

THE STORY THUS FAR: Adam Brent, 32d governor, bachelor Tops and Mrs. Tops, out in the Wales woods. Tops found a man murdered at safe entry. The body was first identified as Mr. Lot Brent, kind of New England nobleman. A car believed to have been used in the murder was found from the question, with a woman's murdered body within. Proof had been found that both the murdered man and the woman had been accustomed dope users in their murder. The case, was the suicide of Kat, seemed to have blown up in Tops's face and she knew, moreover, that, with the case, Tops, however, still had plans and would direct to help Brent during what he had in mind.

CHAPTER XIII

"Stay and stay, as if you didn't know when to go. Stay till I come." He turned to Mr. Eberly. "I expect you've old clothes and fishing tackle up at the lodge?" he suggested.

"Clothes, yes. Fishing things are at home. Why?"

"I'll lend you mine," said Tops. "Well here." He turned to Mrs. Tops. "You move along, mother," he suggested subtly. "—case I can't find things."

So they departed toward Carrick together, and Adam wondered what instructions Tops was giving Mrs. Tops. Then the old man returned alone, rod in hand, gunboots bulging.

"I've got all you'll need, Mr. Eberly," he said. "Now I want to make a phone call to Whitlock—we may need him. Then I'll be with you."

Upon the dot of half past four, Mr. Eberly, alone, wearing shoe-pacs, riding breeches, a loose flannel shirt and a bulky canvas coat bottomed by his thread, came in his own car up the drive to the Ledbrges place in the hills above Ridgeroth. Mr. Eberly was rather pale, but steady.

The driveway forked, a little below the house; one way led to the house itself, the other toward the garages and the service wing. Mr. Eberly turned in that direction, and as he came to the court upon which the garages faced, he pressed the horn.

There were living quarters above the stalls for the cars. At one of the windows there a man appeared, called: "Right, Carl. I'll be down."

Mr. Eberly stayed in the car, kept the engine running. A police van thumping lightly in his thread. Ledbrge, his fishing gear in his hands, a moment later appeared. He came briskly toward the car, a gray-haired little man with a long nose, deep lines running his mouth, something suggestive of the Oriental in the cast of his eyes. He glanced behind him toward the house, climbed into the car, grasped Eberly by the hand.

"How are you, Carl?"

"Fine rain," Eberly assured him. He added: "I phoned to make sure you had arrived. You're often here in charge your place."

"Lucky you did," Ledbrge agreed. "My sister has callers. Your Miss Stevens, and an insufferable woman I don't know. Miss Jones stood my wearing woolly clothes in the house. That's why I told you to come here instead of the front door." And he said: "The front should run. Wind's worsening."

Eberly made no comment. He was guiding the car up the winding road toward the level pond, and a thick growth of hemlock and pine had already hidden from their view the house below them.

Ledbrge remarked: "I'm in a fishing mood, Carl. Sick of New York. I'd like to stay up here a month and do nothing but fish with you."

"How are things in New York?"

Ledbrge said, moving his shoulders as though to shake off a burden: "Well, I've had an unpleasant few days. Holden has gone wrong, Carl. Had let our bright business. Been doing any fishing?"

"Got a new rod," Eberly replied. "And I've gone back to snelled flies."

"The trout won't know the difference," Ledbrge chuckled. "Well, here we are."

Eberly pulled up beside the boathouse, and they got out and began to set up their rods. "We've hit just at the right time," Ledbrge decided. "Best fishing is from now till dark."

Eberly nodded, and they turned toward the boathouse.

Ledbrge was ahead, Eberly behind, and Eberly cleared his throat rather loudly, and he asked in a strained tone:

"Rufus, you feel all right?"

Ledbrge whirled to look at him. "Certainly! I'm tired, but I'm always tired. Why?"

"I don't quite know," Eberly explained. "Something about you seems—different. Your voice, and the way you handle that rod; and you look a little thinner."

Ledbrge laughed, but nervously. "I won't have working as hard as I—and I've a night owl."

Eberly nodded. "We have it. That's why I traveled up against the wind." He added hesitantly: "I don't know what it is. The way you walk, maybe. You look lethe—"

"Nonsense," Ledbrge curtly interrupted. "Come. Get in!" He slid the canoe into the water.

"I had a lot more success in the—canoe," Eberly suggested.

"And so do you," Ledbrge retorted with a laugh. "They hear the overlooks as soon as we leave the dock. Those you got over being afraid of a canoe, old man."

Eberly grinned. "Oh, all right. My life is in your hands," he said, and took the front seat. He held to the edge of the dock while Ledbrge got in, then took his paddle, and they moved away, out of the little cove, around the wooded point, across the pond.

Once Eberly turned half around in his seat to look back. The boathouse was now completely hidden by the wooded point between. The wind was behind them, toward the mouth of the gorge where the dam held back three waters. Ledbrge, when they were a hundred yards offshore, said:

"Stop paddling, Carl, and let's try them here. We'll drift with the wind, but the shoals here first, and the deep water afterward."

"Good enough," Eberly agreed.

He laid down his paddle and began to cast, hitting a little otherwise as that his back cast would not interfere with Ledbrge. Thus he was



"Now, Miss Ledbrge, I'm sorry, but you mustn't try to deceive us."

able to see the other man out of the corner of his eye; and this somehow was consoling. The back of his neck no longer crawled; his spine was no longer cold.

Yet he cast badly, his line a tangle on the water. But Ledbrge, he saw, did no better. The other's line unlashed and curled against the side of the canoe. Ledbrge may have felt Eberly's shining glance, for he said:

"This line's sticky. Need a new one, I guess." And then he said: "Hello, you're perspiring, Carl! Set for exhibition that race."

Eberly hesitated. "I am a little hot," he agreed, and—his back toward the other man—he loosed the upper buttons. He said: "You've forgotten how to cast, Rufus."

There was a momentary pause. They had drifted, Eberly perceived, out into the deep water where the old brook-channel ran.

And then Ledbrge said:

"I'll try it standing up. Always could do better so."

He got uncertainly to his feet, and swayed to bitter. And suddenly there were both in the water. The canoe, at Ledbrge in falling clung to it, dipped one gunwale and thus overturned. The other gunwale coming down hard across Eberly's hips as, belatedly, he scrambled clear.

The point that hid the boathouse was still near, a hundred yards away; the dam and the near shoals, for of the gorge perhaps fifty yards. Ledbrge, without a word, began to swim toward the rocky shore beside the dam.

Eberly did not call out as he watched Ledbrge swim so quietly away.

Joe Dane, in the town of Tops's headquarters, was quick with a theory of his own. "The whole thing's plain enough," he declared. "Ledbrge was having an affair with Mrs. Hall, brought her to Dewain's Mill that night, and Hall trailed them there and killed both of them."

They stood in Will Bonine's chapel. Will was gone, Doctor Medford was somewhere in the small rooms behind. Mat Cumberland scratched his head.

So Joe remembered Earl Priddy and Isaac Murrell, and took Cumberland to hear their stories. Cumberland questioned for at length, and was half convinced of that Rufus Ledbrge had been on Friday night in Little Bear Afterward they stopped Earl and Ike at Dewain's Mill, and Mat Cumberland himself thanked them for great services to the commonwealth, while Mr. Murrell and Mrs. Priddy stood by in excited pride. Then Joe and Cumberland drove on.

It was just past five when they came up the drive to the Ledbrge house. Joe recognized Ben Dewain's car at the steps. "What's she doing here?" he wondered; but the district attorney had no answer in progress.

Joe rang the bell and asked to see Miss Ledbrge. She came to them in the small reception room, and Joe said gently:

"Miss Ledbrge, I've an unpleasant duty. This is District Attorney Cumberland. I'm Mr. Dane, his assistant. We've found a man dead; and some people think it is your brother, Mr. Ledbrge. Will you view the body, identify it?"

The frail old woman turned white as snow. "My brother!" she whispered.

"Yes. Rufus Ledbrge."

"But Rufus is here!" Miss Ledbrge protested, her weak voice somehow desperate.

"Here!" It was Joe's turn to be shaken. Then he smiled. "Now, Miss Ledbrge, I'm sorry, but you mustn't try to deceive us."

"But he is," she insisted, unsteadily. "He's up at the trout pond fishing with Mr. Eberly."

Joe Dane looked at Mat, got he demanded angrily: "Where is this trout pond?"

"Why, you take the road past the garage," Miss Ledbrge told him. "You can't miss it." Her voice was tremulous, her white hand pressed to her bosom.

Dane turned. "Come on, Mat," he said harshly. "We'll see now!" But Mat said: "Look out, Joe!" Miss Ledbrge, swaying like a reed, had slipped softly to the floor.

They took alone in the reception room, but the door into the hall was open. At Mat's ejaculation, Bee Dewain appeared there in the doorway, Mrs. Tops behind her. Joe had tried, too late, to catch the fainting woman; he was on his knees with, beside her, he looked up coolly at Bee, and the girl with a gigantic swept him aside.

"Get out of here, both of you!" she cried. "You heartless idiots! He's take care of her!"

Adam carried a rifle; Whitlock, the last to emerge, carried a small outboard motor, awkwardly.

"All right, Adam," Tops said briskly. "You and Brad get out on the point, where you can see. Whitlock, put the motor on the rowboat, and don't make any noise. Adam, we won't start on you about. Miss Ann more; but tell him if you have to."

Adam nodded, moved quietly away. Behind him, Tops and Whitlock were busy for a while. Then they waited, silent, ready.

Adam lay prone in the underbrush on the point, the rifle trained. The canoe was still offshore, to see the man as it were nothing and begin to fish. No noise was floating him.

Later, Ledbrge stood up in the canoe, and then he bowed overside and fell. The canoe overturned, floated with its bottom just awash. Adam, his eyes peering through the sights, saw Eberly floating with the head well out of water, saw Ledbrge swimming toward the shore. Ten yards of open water lay between the two men.

Ledbrge turned to look back. And then he began to swim back toward the other man. Eberly threw up one arm!

Adam pressed the trigger; he saw the water leap upward where the bullet hit, midway between the two men. Ledbrge looked toward the sound of the report, and at the same instant the outboard motor on the rowboat in the cove started with a staccato roar.

Adam threw in another shell, but then the boat, racing toward the two men in the water, came between him and Ledbrge. He leaped to his feet as the boat came to where the two men were.

Whitlock handled the boat; Tops was at the bow. Whitlock cut off the engine, and they coasted to a stop. Ledbrge had reached Mr. Eberly, was supporting the other man in the water.

"It's all right, Carl!" he said reassuringly, to the sudden silence on the point. "Take it easy. You're all right now."

And then Tops and Whitlock were hauling them both into the boat. Without a word, when this was done, Whitlock started the engine, presetting non-resistance; and he swung the boat back toward the point. Whitlock sat at the stern, Tops in the bow, Ledbrge and Eberly side by side on the cushioned thwart.

Ledbrge, facing forward, saw men appear on the wharf, as they approached. Two came hurrying from a car; two came running along the shore. One of these two held a rifle in his hands. But the hunting roar of the engine made it impossible for the moment for Ledbrge to ask questions which the sight of these strangers provoked; and when the engine ran, they slid alongside the wharf. Joe Dane had the first word.

"What in blazes!" he demanded.

"Hope, what are you doing here?" Tops and gently: "Out a sudding, Joe."

Then Ledbrge cut in, his face white with anger.

"Just a minute!" he exclaimed. "I've a few questions to ask, myself," he added. "Of course, Mr. Eberly and I are grateful for your rescue; but after all, you're trespassers." He glanced at the gun in Adam's hand. "Poachers, too, apparently. Out of season, and on private land. May I have an explanation?"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

IMPROVED UNIFORM INTERNATIONAL
SUNDAY SCHOOL Lesson

Lesson for February 24

WHAT MAKES A PEOPLE GREAT —RELIGION IN THE HOME

LESSON TEXT: [illegible]

Home, church, school and the state—these are the four institutions which determine the greatness of a people—and the most influential of all is the home.

What a child becomes under the nurture of the home will determine his interest in the church, his attitude toward school, and eventually his value as a citizen of the nation. How tragic then that we are giving so little attention to our devotional home!

The religious life of the home is the most important element of the activity, for it is the determining factor in the life of the child. It is in the home that the child's whole attitudinal centers and from which he receives the repeated impressions, day by day, which determine character and destiny. It is in the home that the parent has the opportunity to demonstrate the reality of the faith professed in the church, and to show the child that Christianity really counts in the ordinary experiences of life.

Three things appear in our lesson as characterizing the religion of the home.

I. Worship (vv. 4, 5).

Twice a day the orthodox Jew repeats the words of these verses: namely, at the time of prayer, morning and night. They remind him of his personal relationship to God, and they recall one of God's primary reasons for calling Israel to be his people. They were to be a national witness to the one true God in the midst of the almost universal worship of many gods. They were to stand for monotheism in the midst of polytheism.

So important is the complete devotion of men—and that brings in the whole family—to God that when Jesus was asked what was the greatest of all commandments (see Mark 12:29-31), he named this passage together with Leviticus 19:18.

Nothing should take precedence over the true worship of God in our hearts, and in the hearts of all those we hold dear in our households. The Eternal One, the Source of Life, the All-Powerful One, he is "our God" (N. 4) and he looks to us for complete and constant devotion to him. Let us give it!

II. Instruction (vv. 6-9).

It was not enough that these words should be repeated in some regular or formal worship, but they were to be taught to the children in the home with all faithfulness and diligence—and by the parents.

We are far too eager to delegate the training of our children to others. In religious matters it is the church and the Sunday school which are responsible. Many parents do not even take their boys and girls to the house of God. They just send them. Much is well, such parents are delinquent in their duties to God and to their families.

But our text points to this—it is the business of the home to teach religion, to do it regularly, and to make it a normal and natural part of daily life.

This is a matter of great significance. The faith which we profess as the church ought be effectively brought into the home. It is not enough to carry a Bible on Sunday. It should be in use in the home throughout the week, not only in family worship, but in the incidentals of daily life.

The family altar has gradually disappeared, and it is regrettable that it has, for the testimony of generations indicates that in family worship some of the most useful men and women of all ages have received the direction of life which made them great for God.

III. Remembrance (vv. 10-21).

Israel had a history full of the magnificent mercies of God. In the day when, by his help and blessing they were to be established in their land, they were to recall his blessings and recognize his goodness.

There are few, if any, more powerful incentives to faith and consecration living than the remembrance of past blessings. To recall how God really is possible for ordinary men and women is, by faith, additive things, quench the fires of pessimism, turn back the armies of aliens, to become strong in the midst of assistance (read Heb. 11) is to make one ready for the battles of life.

Every family has its dark and trying days. Its experiences which rock one back on his heels in astonishment and fear—and in the Christian family God has always been the answer—the solution to every problem, the provider for every need. Keep such memories fresh in the thinking of boys and girls and they will be ready for the storms of life.

Help them to a great faith in a great Saviour and you have given them something more precious than all the riches of all the earth.

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