THE HOST

A TALE OF THE OLD WEST

By HARRY LEON WILSON, AUTHOR OF THE SPENDERS

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CHAPTER XXX.—Continued.

He carried the saddle and bridle into the house, and she followed him.

Whatever the nature of Mr. Follett's business, his confidence in the soundness of his attitude toward it was perfect. He showed no sign of abstraction or anxiety; no sign of aught but a desire to live agreeably in the present—a present that included Prudence. When the early breakfast was over they went out about the place, through the peach orchard and the vineyard still dewy, lingering in the shade of a plum tree, finding all matters to be of interest. For a time they watched and laughed at the two calves through the bars of the corral, cavorting feebly on stiffened legs while the bereaved mothers cast languishing glances at them from outside, conscious that their milk was being basely diverted from the rightful heirs. They picked many blossoms and talked of many things. There was no idle moment from early morning until high noon; and yet, though they were very busy, they achieved absolutely nothing.

In the afternoon Prudence donned her own sombrero, and they went to the canyon to fish. From a clump of the yellowish green willows that fringed the stream, Follett cut a slender wand. To this he fixed a line and a tiny hook that he had carried in his hat, and for the rest of the distance to the canyon's mouth he collected such grasshoppers as lingered too long in his shadow. Entering the canyon they followed up the stream, clambering over broken rocks, skirting huge boulders, and turning aside to go around a gorge that narrowed the torrent and flung it down in a little cascade.

Here and there Follett would flicker his hook over the surface of a shaded pool, poise it at the foot of a ripple, skim it across an eddy, cast it under a shelf of rock or dangle it in some promising nook by the willow roots, shielding himself meanwhile as best he could; here behind a boulder, there bending a willow in front of him, again lying flat on the bank, taking care to keep even his shadow off the stream and to go silently.

From where she followed, Prudence would see the surface of the water break with a curling gleam of gold, which would give way to a bubbling splash; then she would see the willow rod bend, see it vibrate and thrill and tremble, the point working slowly over the bank. Then perhaps the rod would suddenly straighten out for a few seconds only to bend again, slowly, gently, but mercilessly. Or perhaps the point continued to come in until it was well over the bank and the end of the line close by. Then after a frantic splashing of the margin of the stream the conquered trout would be gasping on the bank, a thing of shivering gleams of blended brown and gold and pink. At first she pitied the fish and regretted the cruelty of man, but Follett had other views.

"Why," he said, "a trout is the cruelest beast there is. Look at it trying to swallow this poor little hopper that it thought tumbled into the water by accident. It just loves to eat its stuff alive. And it isn't particular. It would just as lief eat its own children. Now you take that one there, and say he was ten thousand times as big as he is, and you were coming along here and your foot slipped and Mr. Trout was lying behind this rock here—hungry. Say! What a mouthful you'd make, pink dress and all—he'd have you swallowed in a second, and then he'd sneak back behind the rock there, wiping his mouth, and hoping your little sister or somebody would be along in a minute and fall in too."

"Ugh!—Why, what horrible little monsters! Let me catch one."

And so she fished under his direction. They lurked together in the shadows of rocks, while he showed her how to flicker the bait in the current, here holding her hand on the rod, again supporting her while she leaned out to cast around a boulder, each feeling the other's breathless caution and looking deep into each other's eyes through seconds of tense silence.

Such as they were, these were the only results of the lesson; results that left them in easy friendliness toward each other. For the fish were not deceived by her. He would point out some pool where very probably a hungry trout was lying in wait with his head to the current, and she would try to skim the lure over it. More than once she saw the fish dart toward it, but never did she quite convince them. Oftener she saw them flit up-stream in flight, like flashes of gray lightning. Yet at length she felt she had learned all that could be taught of the art, and that further failure would mean merely a lack of appetite or spirit in the fish. So she went on alone, while Follett stopped to clean the dozen trout he had caught.

While she was in sight he watched her, the figure bending lithe as the rod she held, moving lightly, now a long, now a short step, half kneeling to throw the bait into an eddy; then off again with determined strides to the next likely pool. When he could no longer see her, he fell to work on his fish, scouring their slime off in the dry sand.

When she returned, she found him on his back, his hat off, his arms flung out above his head, fast asleep. She set near by on a smooth rock at the water's edge and waited—without impatience, for this was the first time she had been free to look at him quite as she wished to. She studied him closely now. He seemed to her like some young power of that far strange eastern land. She thought of something she had heard him say about sandy: "He's game and fearless and almighty prompt,—but he's kind and gentle, too." She was pleased to think it described the master as well as the horse. And she was glad they had been such fine playmates the whole day long. When the shadow moved off his face and left it in the slanting rays of the sun, she broke off a spruce bough and propped it against the rock to shield him.

And then she sighed, for they could be playmates only in forgetfulness. He was a Gentile, and by that token wicked and lost; unless—and in that moment she flushed, feeling the warmth of a high purpose.

She would save him. He was worth saving, from his crown of yellow hair to the high heels of his Mexican boots. Strong, clean, gentle, and—she hesitated for a word—interesting—he must be brought into the Kingdom, and she would do it. She looked up again and met his wide-open eyes.

They both laughed. "I sat up with your pa last night," he said, ashamed of having slept. "We had some business to palaver about."

He had tied the fish into a bundle with aspen leaves and damp moss around them, and now they went back down the stream. In the flush of her new role as missionary she allowed herself to feel a secret motherly tenderness for his immortal soul, letting him help her by hand or arm over places where she knew she could have come much better alone.

"Say! What a Mouthful You'd Make, Pink Dress and All. He'd Have You Swallowed in a Second."

Back at the house they were met by the little bent man, who had tossed upon his bed all day in the fires of his hell. He looked searchingly at them to be sure that Follett had kept his secret. Then, relieved by the frank glance of Prudence, he fell to musing on the two, so young, so fresh, so joyous in the world and in each other, seeing them side by side with those little half-felt, thinly implied, or unconsciously expressed confidences of boy and girl; sensing the memory of his own lost youth's aroma, his youth that had slipped off unrecked in the haze of his dreams of glory. For this he felt very tenderly toward them, wishing that they were brother and sister and his own.

That evening, while they sat out of doors, she said, very resolutely:

"I'm going to teach Mr. Follett some truth to-morrow from the Book of Mormon. He says he has never been baptized in any church."

Follett looked interested and cordial, but her father failed to display the enthusiasm she had expected, and seemed even a little embarrassed.

"You mean well, daughter, but don't be discouraged if he is slow to take our truth. Perhaps he has a kind of his own as good as ours. A woman I knew once said to me, 'Going to heaven is like going to mill; if your wheat is good the miller will never ask how you came.'"

"But, father, suppose you get to mill and have only chaff?"

"That is the same answer I made, dear. I wish I hadn't."

Later, when Prudence had gone, the two men made their beds by the fire in the big room. Follett was awakened twice, by the other putting wood on the fire; and twice more by his pitiful pleading with something at his back not to come in front of him.

CHAPTER XXXI.

The Gentile Issues an Ultimatum.

June went; July came and went. It was a hot summer below, where the valley widens to let in Amalon; but up in the little sunned aisle of Box canyon it was always cool. There the pines are straight and reach their heads far into the sky, each a many-wired harp to the winds that come down from the high divide. Their music is never still; now a low, ominous rush, soft but mighty, swelling as it nears, the rush of a winged host, rising swiftly to one fearsome crescendo until the listener cowers instinctively as if under the tread of many feet; then dying away to mutter threats in the distance, and to come again more fiercely; or, it may be, to come with a gentler sweep, as if pacified, even yearning, for the moment. Or, again, the same wind will play quieter airs through the green boughs, a chamber-music of silken rustlings, of feathered fans just stirring, of whisperings, and the sighs of a woman.

It is cool beneath these pines, and pleasant on the couches of brown needles that have fallen through all the years. Here, in the softened light, amid the resinous pungence of the cones and the green boughs, where the wind above played an endless, solemn accompaniment to the careless song of the stream below, the maiden Saint tried to save into the Kingdom a youthful Gentile of whom she discovered almost daily some fresh reason why he should not be lost. The reasons had become so many that they were now heavy upon her. And yet, while the youth submitted meekly to her ministry, appearing even to crave it, he was undeniably either dense or stubborn—in either case of defective spirituality.

She was grieved by the number of times he fell asleep when she read from the Book of Mormon. The times were many because, though she knew it not, he had come to be, in effect, a night-nurse to the little bent man below, who was now living out his days in quiet desperation, and his nights all at once he would awaken from a dream to find her gone. He thought he would feel very badly then, for probably he would never be able to get back into the same dream again. So he was cautious, resolving to make the thing last until it came true of itself.

Once when they followed the stream down, in the late afternoon, he had mused himself so full of the wonder of her that he almost forgot his caution in an amiable impulse to let her share in his feelings.

"You know," he began, "you're like as if I had been trying to think of a word I wanted to say—some fine, big word, a fancy one—but I couldn't think of it. You know how you can't think of the one you want sometimes, only nothing else will do in place of it, and then all at once, when you quit trying to think, it flashes over you. You're like that. I never could think of you, but I just had to because I couldn't get along without it, and then when I didn't expect it you just happened along—the word came along and said itself."

Without speaking she had run ahead to pick the white and blue columbines and pink roses. And he, alarmed at his boldness, fearing she would now be afraid of him, went forward with the deep purpose of showing her a light, careless mood, to convince her that he had meant nothing much.

The little bent man at the house would look at them with a sort of helplessness when they came in, sometimes even forgetting the smile he was wont to hide his hurts. He was impressed anew each time he saw them with the punishing power of such vengeance as was left to the Lord. He would see more than either of the pair before them. The little white-haired boy who had fought him with tooth and nail so long ago, to be not taken from Prudence, had now come back with the night of a man, even like the night of a lover, to take her from him when she had become all of his life. He could think of no sharper revenge upon himself or his people. For this cowboy was the spirit incarnate of the oncoming east, thronged on by the Lord to avenge his church's crime.

Then in the night would come the terrors of the dark, the curses and groans of that always-dying thing behind him. And always now he would see the hand with the silver bracelet at the wrist, flaunting in his face the shivering strands of gold with the crimson patch at the end. Yet even this, because he could see it, was less fearful than the thing he could not see, the thing that crawled or lurched relentlessly behind him. With the morning would come in its throat, the smell of warm blood and the horrible dripping of it, whose breath he could feel on his neck and whose nerveless hands sometimes fumbled weakly at his shoulder, as it strove to come in front of him.

He sat sleepless in his chair with candles burning for three nights when Follett, late in August, went off to meet a messenger from one of his father's wagon trains which, he said, was on its way north. Fearful he was the meaning of his presence, he was inexpressibly glad when the Gentile returned to save him from the terrors of the night.

And there was now a new goad of remorse. The evening before Follett's return he had found Prudence in tears after a visit to the village. With a sudden great onrush of pity he had taken her in his arms to comfort her, feeling the selfishness strangely washed from his love, as the sobs convulsed her.

"Come, come, child—tell your father what it is," he had urged her, and when she became a little quiet she had told him.

"Oh, Daddy, dear—I've just heard such an awful thing, what they talk of me in Amalon, and of you and my mother—shameful!"

He knew then what was coming; he had wondered, indeed, that this talk should be so long in reaching her, but he waited silently, soothing her.

"They say, whoever my mother was, you couldn't have married her—that Christina is your first wife, and the temple records show it. And, oh, Daddy, they say it means that I am a child of sin—and shame—and it made me want to kill myself."

Another passion of tears and sobs had overwhelmed her, and all but broken down the little little man. Yet he controlled himself and soothed her again to quietness.

"It is all wrong, child, all wrong. You are not a child of sin, but a child of love, as rightly born as any in Amalon. Believe me, and pay no heed to that talk."

"They have been saying it for years, and I never knew."

"They saw what is not true."

"You were married to my mother, then?"

He waited too long. She divined, clear though his answer was, that he had evaded, or was quibbling in some way.

"You are the daughter of a truly married husband and wife, as truly married as were any pair."

And though she knew he had turned her question, she saw that he must have done it for some great reason of his own, and, even in her grief, she would not pain him by asking another. She could feel that he suffered as she did, and he seemed, moreover, to be pitifully and strangely frightened.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Eat Chickens If Too Fat

We puke fun at the Chinese ideals of menage, but events in Sacramento prove that the Mongolians know more than we give them credit for, says the San Francisco News Letter. For centuries the Chinese have used cricket stew, powdered crickets, essence of cricket and plain raw crickets for the reduction of obesity, as they use frog soup for stomach troubles.

Well, in Sacramento it has been noticed that the cats have grown wonderfully thin and had no appetites, refusing to be tempted by cream and other dainties. It has been discovered that they have been feasting on crickets. The insects have satisfied their appetites, but have reduced them to skeletons. The next thing to be put on the market will be a new patent medicine under the name of "Cricket Ice."

Happiness in Marriage.

It all comes around to one of two things, says Harper's Bazar. With all married couples who differ in habit, in taste, in opinion, in mode of life, if there is to be any happiness somebody has to learn to give up, or give up minding that there is a difference. Either way is as good as the other. It is surprising how many things are not of any importance if one can only think they are not.

GLUED THEM DOWN

HOW A SKIPPER SAVED HIS SHIP FROM SAVAGES.

South Sea Island Natives Were Decidedly Up Against It When They Mixed Things with Capt. McCabe.

"It was when I was trading around the South sea islands that I had a narrow escape from a band of savages that were going to take my ship," said Capt. McCabe, the veteran sailor who has now settled ashore to pass his days in leisure, to a Seattle Post-Intelligencer man. "It came near having a serious ending for me, but I came out ahead after all.

"I was sailing in a pretty little schooner, the Mattie W., and we had a general cargo for trading. Selling on deck were about 20 cases of a stuff that was never known to let go, but we couldn't sell a bit of it.

"Well, we got down to Milecello, one of the group of the New Hebrides, and there we anchored in Manley bay. The snowy sand of the beach was shaded by waving palms and the sheltered waters of the bay were warm and as clear as crystal. We lay there for a week resting up and cleaning up the ship. We had been trading for almost a year then and there was nothing left but the ship and that was piled alongside the companion way.

"Well, one afternoon I let all the crew go ashore, and they were inland or away swimming in the clear water. I lay down to have a snooze. Suddenly I was awakened by a sharp jolt and all around me were South sea savages. They were armed with spears, bows and arrows and stone tomahawks. Their actions were hostile and I saw right away that I was up against it. I was alone on the vessel with all these armed heathens.

"Just then I happened to touch one of those glue boxes and in a flash an idea came to me. There was a large bunch standing near the main rifle rail and I grabbed five bottles and threw them at that crowd of savages one after the other. The bottles were thin glass and every one broke. Then, before the savages could recover their wits, I started throwing more. The glass would break and the glue ran all over them. When they tried to walk the glass would cut their feet and in a few minutes I had that whole crowd of savages glued to the deck unable to move. The glue hardened almost instantly on touching the air and this was what saved me.

"When I saw that they were all caught I signaled for the crew to return and then we weighed anchor and put off for Charlotte, in the Gilbert islands, where there were laborers wanted. I wasn't engaging in the slave trade, mind you, because these natives had come on board of their own free will and hadn't left.

"At Charlotte a planter offered to pay those savages loose from the deck and give $1,000 to boot, and I let him do it. That planter also took all the rest of the glue that we had.

"That was one of the most fortunate voyages that ever I made."

Her Probable Reason.

"Day before yesterday, right out in front of the hotel, here," said the landlord of the tavern at Polkville, Ark., "a nice-looking grass-widow met a feller that had been going with her some, and fired three shots at him, one of which tore off considerable of his south ear as he was rapidly going east. I was settin' on the porch at the time, and saw it all, and—

"Great Scott!" ejaculated the washing-machine agent, pricking up his ears eagerly, "unless it is a matter that you don't care to discuss, I wish you would tell me what, in your opinion, was the lady's reason for such an act?"

"Well, I reckon," was the ingenuous reply, "that she was mad at him. Of course, she mightn't have been—you can't tell much about women, you know—but that's the way it looked to me."—Tom P. Morgan in Smart Set.

Children and the Home.

"Children," said Judge McEwen at a dinner in Chicago, "are the great home builders. The lack of children means unhappiness, divorce. In the majority of the divorce suits that I pass on—and I pass on 100 a month—the couples are between 20 and 40 years of age, and childless. So children should be prized and cherished, despite their faults. Faults they have, I will admit. Only the other day I heard of a little girl, who, lunching out, was detected in the act of cramming a large yellow handful of Spanish omelet into the pocket of her pink frock.

"'Why, you little pig,' exclaimed her mother, 'what on earth are you about? Put that back on your plate at once. Why, I never heard of such a thing. What on earth do you mean by it?'

"'It is so gold, muvver,' the child explained, 'I just thought I'd take a piece home to our cook for a pattern.'"

Quick Wit Saved Life.

A captured Turkish officer, on being led forth to execution, asked for a glass of water before he died. On receiving it he looked uneasily around, as if afraid of assassination. "Drink," said the commander. "No harm shall come to thee until thou hast drunk that water." Instantly the prisoner dashed the water on the sandy ground, and thereby saved his life.—Sunday Magazine.

Fishing for Sheep.

When sheep were introduced into Cornwall, England, a flock of them ran into the sea and were floated by their wool. Some fishermen saw them, and, thinking them to be a new species of fish, made haste to try to catch them with hooks and nets. Next morning they brought home a catch whose value was greater than any load their boats had ever carried.

Superstition and Religion.

Superstition is related to this life, religion to the next; superstition is allied to fatality, religion to virtue; it is by the vivacity of earthly desires that we become superstitious; it is, on the contrary, by the sacrifice of these desires that we become religious.—Madame de Stael (1766-1817).

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TIRED BACKS.

The kidneys have a great work to do in keeping the blood pure. When they get out of order it causes backache, headaches, dizziness, languor and distressing urinary troubles. Keep the kidneys well and all these sufferings will be saved you. Mrs. S. A. Moore, proprietor of a restaurant at Waterville, Mo., says: "Before using Doan's Kidney Pills I suffered everything from kidney troubles for a year and a half. I had pain in the back and head, and almost continuous in the loins and felt weary all the time. A few doses of Doan's Kidney Pills brought great relief, and I kept on taking them until in a short time I was cured. I think Doan's Kidney Pills are wonderful."

For sale by all dealers. 50 cents a box. Foster-Milburn Co., Buffalo, N. Y.

PROPER MANNER OF READING.

Writer Sees Much Harm in Multiplicity of Books.

It seems to me that with the multiplication of books we are losing all sense of literature. Leisure and three books, a Bible, a Shakespeare, a Walt Whitman, might make a man truly wise if the seeds of wisdom were in him. I do not know even a wise man whose instinct for wisdom would not be deadened by the frequentation of the Encyclopedia Britannica. Books should be taken in bulk, not in bigger than music or pictures; they are even harder to digest. There is more drunkenness in a book than in all the vineyards of France. A book may remake a man's soul. Books should be treated with reverence or cast out as dirt. They are in danger of passing out of the service of the temple into the "parcel delivery" of the grocer. Nothing is gained by reading a book unless you give to that book more than it brings to you. All these people who read with their eyes only are fatally wasting their time. A book read superficially makes the reader mere superficial, and to read for "information" is to gnaw at the bones of meat.—Arthur Symons in London Saturday Review.

SLEEP BROKEN BY ITCHING.

Eczema Covered Whole Body for a Year—No Relief Until Cuticura Remedies Prove a Success.

"For a year I have had what they call eczema. I had an itching all over my body, and when I would retire for the night it would keep me awake half the night, and the more I would scratch, the more it would itch. I tried all kinds of remedies, but could get no relief.

"I used one cake of Cuticura Soap, one box of Cuticura, and two vials of Cuticura Resolvent Pills, which cost me a dollar and twenty-five cents in all, and am very glad I tried them, for I was completely cured. Walter W. Paglusch, 207 N. Robey St., Chicago, Ill., Oct. 8 and 16, 1906."

WOMEN IN NEW FIELDS.

British Smart Society Takes to "Hopping"—Woman Veterinary.

Work in the hop fields is the latest "rest cure" fad for London's smart set, and the luxurious society "hoppers" claim that a week's hopping is far better and more pleasant than a rest at any well-known health resort.

The tents of these well-to-do pickers are expensively furnished, and easy chairs, soft beds and up-to-date camping outfits are among their hopping appliances.

In Berlin there is a woman veterinary surgeon who is an official inspector of animals. She rides through the streets on the lookout for animals suffering from any disablement, and before reporting a horse as unfit for work, she examines its injuries and whenever possible applies remedies to alleviate its pain. She carries a leather case filled with bandages and other surgical appliances.

Queer Idea of Chinese.

The following is a quite modern Chinese conception of the foreigners' treatment of infectious cases: "If an epidemic broke out two foreigners took the sick away and put them in a little room, washed them with lime water, and then locked them up, so that no one could see them, on purpose that they might soon die and not propagate the disease. Wives and children might cry and weep, but the foreigner would but drive them away with sticks, for until dead no one must see those faces again. Better for all of us to jump into the sea than submit to this."—South China Post.

Judging People.

We are all inclined to judge of others as we find them. Our estimate of a character always depends much on the manner in which that character affects our own interests and passions. We find it difficult to think well of those by whom we are thwarted or depressed, and we are ready to admit every excuse for the vices of those who are useful or agreeable to us. That is, we believe, one of those illusions to which the whole human race is subject, and which experience and reflection can only partially remove.—McCauley.

Beware of Ointments for Catarrh that Contain Mercury,

as mercury will surely destroy the sense of smell and completely derange the whole system when entering it through the mucous surfaces. Such articles should never be used except on prescriptions from reputable physicians, as the damage they will do is ten fold to the good you can possibly derive from them. Hall's Catarrh Cure, manufactured by F. J. Cheney & Co., Toledo, contains no mercury, and is taken internally, acting directly upon the blood and mucous surfaces of the system. In buying Hall's Catarrh Cure be sure you get the genuine. It is taken internally and made in Toledo, Ohio, by F. J. Cheney & Co. Testimonials free.

Sold by Druggists, Price, 75c. per bottle.

Take Hall's Family Pills for constipation.

Great City's Derelicts.

A prominent clergyman at the head of an East Side and Bowery mission is authority for the statement that the men who line up for free bread at the distributing places around o'clock every morning—men who have no place to lay their heads for a single night's lodging—are nearly all from the interior of the United States.—Van Norden's Magazine.