

THE CHIVALRY OF SILAS

BY PHILIP VERRILL MIGHELS.

The little garden gate complained squeakingly, and tried to sag even lower, for a man came to lean on it, beside the woman who was already there. "You don't suppose you could nudge my eye, en' settle the whole shebang this mornin' do you?" said he.

The woman was reading a book. She yet her thumb and turned a leaf, reading on slowly until a paragraph was finished.

"Silas Jud," said she, leaning an elbow on the volume to keep it open, "you ain't never yet read 'Sir Beverly, the Knight of the Mystic Moor'?"

"I ain't never,"

"No, I feared ye hadn't. Ye'd be less pesterin' if ye had. How kin ye ruminate on matrimony with me, 'an you don't no chivalry deeds?"

"I made Tilly a good husband."

"Yes, but where's yer backbone oozed to since she went?"

He answered with a sort of whispered whistle, that conveyed a skeleton idea of a tale.

"Why don't ye buckle on yer armor, an' fare forth with a chunk of my hair ribbon in yer helmet, an' prove yer valour, if ye want me so terrible?"

He did not answer, but walked away staidly, and she continued to read. That same question he had put to her every week for three months.

Jud was a lorn and silent man, who lived apart from other men in Deer Hollow and looked indifferently forward to a small California farm on the hillside for a home. He made his living cutting wood, and even managed to eave a trifle against the farm of the future. For a year now, which time had elapsed since the death of his wife, he had spent a great many of his hours in the cabin to which he now repaired.

At the door he paused and listened. No sound he heard, but when he had tip-toed in, a curl-haired head was raised from a bunk, and one large, violet colored eye greeted him, its mate being hidden by a shabby fist that screwed vigorously around rubbing away the few remaining sleep-vegs.

"Then a dear red-rimmed mouth stretched itself into an O as large as a half dollar."

"Turned back, papa?" said the owner of the fist and eye and mouth and golden hair, and she climbed to the floor.

"Yep, honey-bag," he answered, cheerfully.

"Baby's dress stored," vociferated the tot, bringing the garment for inspection.

"Pore if gal, 'tis, ha, ha!" He took it up, jinked a needle as large as a small sword out of the wall, waxed his linen thread, and set down to sew, stabbing his fingers now and then, but getting on, nevertheless—after his kind. The child set near her face in her dimpled hands, looking very "old-fashioned," and altogether wise.

"Baby wants mamma," she said at last, and the utter incoherence of this observation seemed not at all apparent to this man.

"What would mamma do for baby?"

"Baby sit up on her yap and mamma sing."

Having finished the dress and put it on her, he took the child up on his knee, holding her tenderly against his rough coat and rocked himself back and forth as he sang.

The song, which, fortunately, the little one preferred of all the vast repertoire of her mother who was gone, was the only one he knew. After a half a dozen verses of it, the child slipped away.

"Mamma dot baby sumfin' to eat."

"Why, en course, my popsy-wojey blossom." So he fetched a bowl of milk, a can of brown sugar, and some strange "nutsh" from a pail that hung from a hook over the drying embers in the fireplace, where he had put it to cook before going out. Taking her once more on his knee, he satisfied her hunger, unintentionally hastening matters not a little by using a spoon that was large enough to dig potatoes with.

"What else would mamma do 'o' baby?" he asked after the wee appetite was appeased.

"Pay on floor wit blocks," said she.

"Down he got on 'all fours,' building matchless structures with the half-peeled cubes, and giving the most desperate descriptions of the animals represented therein.

An uneventful week went by. When Wednesday was come, Silas "fared him forth," to do his accustomed woeing. As he neared the cabin of the Widow Harvey, he saw her leaning, as before, on the garden gate, and reading, as usual, in the famous book of Beverly. He took the place that she left for him, saying, after a moment:

"You don't s'pose you could, anyhow, say 'No, en' settle the whole shebang this mornin', do you?"

She was taken off her guard completely; he had never put it that way before. Turning red and fumbling the book till it shut up on her "place," she gazed at him blankly.

"Ahem—Silas—Silas Jud, I mean, he's I ever read ye how Sir Beverly slew the demon wolf in the black cavern?"

"You ain't never."

"Well, listen to this," and thereupon she read a scintillating and lengthy description of this marvellous event.

"What'd he do it for, anyway?" he asked at the end.

She was surprised again; Silas sounded rebellious.

"He was a true an' tremenous knight, an' done it fer his lady fair," she replied, with no small amount of spirit; "an' if you was a wisp an' courageous man, an' dooly sincere, you'd sew my favor on to yer hat, even 't'was only a bone button, an' prove yer noble before ye asked me to say 'Yes' or 'No' or 'Mind yer business,' concernin' this here marryin'."

There ain't no way for me to know yer wiles, an' there's no chivalry left these days nohow, an' those words might be full of demon volves, an' never a one you'd kill fer me."

Her words came forth with an unvoiced spurt; while she eyed the nearby woods as if expecting to see a demon wolf issue therefrom forthwith. Silas looked upon her oddly.

"If you was my wife, or would promise to splice up along of me, I'd wear yer ribbon, er button, or anything of your'n, but jist now I'm wearin' a ribbon fer somebody else."

"Oh! so ye are; an' whose, may I ask?"

"My little gels," said he.

"Oh?"

"They were elent some time."

"Then you don't think you no-ways could this mornin'?" Silas moved off slowly. And never a turn turned he 'o' look upon her, but the book was neglected, while she watched him, and her lips quivered a time or two.

With the baby mounted high, and chucking merrily, Jud went forth to his work this morning, grinning and jinking

the little one, sighing and dropping a long jaw for himself. Soon she was babbling in the woods with her toys—a headless doll, a badly-warped napkin ring and a long row of fresh chips, clean out of the glittering steel, and yet redolent of the pine. From log to log went Silas, hewing his way vigorously, if not valiantly, and glancing at the baby between the scudding bits that flew from the polished edge.

"Presently, his measure along the log whereupon he worked brought him opposite a tree that hid the little one from sight. Well, he would rush at the faster, he thought, and he did. Suddenly, above the noise of his echoing blows, came a shrill call:

"Papa! mamma! papa!"

Like one possessed, he bounded over a fallen tree toward the baby. And he nearly reeled with the stroke of his heart, for out of the copse, swaying heavily on its silent feet, came a gaunt, grizzly bear, with blazing, hungry eyes.

"Ho!" Jud halted, in a fearful voice, reaching madly forward; and he felt his flesh creeping all a-chill at the size of the monster.

It stopped, leered at him maliciously, and swung itself erect, with a movement at once active and awkward, coming forward to meet him as if well aware that he must first be dealt with.

Without a sign of fear, Jud leaped straight in front of the bear, and swung his axe at its head. The huge brute dodged, saving its skull, but sacrificing half of its left paw. Enraged with pain, it stood again, and came at him, gory and roaring. Again the axeman struck, but not so skillfully, and the bear waded with his other paw, with such accuracy and force as to strike the handle a heavy blow that sent the weapon hurtling away, end over end.

With a fendish snort the bear closed in. The scream of some one who had hurried there, startled by the baby's call, attracted only a second's notice from the animal; but in that moment Jud whipped out a long, keen-edged bowie knife, and crouched to strike.

Fierce, then, and furious, the scene. Grasping the man about the shoulders, daubing him, chest and neck and back, with the bleeding paw; tearing away the clothes and flesh from his breast and arms, raking him again and again with its clawed hind feet, the grizzly seemed a very demon indeed.

Into the reeking, hairy body the man drove the steel time after time, but the stabs were far too short, the hide was far too thick and the bear's vitality most wonderful. Forward they tumbled, backward they staggered, in a seemingly endless struggle. Yet it could just but little longer for the man now hid from gashes deep and long, scored on his arms, legs and body; his strength waned, and his thrusts with the knife seemed almost useless.

Backward Silas went. He knew that he should fall in a moment, and the thought of what would happen was maddening. He lunged again, desperately, stabbing the blade in to the hilt; he felt the huge brute quiver—then somebody came and rapped a furious tattoo on the back of the animal's head with a rattling umorella, that cracked and bruised in a manner so utterly aggravating that the creature was glad to drop the man and turn. Reeling forward, Jud grabbed his axe and looked.

Strangest of sights! The Widow Harvey was frantically avoiding the clutch of the grizzly, and was slashing with her weapon with a mad, wild energy peculiar to her sex.

An awful sound made the axe as it clove the skull of the monster, and all three fell to earth, two human beings and a mountain of great, dead bear.

On the following day, as Silas lay,

News of interest to Easter Shoppers will fill this space every day this week. Today we will tell you of the special values in skirts. These have all been priced with a view to quick selling during the Easter Week.

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wounded and bandaged, upon a lounge, he said to the widow: "How did you happen to come?"

"Why," she said, "Willie Millett heard the baby scream an' went to see what was up, an' he seen ye slayin' the demon bear, an' boylike, run to my house, it bein' nearest."

"Yes; but—"

"An' I had to go see no harm come to the baby's knight—an' mine."

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Winnipeg, April 9.—(Special)—Prince Arthur of Connaught arrived here today and was greeted by a large assembly of citizens. He was escorted by the mayor, citizens and soldiers to the city hall, where he was presented with an address.

The prince, in reply, referred to his gratification at the manifestations of loyalty to the empire visible on every hand in the west, and predicted a marvellous future for Western Canada.

The prince will remain here for two days. He will attend functions at the government house and Manitoba Club, and inspect the cadets and soldiers.

A STRONG HEART AND STEADY NERVES

Very important it is in this age of competition to have a clear cool head, a strong heart and steady nerves.

Too much rush and bustle, work and worry, fall to the lot of the average business man—his heart and nerve system will not stand it—he gives them too much work to do.

Women also are doing the same thing attending to their household duties and looking after their social obligations. The constant strain under which they have to continue day in and day out, the irregularities of habits and loss of rest will soon shatter the strongest system. Before long you become nervous, starting at the least sudden sound, the heart beats and palpitates, speaks float before the eyes, the pulse becomes weak and irregular, you have faint and dizzy spells, lack of self-confidence, rush of blood to the head, irritability of temper, shortness of breath, starting in sleep, sensation of pins and needles, sleeplessness, restlessness and finally physical breakdown or nervous prostration.

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The price of Milburn's Heart and Nerve Pills is 50 cts. per box or 3 boxes for \$1.25. Can be procured at all drug and general stores, or will be sent by post, price by The T. Milburn Co., Limited, Toronto, Ont.

TOO COLD YET TO WHIP THE STREAMS

Brook Trout Season Open; Lake Season May 1—Promise of Many Visiting Sportsmen.

The season for brook trout fishing opened April 1, and for fishing in the lakes the season will open May 1. As yet, it is too early for the anglers, for there is considerable snow yet in the woods, and in a good many localities the ice has not yet started and when the weather is cold the beat of luck rarely attends the fisherman.

Every spring there is much correspondence carried on between Fishery Commissioner D. G. Smith, of Chatham, and sportsmen in the United States, in connection with trout fishing, and there is also considerable inquiry made of local residents who are in the position to give reliable information. From present indications it looks as if the province will be visited by large number of United States fishermen within the next two months.

Mrs. T. Whitehead, of Fredericton, is at the Royal.

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