Nan's Hundred Dollars

By EDGAR WELTON COOLEY

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(continued from last week)

Nan's face clouded.

"How much—do you think—it would cost you—Jamie?" she asked, very slowly, trying to think.

"Oh, I could pull through on a hundred dollars," he replied. "Yes, a hundred dollars would be plenty. But it might just as well be a thousand, for I ain't got no show of gettin' it, that I can see."

Nan gasped. A hundred dollars—should she let him have it? Should she stake it all upon the turn of a political wheel?

"Jamie!" She spoke suddenly, almost sharply. "Are you sure—real sure—you could get the nomination if—if you had a hundred dollars."

"As sure as anything on earth," he replied. "Why, see here, Nan. I'd only need about 800 votes and I'm sure of almost 600 at the start—dead sure. Then if one out of every three of these 600 men got one other vote for me, I'd be nominated, don't you see?"

"You know best, Jamie," she said. "I don't. I just wanted to be sure. I would be so glad if you could win—oh, I'd be so proud of you."

She threw her arms around his neck, then tripped into the room where the bureau was and laid her hand upon the knob of the drawer that contained her precious letter.

A moment she hesitated. She did so want a parlor carpet—and a few dishes—and besides, if this money was used and Jim should lose—if he should—there was no telling—

Her glance wandered to the kitchen and she saw Jim leaning against the table, his chin resting in his hand.

"Jamie knows," she said to her heart; "dear old Jamie, he is so anxious and so sure. He cannot be mistaken. And if he should win, how nicely we can get along."

A moment later she stood before him, smiling into his face, her hands behind her back.

"Kiss me, sir," she said, "and I'll give you something."

He lifted her chin with a big, rough hand and kissed her, awkwardly, and she handed him the letter.

As he read it, his eyes brightened and renewed courage crept into his face. But when he had finished he smiled and handed it back to her.

"But you are to keep the money," she said. "Keep it, Jamie and fight—fight—and win."

He shook his head. "I can't take your money, sweetheart," he said. "It ain't mine, and I—I wouldn't feel just right about it."

She locked her arms about his neck.

"But I want you to," she cried; "oh, I want you to win—win—and then we'll buy a little home and it will be ours, Jamie, ours!"

A light, not unlike that on a warrior's face in the heat of battle, crept into his eyes.

"I will!" he cried. "God bless you, Nannie girl, I will."

The last of the returns had been received and those who had been successful at the primaries, surrounded by their admiring friends, left the hall, until the big room was all but deserted.

But over in one corner, where the light shone dim and indistinct, a man lingered, as though loath to leave. His eyes, like those of one who looks, but sees not, stared straight ahead, and upon his face was a hard, resentful gleam.

The janitor, coming in to turn off the lights, saw him.

"Hello, Paxton," he said, "there's where you lose, ain't it?"

"Here's where I lose," Jim replied, grimly, "but I can't believe it, Bascom. I can't believe I'm defeated. The boys all promised to stick by me, and—and I was so sure."

"They are always sure," Bascom replied. "Can't tell nothin' about politics, Paxton; can't tell who your friends are, either until after the votes are counted."

"But I came so near, Bascom; why, I lacked only 20 votes—and it meant so much to me. You see it was Nan's—" He paused. Bascom had moved off indifferent and was putting out the lights at the further end of the room.

When Jim turned in at his door yard, he saw a shadow on the porch, which came lightly down the steps to meet him. It was Nan.

As the light from the window illumined his face, Nan paused. There was no need for him to tell her the news. She read it in the dull gleam of his eyes, and her heart sank within her. He tried to speak, but his lips refused to move.

"Never mind, Jamie dear," she said, bravely, seeing the misery, greater than her own, in his face.

"But your money, Nannie," he cried, "it's—"

"I know it, dear," she said, and her words nearly choked her, "but you did the best you could, Jamie."

"Yes, I did, Nannie, I did," he said, "and Gregory only beat me by 20 votes. Oh, I was so sure, Nannie, so sure."

Nan put her arm through his and petted his hand as she would a child's, as they entered the house.

"Why is it," he asked, bitterly, "that a man like Gregory, who doesn't need it is always elected, while fellows like me, who have hunted everywhere for something to do and have spent every cent we had, are beaten?"

Nan clasped her hands behind his neck.

"But we have each other, Jamie, boy," she said.

"Yes," he replied, with an effort at cheerfulness. "We have each other, Nannie, girl, and I'll work—I'll get something to do—and I'll pay it back, every cent of it, Nan, and we'll—"

A tramping of feet sounded upon the porch followed by a heavy knock upon the door Jim opened it and half a dozen mill hands swarmed in.

Grasping Paxton by both hands, they swung him around and around and slapped him boisterously upon the back.

"You're elected, old man!" they cried. "There was a mistake in the Sixth ward, and you're 'it.'"

Jim stood a moment silently looking at them.

"You say—I'm—elected?" he asked at last.

"That's right," said one. "There was a mistake of a hundred in the count, and you have 98 majority."

"You are—not—fooling me—boys?" Jim asked, very slowly, the color coming and going in his face, his lips trembling.

"'re not," they said. "It is the truth. 't think we'd go back on you, ?"

'ightly and rested a rough pon the head of Nan 'o a chair and had or hands.

," he said, hoarsely; han you can ever

The Man Who Returned from the Under World

By EVELYN MARTIN

It was a sad thing. The local paper, without obvious exaggeration, had called it a tragedy. But they were a truly Christian family, unimaginatively orthodox, and knew how to bring a discreet resignation to their griefs. He had caught a chill in the last week of his honeymoon, and returned home to die after a three-days' illness—three vague, ineffectual days of optimism and inexperienced nursing.

The whole thing was horrible and surprising, and the little bride—19 years old, blue eyed and fluffy—was so stricken with astonishment as to be only half conscious of her misery. She went to the funeral, walking firmly and quietly by her father-in-law. It seemed to her a ceremony more dignified than terrible, for she was unable to conceive of her husband as lying in the coffin which stood, a beflowered and subsidiary altar, at the chancel steps. Everybody said that the wreaths were beautiful, especially the great circlet of white roses which had been sent by the curate's wife. She had written a verse on the card which went with it, for she contributed poetry to the weekly papers sometimes.

The verse rang in the bride's head while the slow ritual of the service went on:

"The happy dead are here;
Their spirits in the sun
Sing softly and make cheer
Because that life is done."

She said to herself bitterly that it was cruel and unfair that he should be free and joyous on some happy spiritual plane whilst she spent long gray years in the world that had suddenly become uninteresting. He had been so kind, so considerate, so much her own during the fortnight that they had spent together. She missed his ready attention, the exclusive delight which he had in her company, the way that his hand caressed the short bits of hair in her neck. She dared not allow herself to realize that she would never have these things again. The thought hurt her intensely, and she detested pain.

Something in her mind cried out: "O, come back! Come back! I want you!" His death, his vanishment, as she thought of it, sitting in the dark church with her eyes fixed on the white mass of flowers, seemed too monstrous and unnatural to be true.

She cried a little as she walked back across the churchyard and thought of the text which the curate had several times repeated: "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption."

Her father-in-law and his two daughters were with her. They all felt a little tired and dull now that the great event was over. They went slowly down the church lane, through the garden gate, up the path still marked with the heavy footsteps of the bearers. The dead man was in all their thoughts just then; he had been a great gardener, and had planted a little while before his marriage the lilies which his bride now brushed with her stiff crepe skirt. In the garden which he had given life to it was difficult to believe in his death. They looked at each other, recognizing between them an added sensation of loss.

And in the porch they found him waiting for them.

Afterwards, when they came to talk about it, no one could quite remember what he wore or how he looked. Only he was there, standing in the doorway, as he had been accustomed to stand looking at his flowers after a morning's work at the desk. There was an air of entire reality about it.

His father, tongue responding automatically to the stimulus of sight, began to say: "Hello, my boy!" Then he stopped, looked hastily at the others, and hoped they had not heard him.

For just five seconds there was a dead silence. The father heard the watch tick in his waistcoat pocket and the sound of his own strenuous breath. He knew that the three girls were all looking at the figure in the porch. Then the bride gave a little cry. Her husband had stepped towards her, holding out his arms with that boyish gesture of affection which she had always liked so much.

"Bertha, darling, I couldn't leave you!" he said. His voice had the joyful note of a traveler come home.

She turned away from him and flung herself against her father-in-law, hid her face on his sleeve, and began to cry hysterically.

"I'm so sorry," said the young man. "I've startled all of you. I thought, somehow, you'd understand when you saw me here; but of course you don't. It was stupid of me. The point is, I've come back. Bertha wanted me; and leaving her alone seemed so horrible."

He turned back into the house, and the others followed him, staring stupidly, and not liking to speak to one another. No one as yet had said anything to him.

They went into the dining-room. He was not there. The cloth was laid for lunch; there was a faint scent of cabbages and stewed rabbit.

They all felt reassured. It was so evident what had happened. They had been the victims of a collective hallucination—a natural thing enough under the circumstances of nerve strain and shock. The bride raised her veil, and on her small white face there were traces of relief as well as of disappointment. She went upstairs to take her things off.

They heard her light footsteps and rustling dress, and then a heavy footstep that went after her. The elder daughter rose quietly and went to the open window. "I can't breathe; this room is stifling," she said.

"A sound came through the opened sash—the grating sound of a spade, and then the heavy, regular thud of wet earth thrown from a height. The new grave was being filled up.

Whilst this still held them with a reminder of the morning's work a door above was opened and shut quickly. Then they heard a confused falling sound and a scream. They rushed upstairs, feeling sick with an unacknowledged terror. The bride lay on her bedroom floor in a dead faint.

He joined them at lunch and spoke regretfully of the fact that Bertha was not well enough to leave her room.

"I'd looked forward so to this," he said. "To the being with you all again. Of course, I see now that I was a bit of a fool not to have prepared you in some way. But I was so anxious to get back. And it seemed to me that being Christians, you would find it natural enough. I wonder more don't return. But it's an effort. I suppose indolence keeps them on the other side."

"You mustn't think I'm hurt or anything of that kind," he began in a deprecating, explanatory tone. "Of course, I know how glad you all are, but you're startled. You mustn't fancy I don't understand. In a day or two the shock will have passed off, and we shall all be happy together as we used to be. Poor little Bertha. The sudden joy was almost too much for her, wasn't it?"

After lunch the elder daughter drew her father on one side. "All those wreaths,' she said, "ought to be arranged on the grave, oughtn't they? People will wonder."

"Yes," he answered. "You're quite right—it ought to be done."

She got her hat and went across into the churchyard, grateful for the fresh air and the sane, ordinary appearance of the outer world. Her brother went to the window and looked out, saw her among the tombstones stooping over her work.

He turned to his father with a bitter smile. "Dorothy was always a tidy little soul," he said, "but it's extraordinary how illogical a woman can be."

As the day passed they noticed a change in him. He had always been of an open, happy disposition, fond of companionship, and easily pleased. It was in this mood that he had returned. But their secret terror, the uncontrollable aversion of which they were so much ashamed, told after awhile on the mental atmosphere. Outwardly they bore the tension of his presence pretty well. It is astonishing how soon a horror becomes homely. Only he, who knew their voices and the little affectionate habits of their daily life, saw that he was being treated as a visitor.

Bertha came down to tea with an air of determined placidity, which sat oddly on her babyish face. But she still wore her black dress. She was careful not to be left alone with her husband. He was moody now and silent; but I think they found this less horrible than his gayety had been. Once he said, in a tone that was almost sulky: "For a reunited family we manage to conceal her raptures pretty well."

Then Magdalen, the younger sister, who had never loved him much, put on an air of fierce cheerfulness, talking and laughing loudly, but it did not convince.

At dinner they were silent, and the tone of his voice when he spoke was resentful. They all knew themselves to be behaving crully—worse, awkwardly; but any other conduct seemed impossible.

As bed time approached they looked at one another with a new fear. Together they were invulnerable; but each dreaded the dark hours, and in the faces of the others saw her own terror. The girls were full of pity for the bride, but they did not dare offer their companionship.

As the clock struck 11 he got up and looked at his wife. There came over his face an expression which meant determination and also a great expectancy. She rose, too, and went almost steadily to the door. Her face was white and her eyes stared curiously. They heard

(continued on first page 4th column.)

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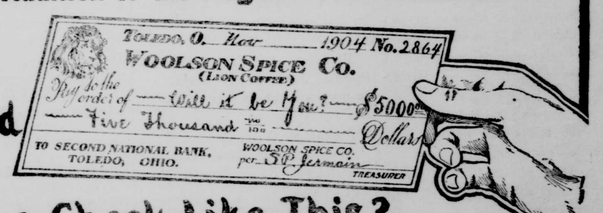
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4 58	9 43	Clayton	8 40	3 42
5 07	9 52	Kenton	8 32	3 34
5 16	10 01	Hartley	f 8 23	3 25
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5 31	f 10 16	Henderson	f 8 08	3 10
f 5 37	f 10 22	Goldsboro	f 8 02	3 04
f 5 46	10 31	Greensboro	7 53	2 55
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