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Novelized From Eugene Walter's Great Play

By J. W. Harding

"Me? North mountain? No, thank you! I had enough walking yesterday. I'm going to church; mother's coming too. We didn't go last Sunday, and the whole park will be gossiping if the family isn't represented sometimes by some one or other. They'll think we're all pagans. Besides, I'm going to wear the new gown Jimsy brought up for me from the dressmaker's. Wasn't it lucky he was coming? It wouldn't have been here till Tuesday or Wednesday. That man's always on hand just when he's wanted. Won't those Parsons girls stare!"

Jimsy walked down through the laurel bower.

"Beth," he said by way of salutation, "that's the most common sense mountain climbing outfit I ever saw."

"It's very rude to make remarks about people's clothing when they're not dressed to receive," she retorted. "You're not privileged to express any opinion. It's too early. But it's quite impossible to stay abed with Emma carrying on as if it was the middle of the day. She's been bumming all over the house since 5 o'clock, and all that because she's going for a climb."

"Why, she hasn't slept a wink thinking of her new dress," laughed Emma.

"Well, Beth, by the time you've got your halo out of curl and settle down in your pew," observed Smith, "we shall be several hundred feet nearer the other cherubs, listening to the sol-

"It's a treat to go walking with you. I know you love it."

emn anthems of the whispering pines. Yes, I said 'the solemn anthems of the whispering pines.'"

"Jimsy, if I didn't know different I'd suspect you of being a poet. The next thing we know you'll be wearing your hair long and pouring out your soul in Sapphic strophes, like—like Emma, here."

"I don't know that I've sampled that particular brand of strophes, but I'm quite sure that if Emma knew their hair long and pouring out their souls they are an adjunct to, and not a rival to, Emma." "Oh, come on, Jimsy; don't listen to her nonsense," laughed Emma.

They started out briskly, Emma showing the way.

"Do you know, it's a real treat to go walking with you," she said. "I know you love it. I've heard you say so. Beth can't bear long walks, and, as for mother, she rarely goes farther than her piazza rocking chair. But I've dragged Beth about and learned every path through the woods to the summits and plateaus. This is the second summer I've been here, you know."

Deserting the beaten path, they ascended through forests of trees of every description, but as they proceeded along the path, in places ankle deep in wet moss, and pushed through underbrush that kept Smith busy breaking a way for his dainty but hardy and seemingly tireless companion they came into the fir region, amid hoary giants that shot sheer to such a height that they seemed to form pillars for the canopy of the heavens. Emma regarded the great trees with awe, but Smith laughed. He told her they were as saplings compared with the mighty trees of the west. He tried to describe these and became filled with the fever of immensity. The long unfelt influence of the borderless prairies, the mammoth mountain chains far flung through the prodigious spaces of the sunset lands that diminished their proportions, was upon him. His soul strained to burst its tethers and soar upward into the infinite, where it could expand unrestrained. Burning words, never used, unimagined before in his unlettered mind, adequate to depict this liberated spirituality, surged tumultuously to his lips—to die there.

For the source of their inspiration, of this tremendous night into the divine azure from his regulated role of the commonplace and coldly practical, was the woman at his side, the one being in the world who was dear to him above all else, whom he held in little less reverence than he did his Maker.

He broke off his description of the forest giants and vast freedoms of the west with a conclusion in his ordinary street surface language.

"But there—it's no use me trying to do any lecture platform stunts. I wasn't born with the gift of the gab, Emma, them things have got to be seen to be appreciated. There's no other way. You understand."

Yes, Emma understood.

She had listened to his brief, unsuspected eloquence and had read his soul in the light of the celestial flicker that had emanated from it; had seen the glory of it in his face—a glory transient as a beacon flash, that was gone from it, leaving only his habitual noncommittal smile, as he turned to her and said, "You understand."

They continued the climb in silence. Emma's bosom rising and falling rapidly upon the rush and swirl of the torrent that raged beneath it, almost sweeping her self control before it. Jimsy indeed loved her! Why had this chance revelation of what her intuition had divined long before torn open the floodgates of her own emotions? Because it had set vibrating every chord of her being, and every chord of that being, as she had come to understand also, was attuned to his. Together they had beheld the mirage of heaven.

At the upper edge of the forest labyrinth they emerged on to a rocky plateau studded with dwarfed firs and balsam pines, but covered thickly with aromatic ferns and blueberry bushes.

Jimsy bared his head to the cool breeze that swept the clearing and watched Emma, who, with a little cry of delight, had stooped among the blueberry bushes and was gathering a handful of their ripe fruit. She was glad of the pretext to hide the upheaval in her heart that she felt must show in her eyes.

This upheaval, sudden and almost overpoweringly violent though it was, was not of the morning's forming. She had known the calm, sympathetic westerner—as he had reminded Captain Williams—ever since she was a girl in short frocks. She had soon come to look upon him as a big brother, with whom she shared her girlish troubles and in whom she confided freely, naturally, as a matter of course. When she had become a woman and he had sought her for his bride she had not been able, with all her liking for him, to bring herself to consider him in the light of a lover.

After the scales formed there by the blandishments and personal pulchritude of Brooks had fallen from her eyes and she saw that she had bowed down to an empty, painted fetich of plaster instead of to God in the flesh she had resigned herself to the lot destiny had brought her and sought to make the best of it like the pure woman she was. Household drudgery and the stern verities of her existence had vanquished and put to flight all her illusions. Love was a delusion. It was not what she had conceived it to be. It existed in perfect, ideal form only in the imaginings of the poets and litterateurs. Had any one suggested to her that Jimsy Smith was the depository of it, that his heart was the altar on which the sacred fire burned unquenchable, that under the crust of his unemotional manner was a quiescent volcano of passion that could be roused to stupendous eruption, she would have laughed.

CHAPTER XXI.

As she had grown wise and come to look upon Jimsy's visits as pleasant breaks in the monotony of her existence, however, she had obtained glimpses of his inner self, flashes of the profundity of his mind, an inkling of his elevation of sentiment that escaped him, in spite of himself, quite unconsciously. Her woman's keen perception had divined a spirituality that was buried purposely in speech and conduct. This had interested her and added her food for interested. But she could find no satisfactory explanation for the self-effacement which, by her intuition, she felt was the result of her own action. Her husband's death had left her free to marry the man she had loved, and, in her blindness, had sacrificed for a mirage of phantom joy. Jimsy had been there when, after he had let go and amused the child, he had remarked a little meeting that he had let slip everything he had ever had in his life that was worth while. The confirmation of her deduction that his unrequited love for herself had been the death of ambition and accounted for his aimless, lonely existence, which she had been inclined to reject as absurd, was obtained on that momentous night just before her husband extinguished utterly and forever the few embers of love for him that still were live. After he had told her the story of his life in his quaint, everyday speech and her heart had gone out to him in that burst of irrepressible sympathy the consternation this had caused him had uncovered his secret as in a book, for in that moment she had seen beyond the mere start of timid modesty.

Later, after the shock of Brooks' action had ceased to obsess her and he had receded further and further toward a memory, she had set free her imprisoned inclinations. Once more her rejuvenated fancy had taken wing to the heights of the ideal and romantic. Somehow it had come to associate Jimsy with its excursions. Possessor of his secret, she had set herself, while disguising her task with cunning, to the dangerous study of the heart that had held it so long inviolate. The knowledge that he loved her with such steadfast intensity rekindled love on the dead ashes her husband had left behind, and for the very reason that Jimsy betrayed his sentiments in nothing, held unswervingly to the line of conduct toward her he had followed ever since she had refused to take seriously his offer of marriage, this love had grown stronger, fiercer, until it had filled her life. She saw that she had passed happiness by. She exalted Jimsy's secret passion, until in her imagining he became the incarnation of nobleness, of desire, of all mortal joys.

She brought a heap of blueberries to him and poured them into his joined hands, and they seated themselves on a rock to eat them and to rest.

"This is the most enjoyable picnic I've had in years," she said gayly. "It was quite in inspiration in you to run up to visit me. Why don't you come often instead of spending your week ends in the hot city? You ought to take a vacation and stay here for a few weeks."

"I'd like to awfully," he told her, "but the fact is I'm too busy to think of getting away. Williams is piling a whole lot of work and responsibility on me these days. Williams, you know, isn't what you'd call an easy boss. If he raises a man's salary he sees to it that he gets his money's worth. He simply won't be bothered, even with matters that ain't precisely details."

hide vanished instantly, and she looked up at him startled.

"Joe walked in on me five nights ago. He looks well and is doing well."

"What is that to me?"

The words came in chilling accents, and her eyes grew hard.

"Emma, do you remember that on that night just before you learned the truth I told you about that chap in

"Do you believe what you are telling me, Jimsy Smith?"

Denver who was long on love and short on honor and kind of took the view that it was his wife's place to overlook things and help him get right?"

"Well?"

"Well, I'm still of that opinion."

"Do I understand that you—that you"—

She did not finish the sentence, but sat gazing at him with wide eyes, stark with agony and amaze.

"I guessed you'd be kind of surprised to hear from him. Since you left Joe he's been leading a strictly honest life. He has a good job in a bank at a good salary, has saved money, and all he wants is for you to forgive and forget and start over again. Joe's all right now, there's no doubt about that, for I've looked up the record he's made since you've been separated. Not only that, but he loves you more than ever. That's gospel truth, too, I know."

"Forgive and forget! Yes, I have forgotten, and oblivion enshrouds forgiveness with it. Joseph Brooks is dead, as dead for me as though he were in his grave. I have even ceased to bear his name. Sometimes I have wondered if he ever existed. If I remember him it is as one recalls a night mare from which one is glad to have awakened."

"It's because he trusts you, Jimsy," she assured him with an intonation perilously near to tenderness.

"So you see," he went on, "it's easier to talk about holidays than to get them. I shouldn't be here now, for I'm working Sundays as well as other days at present, only that I had to come up on a matter of importance."

"Oh," she said, with a jump, "I thought you came to see us for outing. You said it was a business trip. No matter, it's all the same to you."

"My chief object, the express purpose of my coming, was to see you in secret, to talk of and of talking to you alone."

Her heart fluttered violently, suffocatingly. Her heart fluttered violently, suffocatingly again.

"To me—alone?"

"Yes. I've seen Joe."

The pronouncing of her husband's name was to her as a heavy blow. Sweet, timorous expectancy, hot, turbulent blushes that she had bent to

She laughed a little mirthless laugh and, plucking a fern branch, began to pick the fronds from it nervously, letting them fall to the ground.

"That's all very well, Emma," he objected gently, "but Joe is none the less very much alive, and he is your husband. You mustn't forget that ever. And he's all right, I honestly believe. If he did fall into temptation he meant well. He thought he could put the money back easily enough, and he wanted you to have more comfort and be happy. The best of us ain't no better than we should be if you come right down to the contemplation of the naked fact. You know that the book says, 'There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not.' To me the man who is real sorry for having done wrong, especially when his wrongdoing had such a pardonable motive as Joe's had, is as good as he was before he did the thing."

"You are the one man I know whom I would never have suspected of harboring a treasury of such homely platitudes," she said scornfully.

"If it were only a question of forgiving a man who had sinned so weakly as that, but it isn't," he went on. "More is involved—his absolution and salvation by duty if not by love. Emma, you are Joe Brooks' wife. You took oath before God—and you meant it then—to stick by him in adversity as in prosperity, to help him in time of trouble. Your place is by his side now. Yours is the only hand that can guide him right."

She rose and placed both of her little gloved hands on his shoulders and looked into his eyes.

"Do you believe what you are telling me, Jimsy Smith?" she asked sternly. "Do you honestly think that I should go back to him? Do you think it is the duty of a woman to return to the man who struck her?"

She took hold her white finely against his shoulders and speaking with intense earnestness:

"Emma, there are some things on this earth that we're called on to do, ordained by an all wise and merciful Providence. We may not like to do them, but it is not a matter of inclination. We have to make our decisions by the rule of right or wrong. Is it right or is it wrong? It's an arbitrary rule, but I guess it works out for the best in the end. It has always seemed to me so. Therefore I say go back to Joe, your husband. Joe pleads to your heart that was his. 'Tell her,' he said, 'that I'm more sorry than I can express; that I'm sorry and miserable. Tell her that there is no light in life without her.' Those were about his words."

He released her wrists. She had listened to him at the last with averted face that was bloodless and looked ghastly under its coat of sun tan. She walked away wrestling with herself.

Smith stood as impassive as fate. But on his brow a dampness had gathered, and she had seen the sweat beads ooze there as he spoke.

The little cool clad form with its clinging skirt returned slowly.

"Jimsy, why did he charge you to tell me these things?"

"Why? I don't know. Because I'm his friend and yours, I suppose. Because there was no one else could do it."

"And, like the good man you are, you were governed in your decision by the rule of right and wrong."

"That was about it, if you cut out the qualification of me."

"And, having been influenced to assume this role of ambassador by a sense of duty and loyalty, feeling bound to do so for the very reason that would have deterred a man of ordinary moral caliber, you would have adhered to the rule though every word of your counsel had been to you as the scar of a white hot iron and its utterance had been death."

For the first time in her life she saw a look of sternness pass over his face. And it was mingled with pain.

"Emma," he said, "I guess we'll go down now. And we'd better take a short cut, if there is one, or we won't be home for dinner. You must be hungry, and of all the"—

"No, Jimsy, hear me," she interrupted. "You must and shall hear me. You have said what you had to say. Now it is my turn, and I, too, will speak plainly. You believe—you know—I am and always have been a good woman. You believe that I was faithful, as far as was humanly possible, to the spirit as well as the letter of my marriage vows, made fervently, trustingly. I swore to love and honor Joe Brooks. It was easy, for I did then love and honor him beyond understanding now. But neither love nor honor is kept alive eternally by the virtue of an oath in the face of delusion and worthlessness. Gold was tinsel; diamond was glass. You were witness to the slow murdering of love, and you saw it strangled and thrown down at the last as he would have strangled me had you not prevented."

He would have spoken, but she checked him with a gesture of command.

"No, don't interrupt. Hear me to the end and then speak. What is this thing that you are asking me to do? You are asking me to go to a living death, to make of my heart a sepulcher of all sweet or elevating emotion, to surrender my lips to the fetid kiss of an Iscariot, to deliver my body to his loathsome embraces, while my soul sickens with disgust and horror—my body that he would have betrayed, hired out for a piece of silver and, gloating, taken back again. You are asking me to immolate myself with all that I hold sacred and beautiful on an altar that you style duty. Now apply your rule to this. Is it right? Is it wrong? Oh, Jimsy, answer me! Before God, is it right?"

She stood incoming with the vehemence of her defense and the strength of her feeling, her arms outstretched in imploration and appeal.

A great sob rent the indication of the control that was unique in Smith's experience for one single moment the mask of impenetrability fell from his face.

She read the answer there.

Removing feverishly the glove from her left hand, she forced from her finger the wedding ring that in the years had tightened closely upon it and hurled it from her. It ricochetted on a rock and went bounding over the outer edge of the plateau far down into the pathless, tangled brush of the almost perpendicular declivity.

Smith turned away in silence, and in silence they made their way back along the little path up which they had come. Neither spoke, even at the difficult places when he stretched out his hand and helped her with its strong, sustaining clasp.

(To be continued.)

A new company has been organized to build motor cars at Galt.

Some charges of graft in connection with the sale of city lots are made at Belleville.

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"Y" SECRETARY RESIGNED

The citizens of Lindsay, especially the boys and young men, will be very sorry to hear that Mr. F. T. Young, secretary of the local Y.M.C.A., has resigned his position and left Saturday for his home in Toronto.

During his stay in town, Mr. Young has made himself very popular with all the members and citizens generally, and he will be greatly missed in all departments. From the first day of his arrival the secretary worked hard and was recognized as a hustler of unusual ability combined with a hearty cheerful manner, which made him the most popular secretary in many years.

When he arrived at the local institution, he at once worked hard to increase the membership, with the result that the "Y" has now a larger membership roll than it has enjoyed for many years. As a secretary, he had very high confidence of the boys, many of whom are living better lives as a result of his influence.

As a physical director, Mr. Young made himself very popular, as his skill and kindness has never been exceeded by any former director in the local institution.

Mr. Young will spend a few weeks at his home after which he will take up his new position as advertising manager of the McLean Publishing Co. All the boys, and members of the Y.M.C.A., while being sorry to see his departure, will join with us in wishing him every success in his new position, where his energy and ability is sure to be appreciated.

DEATHS.

WINTERS—On Monday, January 2, 1911, Margaret Jane Winters, aged 87 years, widow of the late James L. Winters. The funeral will leave the late residence, 31 Victoria ave., Thursday, January 5, at 2.30 p. m. to Riverside Cemetery. Service half hour earlier.

Advertise in the Warder.

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