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Post-Office Bulletin.

Mails Close.

6 00 a m; D & C R R for Points North.
8 10 a m; Q A R R for Points West.
9.45 a m; Q A R R for Points East.
11:45 a m; Steamer for River Points.
1:00 p m; Stage for Preston.
1:00 p m. D & C R R for Points North.
3:35 p m; Q A R R for Points West.
6:20 p m. Q A R R for Points East.

Mails Arrive.

8:25 a m; Q A R R, from Points East.
10:10 a m; Q A R R, from Points West.
11:00 a m; Stage, from Preston.
11:30 a m; Steamer, from River Points.
11:45 m; D & C R R, from Points North.
3:35 p m; Q A R R, from Points East.
3:34 p m; Q A R R, from Points West.
7:45 p m; D & C R R, from Points North.

GENERAL DIRECTORY.

County Officials.

Judges of the Circuit Court—James A. Pearce, Chief Judge; Edwin H Brown and William R Martin, Associates Terms—jury, 1st Monday in April and October; non-jury, 2d Monday in January, 4th Monday in June.

Clerk of the Circuit Court—Charles W. Hobbs.

County Commissioners—James B. Wright, President; Wesley Jarrell and Daniel J. Zacharias.

Treasurer and Clerk to the Commissioners Charles H. Whitby.

Judges of the Orphans' Court—John A. Sigler, Chief Judge; Thomas L. Day and Jesse T. Dennis Associates.

Register of Wills, Robert J. Jump.

School Commissioners—Thomas W. Jones, President; Henry C. Fisher and Albert W. Sisk.

School Examiner and Secretary—W. S. Crouse.

State's Attorney—Albert G. Towers.

Sheriff—Isaac L. Dukes.

Professional and Business Cards.

ALBERT G. TOWERS.
State's Attorney for Caroline County,
Denton, Md.

T. PLINY FISHER,
LAW AND COLLECTIONS,
Denton, Md.

OSCAR CLARK,
ATTORNEY-AT-LAW
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Denton, Md.
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Denton Md.

DR. ALEX. HARDCASTLE,
PHYSICIAN AND GYNECOLOGIST
Denton, Md.
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Box 88, Denton, Md.
Will sell property in Caroline or any of the adjoining counties.

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CONSTABLE AND COLLECTOR,
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F. P. COVEY,
DEALER IN
Bone Phosphate and Lime.
Agent for the ÆTNA LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY.
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We are also headquarters for prime clover seed, $6 90 a bushel.

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CONSTABLE AND COLLECTOR,
Concord, Md,

A Knight of the Highway

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

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SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I.—Philip Rossiter, a young college-bred man, through lack of determination and will-power, had descended to the level of a common tramp. He has stolen a ride on a freight train and by chance gets off at Illica, a town well known to him in his college days.

CHAPTER II.—While lounging on the river bank next day he hears a cry for help and saves a young man, Joe Becraft, from drowning. The latter seeing what Rossiter is and wishing to help him asks Philip to accompany him to the hop-fields where he is going to work. Philip consents to go with him.

CHAPTER III.—They go to a barber in town who improves Philip's appearance and later, in company with Joe's mother, sister and brother, they leave for Mr. Merton's hop-fields.

CHAPTER IV.—On the way Philip recognizes many scenes familiar to him in his college days, and the contrast between his bright ambitions of those days and his present low condition saddens him and makes him despise himself.

CHAPTER V.—At the hop-fields Rossiter meets Miss Merton and her cousin, Miss Sylvia Densmore, of Illica. He is fascinated with the beauty and charm of the latter but tries not to let her know it. He has resolved to reform and is happy to know he is again a man. While out strolling one evening he meets "Whiskers," a tramp of the lowest order he had once known. Philip knows his presence means no good.

CHAPTER VI.—Miss Merton and Miss Densmore, who are working in the hop-fields for pleasure, learn that Rossiter is a well-educated and are consequently mystified to find him working in a hop-field.

CHAPTER VII.—Rossiter, the following Sunday, saves Miss Densmore from an attack by "Whiskers," the tramp.

CHAPTER VIII.—A hop-dance is to be given and although Philip decides not to go, he changes his decision at the solicitation of the two girls and spends an enjoyable evening with Miss Densmore.

CHAPTER IX.—Sylvia finds Philip an insolvable mystery. He tells her of his travels and she, if nothing more, has gone to admire and respect him for the manly qualities she has observed in him. "Whiskers" is caught and is given a severe lashing.

CHAPTER X.—"Whiskers" sets fire to the hop-kiln one night but it is extinguished before much damage is done.

CHAPTER XI.—As hop-picking draws to a close Sylvia becomes aware of Rossiter's interest in her. Mr. Merton, while returning from town one day with Sylvia is attacked by "Whiskers," but Philip learns of the intended attack and arrives in time to save them, but is badly hurt in doing so.

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 was fumbling in his pocket, when Parmelee's shout from the crest of the dip caused the tramp to turn. He knew that their dastardly attempt had failed. Even at that instant his confederate released the struggling horse, and the frightened animal plunged forward. "Whiskers'" eyes were murderous. The young man's impetuous leap past Simpson to Mr. Merton's assistance had brought him and the enraged vagabond face to face. The long run and the violent efforts he had since made seemed suddenly to tell upon his strength. He felt his breath weaken. He was aware of the swinging bludgeon and of trying to dodge the blow, and then it was as though the earth had gaped and swallowed him.

He returned to a consciousness of existence through a variety of painful sensations, most of them in his head.

He opened his eyes.

"Are they gone?" he asked weakly.

"Yes," someone said.

He knew the voice, and gained suddenly a clearer realization of his surroundings. Parmelee, Mr. Merton and Dick Whittlesey were standing about him, while over him Miss Densmore was bending with a look which he many, many times afterward questioned himself, wondering if he had seen it in a dream.

CHAPTER XII.

AN ARRIVAL.

In the light wagon, propped up between Jack Parmelee and Dick Whittlesey, Rossiter rode back to the Merton farm. At first everything was a daze to him, but soon the air revived him somewhat, and before the house was reached, save for a giddiness and dull throbbing in his head, he fancied he was quite himself. He was glad of the aid of Parmelee's stout arm, however, when he came to descend to the ground.

"I'll be all right after a bit," he said, as he steadied himself, "if you'll help me down to my cot."

Mr. Merton and Miss Densmore had hastened on in advance, and they, with Miss Merton and her mother, gathered about the injured man.

"You're to come right in here," Mrs. Merton declared, and, though Rossiter protested, he was led into the family living-room, where, stretched upon a couch, he was made as comfortable as might be with cool compresses that after a time allayed the painful feeling in his head. The blow from the bludgeon had been a glancing one, but above his ear a lump had formed that was exceedingly tender to the touch.

By and by Jack Parmelee looked in from an outer door, and, noting the improvement in Rossiter's appearance, exclaimed:

"That was a pretty ugly little clip you got! It keeled you half way down the embankment, an' if it had been a couple o' inches the other way your head an' a squashed puff-ball'd have passed for twins."

"How can you, Jack?" cried Miss Merton, who, with her mother, chanced to be in the room.

"What's the use o' gloomin' about it? He'll be fit enough in the mornin'. A trifle sore in the upper story mebbe, but that won't last long."

"You were just in time," said Rossiter, smiling. "I was about done for."

"You put up a great fight, Sylvia says, and Merton allows you've got the darndest grit he ever saw. They'd all skeedaddled by the time I got down into the dip. They must have thought I had an army behind me by the way they lit out. Well, Dick Whittlesey was close by, and he's a whole regiment in a scrap."

Rossiter had a brief nap late in the afternoon, and woke to find himself alone and much refreshed. The rattling of dishes indicated the nearness of the supper-hour, and outside there was a suggestion of approaching dusk. He rose to his feet without difficulty, and was walking towards the outer door, which opened upon the porch, with no definite intention, when Miss Densmore appeared from the adjoining room bearing a daintily arranged tray, upon which was a steaming cup of tea, some toast, and a few other tempting edibles.

She exclaimed in protest on seeing Rossiter.

"You're to sit down at once, sir!" she said. "We're not going to have you running off in that fashion."

He succumbed very willingly, and she bustled about making him comfortable.

"Miriam and my aunt are busy," she exclaimed; "so I said I'd look after you."

"You needn't have been to all this trouble," he answered. "I'm fully recovered now." But he was glad to eat with her sitting by chatting cheerily to him.

"I'm afraid," he remarked presently, "that you will find it difficult to keep to yourself your promise of the other night."

"What was that?"

"Don't you recall? You were going to hold in recollection from your hop-picking life only its pleasant phases. Aren't the disagreeables, so to speak, likely far to outweigh the happy experiences?"

"Oh, no!" she replied, with a little shake of her head. "It's like a play. Unless the end is tragic, however much the actors pass through, the effect is not darksome, quite the contrary. The bright scenes stand out and the gloomy ones recede."

"The end!" thought Rossiter. Yes, the end of this small episode in life's drama was certainly near at hand. It was delicate ground these two were treading upon—the girl more and more conscious of something in her heart which she would not admit to herself was there, fearful of all it might involve, her sensitive nature shrinking from the speech of family, of friends, and of the world; the man now wholly mastered by the love he had so sternly struggled against, realizing its apparent folly and hopelessness, and yet grasping at straws, and buoyed up by the trailer fabric of dreams.

"Though you would not let me try to tell you, Mr. Rossiter," Miss Densmore broke out suddenly, "of my gratitude to you for all you did for me, I must. I will speak of your nobleness, your generosity, your bravery in coming to uncle's aid. Why, if it hadn't been for you——"

Her words were as spark to powder. All the pent-up emotion within him rushed to his lips. She should know, whatever might be the consequences, that it was her presence with Mr. Merton that had moved him to strive so mightily, that there was nothing he would not do, aye, to risking life and limb a thousand times to win her favor. Whatever his past might have been, and she should read the open page of it without reserve, the future, and she might put him to the proof, should be like the life-moulding of another man, if he might but wear her gage.

"Do you think, Miss Densmore," he began, and there was that in his voice and in his eyes that caused her to turn away, "do you think I would have gone so eagerly to your uncle's aid——"

His impassioned words were cut short by Miss Merton's entrance.

"How cosey you are!" she cried, seating herself. "And is the hero quite recovered?"

"He's likely to faint dead away if you apply that title to him again, Miss Merton," Rossiter had wit enough to answer.

What had he been about to say? Miss Densmore wondered. Inference clearly pointed but in one direction, and yet——. She was in a tremor of doubt, not sure of herself, marvelling at Rossiter's sudden exhibition of feeling when hitherto he had held himself in such close restraint. As for Rossiter, he had resolved that he would not turn his back on the Merton farm and the hop-fields without putting his fortune once more to the test.

Mr. and Mrs. Merton came in shortly, a lamp was lighted, and then, though they urged upon him to rest for a while longer, Rossiter declared that he would go down to the men's sleeping-quarters, and bade them all "good-night."

"You'll not hesitate to rouse some of us if you should feel ill?" said Mrs. Merton.

Rossiter assured her that she need have no further anxiety in regard to him, and went out to find Joe Becraft lounging about watching for him. He would have much preferred to be alone, but he would not hurt Becraft's feelings, so the two walked towards the men's sleeping-quarters together.

The next morning Rossiter was at his work as usual. He did not feel strong, but in response to all inquiries replied that he needed only another night's rest to be ready for further adventures. The girls came into the yard long enough to pick one more box each, chatted gleefully over the amount of money they had earned, talked of the departure of the pickers and how lonely the farm would seem after they had gone, inquired as to Rossiter's plans, and said, as they were leaving, that they would reserve their good-byes until later, he having stated that he should probably ride into Illica with the Becrafts on the following morning, although some were planning to take the evening train for Hintonville.

By four o'clock the last box had been emptied, the last pipe stripped and stacked. It was announced that Mr. Merton was to be found in his little room in the barn, and thither all the pickers flocked for their pay. When the grateful farmer came to settle with Rossiter he endeavored to make him accept a much larger sum than that due him, saying he wished in some way to show his appreciation of his many services, and knew no other manner of making clear such appreciation. It was frankly yet by no means indelicately put, and though the pole-puller would not listen to the proposal, he was gratified rather than offended. Mr. Merton then asked him if he would not like to remain in his employment upon the farm, saying that Jack Parmelee had suggested it. For this further mark of kindness Rossiter expressed his thanks, but replied in the negative, whereat Mr. Merton's regret was apparently genuine.

As Rossiter emerged from his interview with Mr. Merton, and was standing in the door of the barn pondering upon how he should effect his interview with Miss Densmore, a young man, trimly clad and neatly gloved, drove briskly into the yard in a smart dog-cart. He pulled up in in front of the porch and Miss Densmore and Miss Merton came out to meet him.

"Hullo! There's young Wolffe, a friend of Sylvia's from Illica," said Jack Parmelee, who was sitting upon the barn threshold whittling energetically at a splinter of pine. "Hey, Dick Whittlesey! Run and take that horse!"

"I came down from the woods day before yesterday," the newcomer was saying to Miss Densmore, "and yesterday I met your father, who told me you were up here, so I thought I'd drive out."

As Rossiter viewed the greeting between the two, the lovely girl and this fine-looking, handsomely dressed young man, the little fabric of dream which he had allowed to grow gradually since his struggle in the dip crumbled into dismal ruin. He strode away into the orchard cursing himself for his mad presumption. Yet hope died hard, and by the time the sound of the supper bell rang out he made up his mind that the presence of this unexpected arrival should not deter him from pleading his cause. Curiously, in all his thoughts of Miss Densmore the probability that her affections were engaged was not a thing that had received from him much consideration. Now he wondered why.

The evening meal was earlier than usual, that those of the pickers who desired might catch the train at Hintonville. After he had eaten Rossiter again sought the orchard. He had decided that he would wait and watch to see when Mr. Wolffe took his departure, and then perhaps the opportunity he sought would offer itself. Eagerly he marked the shadows gather, and saw the evening star begin to glisten beyond the purple outline of the distant hills. He was just upon the point of returning to the proximity of the house when he caught the faint murmur of voices. He had found a seat upon a wide rail in a corner of the snake fence where tall elderberry-bushes formed a partial screen, and fancying it was some of the pickers wandering by the path, half a dozen yards away, to the edge of the orchard, he concluded he would let them pass before making a move. He sat there inattentive and passive until suddenly he was conscious that one of those speaking was Miss Densmore. Without looking he knew who her companion must be. What should he do? As yet he had heard no word of their conversation, and he had no desire to play the unwilling eavesdropper. As noiselessly as possible he tried to shift his position so that he might slip into the bushes on the other side of the fence and thus steal away unnoticed. He had half accomplished his purpose when what Wolffe was saying became clear to him.

"It isn't a matter of one hour in the day, Sylvia, but of every hour," his words ran. "Indeed, it seems to me that you are never absent from my thoughts. I can't put you away from me. Why, up there in the woods I heard your name in the song of every bird, in every breeze that cried in the pine-tops, in every brook murmuring over the rocks. Your face was always before me, even when I woke in the great darkness of the forest night."

Rossiter could not know that it was the third time this young man had declared his love to Miss Densmore; that he was now breaking his promise not to speak of it to her again; that a moment before, when he had ventured on forbidden ground, she had endeavored to silence him. To the tortured man it seemed like a first declaration, and to all appearances the girl was a willing listener. In his agony of mind his caution was forgotten, and he allowed one of the branches which he had bent back to slip from his hand and strike against the fence. Miss Densmore glanced towards him, recognized his disappearing figure, and gave a little, suppressed cry. He supposed it to be one of fright, and, hastily parting the bushes among which he now found himself, sped, crushed at heart, swiftly away in the thickening shades.

CHAPTER XIII.

GOOD-BY TO THE HOP-FIELDS.

When Miss Densmore stepped upon the porch of the house she was alone. Mr. Wolffe had gone to the barn to look after the harnessing of his horse. His interview had had in it an unmistakable element of finality, and at last he realized the utter hopelessness of further pleadings and protestations. He could not understand Miss Densmore's strange agitation and fright at the noise in the bushes, but why, he questioned, should he now trouble his head about that? His horse was shortly ready, he sprang into the cart, gathered up the reins, and started, in no very amiable mood, on his 12-mile drive to Illica.

As Miss Densmore entered a narrow side hallway she encountered Jack Parmelee.

"Your pole-puller left his good-byes," he said. "He changed his mind, I guess, about waitin' until morning; thought mebbe he could catch the train at Hintonville; wanted me to give you this," and he held out a small slip of folded note-paper.

"Thank you," said Miss Densmore, taking it and passing into the room where Rossiter had been brought the previous afternoon, and where her cousin and aunt were now sitting. It was, then, even as she had feared: Rossiter had heard a portion of Mr. Wolffe's untimely declaration.

"Mr. Wolffe wished me to say good-night," she remarked to Miriam and her aunt. "It's so late that he felt he must hasten back."

"Mr. Rossiter's gone. Did Jack tell you?" exclaimed Miriam. "Wasn't it queer he should start off so, and never come in to say good-by? I can't understand it. Really, I feel quite hurt."

"Oh, I suppose he thought if he waited to say good-by to everyone he wouldn't catch the train," returned Miss Densmore with assumed indifference.

This attitude on her cousin's part seemed so unnatural that Miss Merton fell to wondering what could be back of it, but she did not think it wise to question her. There was Mr. Wolffe's sudden departure too. Could there be any connection between the abrupt leave-taking of the two men? The enigma was quite beyond her solving, and there appeared to be no inclination on Miss Densmore's part to solve it for her. The latter lingered for a moment, and then passed leisurely from the room. She ascended the stairs, entered her chamber, and closed the door. She did not strike a light at once, but sat down upon the edge of the bed and gazed wide-eyed at the wall.

She recalled what she had said on the night of the hop-dance, and also her talk with Rossiter on the preceding evening. "Her promise to herself," he had called it, her assertion in regard to her after-thought of her hop-picking life. Tears started into her eyes. Had he come to say good-by to her, as she surely expected that he would, she had meant to extend to him a cordial invitation to call upon her in Illica, and something in her heart told her he would have come. Now she felt that in all likelihood she should never see him again. He had not revealed to her his home—or the place that he had once called home; she had gathered that it was one of the large eastern cities, and that he was returning thither to begin life anew, that was all. The chapter seemed to her irrevocably closed.

At length she rose, lighted a candle and unfolded the crumpled scrap of paper. "Good-by. God bless you," she read, and then his signa-

AND THEN THE SIGNATURE.

ture—"Philip Rossiter." She extinguished the candle, and going to the window looked long at the sky and the fast-thickening stars. Then she walked to the bureau, opened one of the drawers and taking therefrom a little box of Venetian glass which held some treasured trinkets, snapped back the lid and laid the paper caressingly among them.

After his plunge out of the bushes Rossiter hurried up the field, crossed into the upper orchard, and made his way to the sleeping quarters of the men. What he had just seen and heard had suddenly dissolved the resolution and purpose that had been daily taking firmer and more definite shape since he left the freight-train that night at Illica. Life never would, never could, hold aught for him. What he had recently experienced proved this but too plainly. He was a fool to think that he could ever be anything but a vagabond. He would take to the road again. Hastily he put his few belongings together and strode to the door. There he paused. Should he leave without a word to any one? The love in his heart flooded over him like a great wave as his mind reverted to Miss Densmore. No, he would somehow contrive to send a good-by to her. It was a crowning piece of folly, perhaps, doubtless, for it would mean nothing to her, but he would indulge in it nevertheless. It would be his final tribute on the now shattered altar of hope—the shrine which he had so unwittingly reared.

He remembered to have seen Joe Becraft that morning slip a small pencil into a vest hanging upon a chair near his cot. The garment was still there. He took out his brother's letter, tore off at the crease a little strip upon which there was no writing, and in the dim light traced his words of adieu. He then replaced the pencil, thrust the folded message into his pocket, and rending in scraps the remainder of the letter, scattered the fragments upon the grass as he stepped from the door.

"There's an end of that!" he said.

In the hop-kiln, by dull lantern light, some of the pickers were having a last impromptu merry-making to the wheezy music of a mouth-organ played by one of their number. Among the dancers was Joe Becraft. It had been Rossiter's intention to bid him good-by, but he saw that he could not do so without encountering many others, so with a consciousness of real regret he turned away. As he came to the end of the barn he descried Jack Parmelee's familiar figure moving towards the house. Here was the very man for his purpose. He hailed him.

"Mr. Parmelee!" he called.

The farm manager halted.

"Oh, it's you!" he said, as Rossiter drew near. "What's up?" He had remarked the pole-puller's bundle.

"I'm off," said Rossiter. "I've changed my mind about waiting till morning. If I hurry I think I can catch the Hintonville train, but I can't wait to say good-by to everyone. Won't you make my adieus to Mr. and Mrs. Merton and Miss Merton and to the Becrafts,—I'm very sorry not to see them all,—and would you be kind enough to give this to Miss Densmore?"

He held out the slip of paper with its penciled words. Parmelee took it.

"Why, certainly, to be sure," he said. "But you'd better wait. Indeed, I wish you'd stay right on. We need just such a man as you. Mr. Merton'd give you good wages, you know."

"It's very kind of you. Mr. Merton spoke about it, but I must go," answered Rossiter, holding out his hand.

"Well, you'll come next year?" said Parmelee, giving him a hearty grip. "I'll keep a place for you, if you say so."

"I can't promise," Rossiter replied. "Thanks just the same."

Parmelee watched Rossiter stride out of the gate and take the Hintonville road.

"There's a chap I can't make out," he muttered as he walked towards the house.

Rossiter recalled that half way to Hintonville there was a highway branching towards the west. When he reached this he took it without hesitation. He had no intention of trying to catch the train, but had spoken of doing so as a plausible excuse for his hasty departure. Plans he had none, needed none. He was to drift again, a waif, a vagrant, a common vagabond. Now nothing mattered. Money he had, more than he had possessed that year, but of what special avail was it? In the life to which he was returning he could manage quite as easily without it. He trudged on steadily, his mind a babel of emotions. One by one he reviewed the scenes of his hop-yard life, in which Miss Densmore always appeared as the central figure, but chiefly he dwelt upon his return to consciousness after the encounter in the dip of the Blue Creek Road. It must have been pity not love that he had seen in Miss Densmore's eyes as she had bent above him. Yes, it must have been that, and yet the look haunted him, and continued to do so.

By and by he found himself nearing the valley of the Oskenonto. As he halted an instant before seeking the lower level, a fierce pulsating flame leaped up into the hollow of the night, and he knew that he was not far from the blast furnace of Harkaway. Descending, he chose a road that led him past the flaring stacks, and paused to watch the fiery waves of molten iron pour into the moulds of sand. He crossed the furnace slag-heaps, hideous even in the starlight, and beyond the Oskenonto and the abandoned Susquenango canal found a highway ascending into the hills. Whither it wound he had no notion, and naught did he care. The hills appealed to him. He would go up among them as high as might be, and so he struck into this road. For a time he ascended gradually, then it became stony and steep. Behind him, from time to time, the stacks of the furnace shot streamers of red and blue and orange into the night, illumining briefly and weirdly the heaven and the earth. Occasionally a cloud would reflect the glow after the flame had died, a mock sunrise or sunset. Towards midnight, when he had won high among the uplands, the moon rose, a crumbling segment of pale gold.

Rossiter was now weary, and presently a straw-stack in a field adjoining the highway suggested a desirable place of rest. He scaled the fence and approached the stack, becoming consious, as he did so, of the sound of heavy breathing. Some one, it was evident, had already availed himself of a free night's lodging. Rossiter hesitated an instant and then went forward. Doubtless there would be plenty of accommodation for two. On the eastern side of the stack, revealed distinctly by the moonlight, was the huddled body of a man. There could be no harm, Rossiter thought, in having a closer glance at his fellow-lodger. He advanced cautiously a few paces and peered down, to start back in amazement and dismay, for he had gazed upon the repulsive face of "Whiskers."

Swiftly and silently he retraced his steps to the road, his mind swept by a powerful reaction. Voluntarily he had returned to the level of this detestable creature, had allowed the first disappointment to overthrow every firm resolve of the past weeks, and had gone miserably down once more into the very slough of degeneracy. Out of the realization of his instability, the overwhelming sense of his bitter shame, by some strange and sudden revulsion his spirit rose triumphant. He bowed his head.

"With God's help," he said, "it is the last time!"

He strode downward towards the valley, and a mile from the straw-stack found a sleeping place in a shed. Slumber soon brought its boon of forgetfulness, but before it did so he summoned from the depths of his recollection the lovely contour of Miss Densmore's face.

"After all," he thought, musing upon the sweetness of what might have been, "it is a blessing to have known her!"

When he roused the following morning the sun had scattered the banked mists above the hills beyond the Merton farm, and as he stood in the door-way of his rude shelter, blinking in the glistening light, a farmer approached driving market-ward with a heaped wagon-load of potatoes. The two men exchanged glances and nods.

"Bound for Hintonville?" inquired Rossiter.

"Yep. That's where I'm goin'," was the reply.

"Perhaps you wouldn't mind giving me a lift, then?"

"Mind? Certainly not! Jump right up."

He checked his horses until Rossiter had mounted to the seat beside him. He was of a hearty, big-boned type; had a sandy beard, keen yet kindly blue eyes, and a voice that expanded into a muffled roar at the close of every sentence. His laugh, too, was explosive.

"Been hop-pickin', I s'pose, an' now startin' home?" he ventured.

"Yes," returned Rossiter.

"Like it?"

"Yes, very much."

"Hain't heard, hev ye, what happened to a hop-picker, er a tramp, las' night up to Bob Pankhurst's on the hill?"

"No; what was it?"

"Well, ye see Bob's got—er had, ruther—a straw-stack jest across the road from his house that'd ketch the eye o' anybody strollin' by an' on want o' a place to stow 'emselves till daylight free o' charge. They's plenty o' sech about these days"—this final remark with a sly glance at his companion.

The mention of the straw-stack had stimulated Rossiter's interest to such a degree that he did not heed the attempted pleasantry.

"Yes! yes!" he cried. "What happened!"

"Well," said the farmer, "when Bob got up this mornin' he was minus a straw-stack. The blamed thing burnt in the night, and not a dern soul about the place seen it. When they discovered it, and come to go near to look at it, there was a man's boots stickin' out o' the black, smokin' mass. His upper part was done to a crisp."

"If I recall rightly," said Rossiter, conscious of a sudden awe in his tone which the other did not seem to notice, "there is but one straw-stack for some distance."

"Yep," said the farmer, "that's right! Bob's is the only one for at least three miles, leastwise the only one near the road. The feller, whoever he was, must 'ave been smokin' an' fallen asleep. He's had his las' smoke, that's dead sure, an' a mighty big one it was, by the look o' it."

Rossiter had no comment to make. The horror of the scene kindled in his imagination by the farmer's words silenced him. And yet he could but consider the dreadful doom which had overtaken "Whiskers" as retributive. There was no one, he thought, who would question the justice of this tragic interposition of fate, but the shocking end of Hart Dawson was still heavy on his mind when, an hour later, he stepped upon the platform of the Hintonville station.

(Continued on 4th page)

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