause of his not being noticed, and he ran obliquely into the field, swinging his arms. Just as the horse reached the crest of the dip he fancied Miss Densmore observed him, but he was not sure, for a moment later the buggy disappeared.

He did not slacken his speed, but raced on over the springy turf, his ear alert to catch the first sounds of a struggle. A confusion of shouts came to him as he drew near the fence separating the pasture from the road. He put his hands upon the top rail and went over with a bound. Almost before his feet touched ground he was conscious of what was going on in the dip below him. Mr. Merton's horse was rearing and plunging in the grasp of one man, while Mr. Merton was lashing savagely with his whip at two others who were attacking him from opposite sides of the buggy. Of Miss Densmore, Rossiter could see nothing, but he surmised, and rightly, that she was crouching half upon the seat and half upon the bottom of the vehicle to give her uncle freer play with his whip.

With an Indian-like yell Rossiter dashed down into the dip. Already one of the men—"Whiskers"—had Mr. Merton in his grasp. He seemed not to heed the shout, but the other, Simpson, turned his head, and seeing who it was stepped back a pace "Whiskers'" attention was thus attracted, and he too recognizing Rossiter ripped out a terrible oath.

"Tackle him, tackle him, you dum my! I'll tend to the old gent," he added.

He had not relaxed his ferocious grip on Mr. Merton, and Rossiter saw that Miriam's father was in imminent danger of being dragged from the carriage. His whip had slipped to the ground, and the reins would have fallen beneath the heels of the horse had not Miss Densmore opportunely seized them. Rossiter eluded Simpson's clumsy attempt to grasp him, and sprang to Mr. Merton's aid, thus

HE SPRANG TO MR. MERTON'S AID.

forcing "Whiskers" for an instant to release his hold. If he could keep them at bay until Parmelee arrived all would be well. He danced out of reach along the edge of the embankment after he had fetched "Whiskers" a stinging buffet, Simpson close after him.

"Parmelee! Parmelee!" he shouted.

There was a faint cry in answer. "Whiskers" renewed his attack upon Mr. Merton, but Simpson stopped short, and the man who was gripping the horse's head glanced about in apprehension.

"The game's up, 'Whiskers,'" said Simpson, "we'd better make tracks!"

"Not if hell splits!" cried the furious tramp, and he caught from the roadside a bludgeon which he had evidently dropped in order the better to use his hands, and menaced the now defenceless Mr. Merton.

"That bag o' money, or I'll brain ye!" he shouted.

Rossiter made a rush at Simpson. The man was powerful but awkward, while Rossiter had never lost the agility of his college days. There was no grappling, though the farm-hand made a clutch at his antagonist, a second afterwards to reel blindly backward under a fierce blow that landed upon his jaw. Then Rossiter was past him. The bludgeon was poised in "Whiskers'" hand, and Mr. Merton

(continued next week.)


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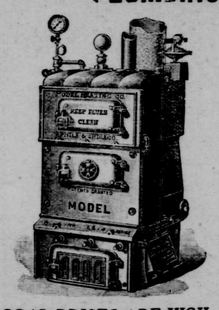

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| P. M. | P. M. | A. M. | A. M. | Miles | | A. M. | A. M. | P. M. | P. M. |
| 2.00 | 3.15 | ..... | 7.00 | ..... | Lv.....Baltimore....Ar. | 11.40 | ..... | 9.00 | 7.40 |
| 3.55 | 5.10 | ..... | 8.55 | 25.00 | Ar. Lv. Love Point Lv. Ar. | 9.40 | ..... | 7.60 | 5.20 |
| 4.00 | 5.15 | 11.15 | 9.05 | ..... | Lv. Stevensville | 9.32 | 10.53 | 5.58 | 5.05 |
| 4.07 | 5.22 | 11.20 | 9.14 | 28.81 | .....Chester..... | 9.24 | 10.43 | 5.48 | 4.56 |
| 4.10 | 5.25 | 11.45 | 9.21 | 30.44 | .....Narrows..... | 9.21 | 10.28 | 5.43 | 4.52 |
| f 4.13 | f 5.28 | f11.48 | f 9.23 | ..... | .....Winchester..... | f 9.18 | f10.22 | f 5.38 | f 4.48 |
| 4.18 | 5.33 | 12.00 | 9.28 | 31.76 | .....Wallacy..... | 9.13 | 10.16 | 5.32 | 4.43 |
| f 4.20 | f 5.35 | f12.03 | f 9.31 | 35.82 | .....Queenstown..... | f 9.10 | f10.11 | f 5.24 | f 4.39 |
| 4.25 | 5.40 | 12.10 | 9.37 | 38.07 | Ar. Lv. Centreville Lv. Ar. | 9.04 | 10.18 | 5.18 | 4.32 |
| 4.45 | 5.58 | 12.27 | 9.55 | 44.36 | | 9.55 | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| 4.00 | 4.50 | ..... | 8.35 | ..... | | 8.35 | 10.00 | 4.50 | 4.00 |
| f 4.30 | f 5.45 | ..... | f 9.44 | 40.40 | .....Bloomingdale..... | f 8.59 | ..... | f 5.08 | f 4.18 |
| f 4.35 | f 5.50 | ..... | 9.52 | 43.45 | .....Wye Mills..... | f 8.53 | ..... | 5.01 | 4.11 |
| f 4.42 | f 5.56 | ..... | 10.00 | 46.45 | .....Willoughby..... | f 8.47 | ..... | 4.52 | 4.02 |
| ..... | 6.04 | ..... | ..... | ..... | .....D. & C. Junction..... | f 8.40 | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| 4.53 | 6.06 | ..... | 10.12 | 50.48 | .....Queen Anne..... | 8.38 | ..... | 4.39 | 3.49 |
| 5.00 | 6.12 | ..... | 10.20 | 53.68 | .....Downes..... | 8.32 | ..... | 4.29 | 3.40 |
| f 5.04 | f 6.15 | ..... | f10.24 | 55.05 | .....Tuckahoe..... | f 8.29 | ..... | f 4.27 | f 3.37 |
| 5.11 | 6.21 | ..... | 10.33 | 57.99 | .....Denton..... | 8.21 | ..... | 4.20 | 3.30 |
| 5.17 | 6.27 | ..... | 10.48 | 60.89 | .....Hobbs..... | 8.10 | ..... | 4.05 | 3.14 |
| 5.26 | 6.35 | ..... | 10.58 | 64.57 | .....Hickman..... | 8.10 | ..... | 3.52 | 3.02 |
| f 5.30 | f 6.39 | ..... | f11.02 | 66.40 | .....Adamsville..... | f 8.06 | ..... | f 3.47 | f 2.54 |
| f 5.35 | f 6.44 | ..... | f11.08 | 68.55 | .....Blanchard..... | f 8.01 | ..... | f 3.35 | f 2.46 |
| 5.43 | 6.50 | ..... | 11.18 | 71.80 | .....Greenwood..... | 7.55 | ..... | 3.20 | 2.30 |
| f 5.51 | f 6.57 | ..... | f11.31 | 75.47 | .....Owens..... | f 7.47 | ..... | f 3.05 | f 2.12 |
| f 5.56 | f 7.01 | ..... | f11.36 | 77.57 | .....Oakley..... | f 7.43 | ..... | f 2.55 | f 2.05 |
| 6.04 | 7.08 | ..... | 11.43 | 81.07 | Lv.....Ellendale.....Ar. | 7.36 | ..... | 2.45 | 1.58 |
| f 6.12 | f 7.15 | ..... | f11.51 | 84.91 | .....Wolfe..... | f 7.29 | ..... | f 2.29 | f 1.39 |
| 6.39 | 7.32 | ..... | 11.58 | 87.57 | .....Milton..... | 7.22 | ..... | 2.21 | 1.31 |
| f 6.28 | f 7.30 | ..... | f12.08 | 91.57 | .....Whitesboro..... | f 7.14 | ..... | f 2.11 | f 1.21 |
| f 6.31 | f 7.33 | ..... | f12.11 | 92.82 | .....Overbrook..... | f 7.11 | ..... | f 2.07 | f 1.18 |
| 6.40 | 7.42 | ..... | 12.20 | 96.82 | Ar.....Lewes.....Lv. | 7.03 | ..... | 2.00 | 1.10 |
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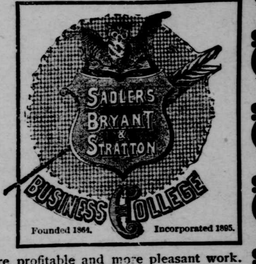


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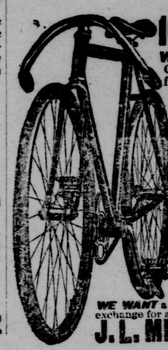

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|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12 45 | 5 00 | lv Wash'ton ar | 1 15 | 8 15 |
| 2 50 | 6 35 | Baltimore | 11 23 | 6 48 |
| 3 20 | 7 40 | Philadelphia | 10 54 | 5 44 |
| 4 02 | 8 23 | Wilmington | 10 06 | 5 00 |
| 5 22 | 9 45 | Clayton | 8 50 | 3 44 |
| 5 31 | 9 57 | Kenton | 8 41 | 3 35 |
| f 5 40 | f 10 06 | Hartley | f 8 32 | 3 26 |
| f 5 44 | f 10 08 | Slaughter | f 8 30 | 3 24 |
| 5 49 | 10 15 | Marydel | 8 23 | 3 17 |
| f 5 55 | f 10 21 | Henderson | f 8 17 | 3 13 |
| f 6 01 | f 10 27 | Goldsboro | f 8 11 | 3 05 |
| 6 10 | 10 36 | Greensboro | 8 02 | 2 56 |
| 6 19 | 10 45 | Ridgely | 7 53 | 2 47 |
| 6 27 | 10 53 | Queen Anne | 7 44 | 2 38 |
| f 6 36 | f 11 02 | Corbova | f 7 35 | f 2 29 |
| f 6 41 | f 11 08 | Chapel | f 7 29 | f 2 23 |
| 6 54 | 11 20 | Easton | 7 20 | 2 14 |
| f 7 08 | f 11 34 | Trappe | f 7 04 | f 1 58 |
| 7 17 | 11 43 | ar. Oxford lv | 6 55 | 1 49 |
| P. M | A. M. | | A. M | P. M. |

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