

(CONTINUED FROM TENTH PAGE.)

Neville came back at dusk. He was tired—well, tired is a poor word by which to describe it—but there was a glow on his sunburnt face and a subdued light in his eyes.

Sylvia was not in the outer room when he arrived, and he asked for her at once. "Oh, she's all right," replied Meth. She'll be here presently.

He went outside and had a good wash, and came in, still rubbing his head with the towel. But the operation was suddenly suspended, and he stood staring at the vision which appeared in the tiny little room.

The dark merino revealed the graceful outlines which the old brown dress had done its best—without indeed quite succeeding—to hide and misrepresent; the soft silky hair no longer hung in an inky torrent over her shoulders, but was neatly braided in glossy coils.

It was Sylvia, but Sylvia transformed; or, rather, in her proper character for the first time.

Neville was astounded, and stared at the dress and hair, and at last at the face. It struck him for the first time—perhaps Miss Brown's remark helped to bring it home to him—that this "sister" of his was the most beautiful young creature he had ever seen.

"Good Lord, Syl," he said, "what—what a swell you are! And made it all in one day, too!"

"It's—it's very plain," she said, rather tremulously. The approval and admiration in his eyes went straight to her heart, and set it beating in a way that she did not understand. "Do—do you like it, Jack?"

"Like it? Like it isn't the word," he responded. "It's—it's scrumptious!"

"Not so nice as Mary Brown's though, Jack," with a sudden droop of the dark lashes.

"Mary Brown? Oh, well, you're so different, you see."

"Yes, with a faint sigh.

"Yes, you're the sun, and Mary Brown's the moon."

"Thank you, Jack; but—but some people prefer the moon."

"I like em both in their place," said the young man, with heartless stupidity. "Let me look you all around. Splendid! How on earth you managed it I can't tell. By George! what a sensation you'll create on Sunday. Yes, you're a clever little girl, Syl, and I'm proud of you."

The tears started to her eyes, and, seeing them, he bent to kiss her. She let his lips almost touch hers; then something—that divine maidenly instinct, that exquisite modesty which is the pearl, the great charm of her sex and age—awoke suddenly, and she drew her head back with a quick gesture, and putting her hands on his strong, broad chest kept him away.

"Oh, all right," he said, taking the repulse with brotherly good-nature. "And now let's have supper. Where are you going? Don't change your dress. I can't wait; I'm famishing."

She did not answer him, but ran into the inner room, but not to change the dress. She wanted to wear it, and feel his eyes resting on it with a look that had made her so glad. After she had pushed him from her she had put her hand to her bosom to still its beating, when she missed something. It was the little packet her father had given her just before he died.

It was lying on the bed, where she had left it in the excitement of the moment. With a little cry of remorse she seized it, kissed it, and put it in its accustomed hiding place. Then she went back and put the supper on the table.

"By George! it's like supping with the Queen of Sheba!" he said. "Where's Meth?" he asked, after he had taken the edge of his appetite.

"Run down to the camp."

"Right; then—"

He got up and barred the door, unfastened his coat, and placed the bag—lumped it—on the table.

"Look there!" he said in a whisper—'nearly full. And one day's work only! I tell you, Syl, I could scarcely tear myself away. And there's any amount of it there, I believe. My girl, we are rich—"

rich—rich! We shall both be able to go to England!"

"Oh, Jack!"

Her face that had been cold enough even at the sight of the gold, flushed with relief and delight, and her eyes grew bright.

"Yes, and I shall be able to look after you over there as I have done here—better, I hope," for he remembered how late he had left the purchase of the dress.

"Not better, Jack," softly.

"And perhaps I'll be able to find some of your people and restore you, you know."

She didn't look particularly delighted or grateful at this addition.

"But we mustn't be in too much of a hurry. I've been thinking it over, and I don't think I'll go there tomorrow. I'll walk down to the camp and hang about a bit, and then put in an hour or two at the old claim here. It won't do to rouse the boys' suspicions. We must go to work cautiously. How should you like a farm in England—Devonshire, Syl—a farm, with horses and cows, and ducks and—"

She clasped her hands and cooed with delight, and they sat up late that night, talking of all they would do with the riches he had discovered in the valley behind the hills.

In the morning Neville started down to the camp. It had grown considerably and improved in appearance. On the way he noticed a new shanty, rather neater in its appearance than the rest. There was a small patch of garden in front, inclosed by wooden rails, and Neville had fancied that he had seen a girl walking in it; but if there was one, she had disappeared before he got up to it, and after a curious glance at the cottage—for it almost deserved the name, with its white blinds and clean windows—passed on.

Macgregor's store was busy, as usual, and Neville was hailed by Locket and two or three others who were taking their morning drinks.

"Come down to kill anybody, Young 'Un?" said Locket. "No? Thanks—much relieved. Well, what do you think of the camp now, eh? Lorn Hope is rising, I believe—eh, boys?"

"That's so. Give us time and fair play and we'll lick London and Paris presently," responded the Doc. How's the luck with you, Young 'Un?"

Neville shook his head and looked as glum as he could.

"I've come down for a new pick," he said. "I suppose I can get one on tick for a few days?"

"Well, I don't know; I never tried," said the Doc, with self-directed sarcasm. "Yes, I reckon Lorn Hope is on the soar. We're getting respectable. See the notices, Young 'Un?" and he pointed to the two prohibitory placards on the tent. "Mac's morals is better than his spelling, ain't they?"

Neville laughed.

"And we ain't stopped there!" said Locket. "We're going to build a slap up church for the parson. Seen him? How's that for high? And we're going to rush in all the bad characters—"

"You'll want a big church," said Neville. Locket laughed.

"Not so big as we did," he said, with a certain significance, which caused Neville to look at him attentively. "No, we've been weeding out since you were down here last, Young 'Un. It was such a relief to get rid of that snaky old Lavarick that we tried it with half a dozen more, and turned 'em out, neck and crop."

"Which was about the foolishest thing we could do," remarked one of the by-standers, curtly.

"As how?" demanded Locket, who had been the prime mover in the expulsion.

"Why, because while we had 'em here we had 'em under our eyes, but now where are they? Just mooching around on the hills, waiting for a chance to rush us. One of the boys was shot down just outside the night before last. The bank agent was pretty high stopped and unloaded last week. It's my belief our black sheep have joined the rangers, and that there'll be trouble before long."

Neville was not very much impressed. Youth in its strength, with a revolver in its belt, is seldom scared. He took a drink, he was careful not to stand one—bought his pick, and set out for home.

On his way he passed the cottage, and there was Miss Mary Brown in a pretty morning frock—for all the world as if she were in England—playing at what girls call gardening.

Neville stopped and took off his hat, and she looked round with a pretty start and a prettier blush, as if she had not seen him go past, and had screwed up courage to venture out again on the chance of his stopping.

"Gardening, Miss Brown?" said Neville, almost as shy as herself.

"Big, strong men are always shy. It is your little man who can face any number of ladies without flinching."

"Yes," she said, with a timid little laugh; "but it is hard work—the ground is so hard. I've had to dig it up with this hoe," and she pointed to a small instrument with which it would have been difficult to kill a lady-bird.

Neville laughed, and she laughed also.

"That's no use," he said, with his usual bluntness. "This is the sort of thing you want," and he held up the pick.

"That great thing! Oh, dear me! I couldn't lift it!"

"Oh, it's light enough," he said. "I'll show you, if I may come in."

"Oh, I beg your pardon! How rude of me to keep you out there!" and she blushed most charmingly as she opened the gate.

Neville went in, and in a very short time had made the tiny square of earth take to itself the likeness of a plowed field.

With many and repeated declarations that she really shouldn't permit him to work so hard, Miss Mary looked at the great fellow—looked with covert admiration and woman-worship from under her lashes.

Then she ran into the cottage and brought out a pitcher of lemonade—and lemons are eighteen pence a piece in Lorn

Hope!—and poured him out a glass and watched him drink it, and thought he did it as beautifully as he dug, and—Ah, well! of course Neville was persuaded to sit down and rest after his tremendous exertions, and as they sat and talked, Miss Mary's heart, which had been shaken and loosened in her bosom on her first meeting with the handsome young man, slowly but surely stole away from its mistress. Oh, what a faithless, ungrateful thing a girl's heart is! A look, a word, a sigh from some man, and lo! it deserts its legitimate owner, perhaps forever.

Neville tore himself away at last, feeling very cheerful and comfortable. He had enjoyed his chat with the pretty, fair-haired young lady with the shy smile and the ready blush; but his heart was still in its place, fast and firm enough.

"What a time you have been!" said Sylvia.

"Oh," he said, "I had a chat with the boys, and—" he hesitated for just half a moment, for he was not quite so stupid as not to know that Sylvia had not 'taken to' Miss Mary—and on my way back I met Miss Brown—that is, I saw her in her garden. They've got the jolliest little cottage, all white blinds and—"

"Did you go in?" she broke in, with suspicious indifference.

"Yes, I went in. She was trying to dig up the ground with a pen-holder or something of the kind, and I—"

"Went and dug it up for her and—spant the morning with her. I hate that girl!" and her eyes flashed.

Neville started.

"What on earth for?" he demanded. "Why, you've only seen her once, and for five minutes; and it isn't fair, either, for she particularly wants to know you and be friendly; and—upon my word, Syl, I think it would be a good thing if you made a friend of her; she would be company—"

"For you," she put in, quite calmly now, and smiling.

Always distrust a woman's smile on such occasions.

"Very well, I will. After all, she isn't so bad. But I wish she wasn't quite so washed-out looking. But she can't help that, can she?" and with this feminine shot she declined to talk any more on the subject of Miss Brown.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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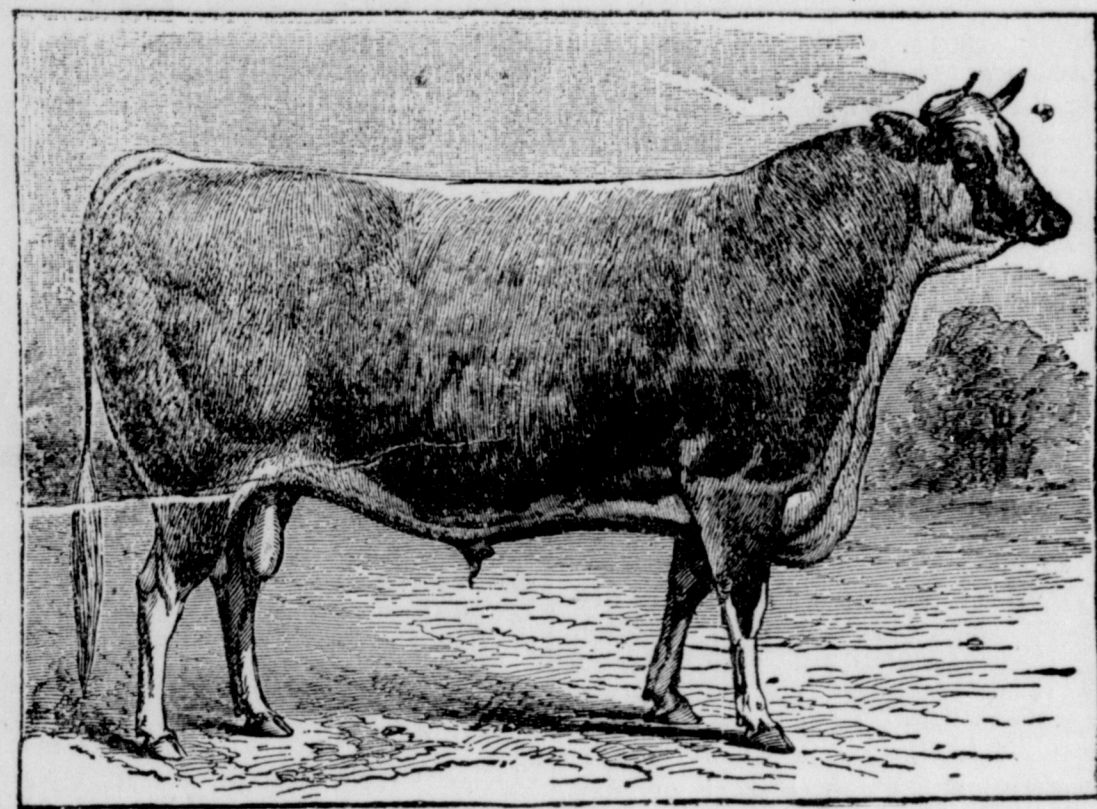
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A JAGUAR'S TRICK.

The Clever Way in Which he Fooled the Caymans and Crossed a River.

Robert Wilson Fenn contributes to the St. Nicholas an interesting story about "The Jaguar and the Caymans." Mr. Fenn was camping on the banks of the Upper Magdalena River, in Columbia, South America, and this is what he saw.

We had finished our evening meal, and I was enjoying my customary smoke under the teldills, or netting, and chatting with my Indian companions, when, suddenly, the most awful series of catcalls that I had ever heard disturbed our peace and the night air. A prolonged yowl, like the united voices of all the cats on all the roofs of a large town, made the cold chills creep up and down my spine and goose-flesh to run all over me.

"What is it?" I asked one of the men. "El tigre, señor!" (The tiger, sir!) he replied; "ra a pasar el río" (he is going to cross the river.) "Let him cross if he wants to," said I; "but what does he want to upset my supper and spoil my after-dinner smoke with his hideous noise?" Come and see, señor," he replied, and taking up his gun, motioned me to follow him. Softly we crept along the margin of the creek toward the river, and making our way through the spines of the overhanging bamboos, came out upon the narrow beach near the mouth of the creek.

Sure enough, by crawling cautiously along in the shadow of the bluff, we saw our musical friend squatting on his haunches with head thrown back and mouth open, emitting the most blood-curdling serenades one could expect to hear, and looking for all the world like a gigantic tabby cat. But what connection such a noise could have with his passage of the river I failed to see.

"Anastasio," I said in a whisper, "doesn't the foolish fellow know that he will draw all the alligators together, and

when he gets into the water he will swim off in sections? "Leave him alone," chuckled the Indian; "he knows how to get across." So, crouching down in the bushes on the bank of the river, we waited for his first move. I think we must have been there about twenty minutes or half an hour, and I was becoming almost worn out with the attacks of the mosquitoes, when the concert suddenly ceased. At the same moment the moon came out clear and bright from behind a cloud, and Anastasio, nudging my arm, pointed to the surface of the water in front of the jaguar. At first I thought there were a number of sticks in the water, but as the current was swift and they were motionless in their places, I was for a moment puzzled. "Caymanos" (alligators), whispered the Indian, and I saw that his eyes were better than mine. There were the ugly snouts of half a dozen of the big fellows, some well out of water, and some just showing their nostrils and the bumps over their eyes, but all ready for their expected prey.

But they were to be disappointed this time; for the jaguar, immediately upon the conclusion of his serenade started off upstream as hard as he could run along the bank of the river, and when he had gone about 500 yards dropped softly into the water and swam safely across, while his baffled enemies were unable to make fast enough time up-stream against the swift current to get him.

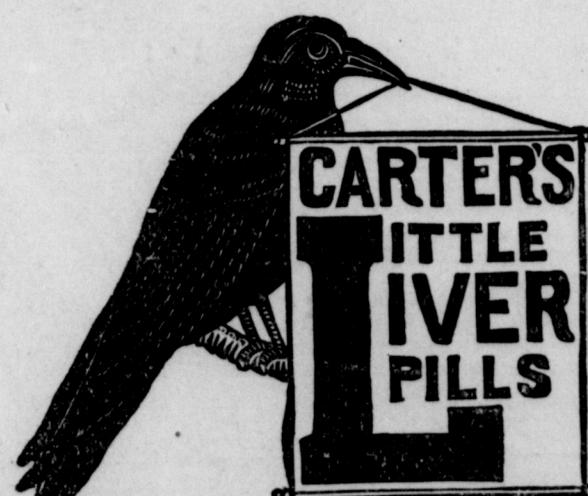
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