

# Satan Sanderson

By HALLIE ERMINE RIVES.

AUTHOR OF "HEARTS COURAGEOUS," ETC. COPYRIGHT 1903, THE BOBBS-MERRILL COMPANY

in smoky mountain whom he would protect at hazard of his own life? Jessica's veins were all afebrile. A rec- tor murderer? A double career? Was it beyond possibility? It came to her like an impinging ray of light, the old curious likeness that had sometimes been made a jest of at the white house in the aspens. Moreau and Prendergast had believed it to be Hugh. So had the town, for the body had been found on his ground. But on the night when the real murderer came against the cabin perhaps it was his coming that had brought back the lost memory. Hugh had known the truth. In the light of this supposition, his strained manner then, his present determination not to speak, all stood plain.

What had he meant by a debt of his past that he had never paid? He could owe no debt to Harry Sanderson. If he owed any debt it was to his dead father, a thousand times more than the draft he had repaid. Could he be thinking in his remorse that his father had cast him off, counting himself nothing, remembering only that Harry Sanderson had been David Stires' favorite and St. James', which must be smirched by the odium of its rector, the apple of his eye?

Jessica had snatched at a straw, because it was the only buoyant thing afloat in the dragging tide. Now with a blind fatuousness she hugged it tighter to her bosom. One purpose possessed her—to confront Harry Sanderson. What matter though she missed the remainder of the trial? She could do nothing. Her hands were dead. If the truth lay at Aniston she would find it. She thought no farther than this. Once in Harry Sanderson's presence, what she should say or do she scarcely imagined. The horrifying question filled her thought to the exclusion of all that must follow its answer. It was surely and self-consciously she craved, only to read in his eyes the truth about the murder of Moreau.

She suddenly began to tremble. Would the doctors let her see him? What excuse could she give? If he was the man who had been in Hugh's cabin that night he had heard her speak, had known she was there. He must not know beforehand of her coming lest he have suspicion of her error. Bishop Ludlow, he could gain her access to him. Injured, dying perhaps, maybe he did not guess that Hugh was in jeopardy for his crime. Guilty and dying, if he knew this, he would surely tell the truth. But if he died before she could reach him? The paper was some days old. He might be dead already. She took heart, however, from the statement of his improved condition.

She sprang to her feet and looked at her chateleine watch. The eastbound express was overdue. There was no time to lose. Minutes might count. She examined her purse. She had money enough with her.

Five minutes later she was at the station, a scribbled note was on its way to Mrs. Halloran, and before a swinging red lantern the long incoming train was shuddering to a stop.



## Chapter 29

IN the long hospital the air was cool and dilted, drab figures passed with soft footfalls and voices were measured and hushed. But no sense of coolness or repose had come to the man whose racked body had been tenderly borne there in the snowy dawn which saw the blackened ruins of Aniston's most perfect edifice.

Hugh had sunk into unconsciousness with the awe struck exclamation ringing in his ears, "Good God, it's Harry Sanderson!" He had drifted back to conscious knowledge with the same words racing in his brain. They implied that so far as capture went the old, curious resemblance would stand his friend till he betrayed himself or till the existence of the real Harry Sanderson at Smoky Mountain did so for him. The delusion must hold till he could have himself moved to some place where his secret would be safer, till he could get away.

This thought grew swiftly paramount; it overlapped the rigid agony of his burns that made the bed on which he lay a fiery furnace; it gave method to his every word and look. He took up the difficult part and, after

the superficial anguish dulled, complained no more and successfully counterfeited cheerfulness and betterment. He said nothing of the curiously recurrent and sickening stab of pain, searching and deep seated, that took his breath and left each time an increasing giddiness. Whatever inner hurt this might betoken, he must hide it the sooner to leave the hospital, where each hour brought nearer the inevitable disclosure.

He thanked fortune now for the chapel game. Few enough in Aniston would care to see the unfrocked, disgraced rector of St. James'. He did not know that the secret was Bishop Ludlow's own until the hour when he opened his eyes after a fitful sleep upon the latter's face.

The bishop was the first visitor, and it was his first visit, for he had been in a distant city at the time of the fire. Waiting the waking, he had been mystified at the change a few months had wrought in the countenance of the man whose disappearance had cost him so many sleepless hours. The months of indulgence and rich living—on the money he had won from Harry—had taken away Hugh's slightness, and his fuller cheeks were now of the contour of Harry's own. But the bishop distinguished new lines in the face on the pillow, an expression unfamiliar and puzzling. The firmness and strength were gone, and in their place was a haunting something that gave him a fitting suggestion of the discarded that he could not shake off.

Waking, the unexpected sight of the bishop startled Hugh. To the good man's pain he had turned his face away.

"My dear boy," the bishop had said, "they tell me you are stronger and better. I thank God for it!"

He spoke gently and with deep feeling. How could he tell to what extent he himself, in mistaken severity, had been responsible for that unaccustomed look? When Hugh did not answer the bishop misconstrued the silence. He leaned over the bed. The big cool hand touched the fevered one on the white coverlid, where the ruby ring glowed, a coal in snow.

"Harry," he said, "you have suffered—you are suffering now. But think of me only as your friend. I ask no questions. We are going to begin where we left off."

"I would like to do that," said Hugh, "to begin again. But the chapel is gone."

"Never mind that," said the bishop cheerfully. "You are only to get well. We are going to rebuild soon, and we



"We are going to begin where we left off," want your judgment on the plans. Aniston is hanging on your condition, Harry," he went on. "There's a small cartload of visiting cards downstairs for you. But I imagine you haven't begun to receive yet, eh?"

"I've seen nobody," Hugh spoke hurriedly and hoarsely. "Tell the doctor to let no one come—no one but you. I—I'm not up to it."

"Why, of course not," said the bishop quickly. "You need quiet, and the people can wait." The bishop chatted awhile of the parish, Hugh replying only when he must, and went away heartened. Before he left Hugh saw his way to hasten his own going. On the next visit the seed was dropped in the bishop's mind so cleverly that he thought the idea his own. That day he said to the surgeon in charge:

"He is gaining so rapidly I have been wondering if he couldn't be taken away where the climate will benefit him. Will he be able to travel soon?"

"I think so," answered the surgeon. "We suspected internal injury at first, but I imagine the worst he has to fear is the disfigurement. Mountain or sea air would do him good," he added reflectively. "What he will need is tonic and building up."

The bishop had revolved this in his mind. He knew a place on the coast, tucked away in the cypresses, which would be admirable for convalescence. He could arrange a special car, and he himself could make the journey with him. He proposed this to the surgeon and with his approval put his plan in motion. In two days more Hugh found his going fully settled.

The idea admirably fitted his necessity. The spot the bishop had selected was quiet and retired and, more, was near the port at which he could most readily take ship for South America. Only one reflection made him shiver—the route lay through the town of Smoky Mountain. Yet who would

of looking for a fugitive from the law in the secluded car that carried a sick man? The risk would be small enough, and it was the one way open.

On the last afternoon before the departure Hugh asked for the clothes he had worn when he was brought to the hospital, found the gold pieces he had snatched in the burning chapel and tied them in a handkerchief about his neck. They would suffice to buy his sea passage. The one red counter he had kept—it was from henceforth to be a reminder of the good resolutions he had made so long ago—he slipped into a pocket of the clothes he was to wear away, a suit of loose, comfortable tweed.

Waiting restlessly for the hour of his going, Hugh asked for the newspaper. Since first he had had them read to him each day, listening fearfully for the hue and cry. But today the surgeon put his request aside.

"After you are there," he said, "if Bishop Ludlow will let you. Not now. You are almost out of my clutches, and I must tyrannize while I can."

A quick look passed from him to his assistant as he spoke, for the newspapers that afternoon had worn startling headlines. The sordid affairs of a mining town across the ranges had little interest for Aniston, but the names of Stires and Moreau on the clicking wire had waked it thus late to the sensation. The professional caution of the tinker of human bodies wished, however, that no excitement should be added to the unavoidable fatigue of his patient's departure.

This fatigue was near to spelling defeat, after all, for the exertion brought again the dreadful stabbing pain, and this time it carried Hugh into a region where feeling ceased, consciousness passed and from which he struggled back finally to find the surgeon bending anxiously over him.

"I don't like that sinking spell," the latter confided to his assistant an hour later as they stood looking through the window after the receding carriage. "It was too pronounced. Yet he has complained of no pain. He will be in good hands at any rate." He tapped the glass musingly with his forefinger. "It's curious," he said after a pause. "I always liked Sanderson—in the pulpit. Somehow he doesn't appeal to me at close range."

The special car which the bishop had ready had been made a pleasant interior. Fern boxes were in the corners, a caged canary swung from a bracket, and a softly cushioned couch had been prepared for the sick man. A moment before the start, as it was being coupled to the rear of the resting train, while the bishop chatted with the conductor, a flustered messenger boy handed him a telegram. It read:

I arrive Aniston tomorrow & Confidential. Must see you. URGENT. JESSICA.

The bishop read it in some perplexity. It was the first word he had received from her since her marriage; but, aware of Hugh's forgery and disgrace, he had not wondered at this. The newspapers today pictured a still worse shame for her in the position of the man who in the name still was her husband, who had trod so swiftly the downward path from thievery to the worst of crimes. Could Jessica's coming have to do with that? He must see her, yet his departure could not now be delayed. He consulted with the conductor, and the latter pored over his tablets.

As a result his answering message flashed along the wires to Jessica's faraway train:

Sanderson injured. Taking him to coast train 48 due Twin Peaks 2 tomorrow afternoon.

And thus the fateful moment approached when the great appeal should be made.

The evidence of the first day's trial of the case of the people against Hugh Stires was the all engrossing topic that night in Smoky Mountain. Barney McGinn perhaps aptly expressed the consensus of opinion when he said, "I allow we all know he's guilty, but nobody believes it."

Late as Smoky Mountain sat up that night, however, it was on hand next morning, rank and file, when the court convened.

All the previous evening, save for a short visit to the cell of his client, Felder had remained shut in his office, thinking of the morrow. In his talk with Harry he had not concealed his deep anxiety, but to his questions there was no new answer, and he had returned from the interview more non-plused than ever. He had wondered that Jessica on this last night did not come to his office, but had been rather relieved than otherwise that she did not. He had gone to bed heavy with discouragement and had waked in the morning with foreboding.

"As he turned from greeting his client in the packed courtroom Felder noted with surprise that Jessica was not in her place; not that he needed her further testimony, for he had drawn from her the day before all he intended to utilize, but her absence disturbed him, and instinctively he turned and looked across the sea of faces toward the door.

Harry's glance followed his, and a deeper pain beleaguered it as his eyes returned to the empty chair. He saw Mrs. Halloran whisper eagerly with the lawyer, who turned away, with a puzzled look. In his bitterness the thought came to him that the testimony had sapped her conviction of his



"I have learned his true character during these days."

Innocence; that his refusal to answer her entreaties had been the last straw to the load under which it had gone down; that she believed him indeed the murderer of Moreau. To seem the cringing criminal, the pitiful liar and actor in her eyes! The thought stung him. Her faith had meant so much.

The ominous feeling weighed heavily on Felder when he rose to continue the testimony for the prisoner, so rudely disturbed the evening before. In such a community pettifogging was of no avail. Throwing expert dust in jurors' eyes would be worse than useless. In his opening words he made no attempt to conceal the weakness of the defense, evidently considered. Stripped of all husk, his was to be an appeal to Caesar.

Through a cloud of witnesses concisely, consistently, yet with a winning tactfulness that disarmed the objections of the prosecution, he began to lead them through the series of events that had followed the arrival of the self forgotten man. Out of the mouths of their own neighbors—Devlin, Barney McGinn, Mrs. Halloran, who came down weeping—they were made to see as in a cyclorama the struggle for rehabilitation against hatred and suspicion, the courage that had dared for a child's life, the honesty of purpose that showed in self surrender. The prisoner, he said, had recovered his memory before the accusation and asserted his absolute innocence. Those who believed him guilty of the murder of Dr. Moreau must believe him also a vulgar liar and poseur. He left the inference clear: If the prisoner had fired that cowardly shot he knew it now; if he lied now he had lied all along, and the later life he had lived at Smoky Mountain, eloquent of fair dealing, straightforwardness of purpose, kindness and courage, had been but hypocrisy, the bootless artifice of a shallow buffoon.

The session was prolonged past the noon hour, and when Felder rested his case it seemed that all that was possible had been said. He had done his utmost. He had drawn from the people of Smoky Mountain a dramatic story and had filled in its outlines with color, force and feeling. And yet as he closed the lawyer felt a sick sense of failure.

Court adjourned for an hour, and in the interim Felder remained in a little room in the building, whither Dr. Brent was to send him sandwiches and coffee from the hotel.

"You made a fine effort, Tom," the latter said as they stood for a moment in the empty courtroom. "You're doing wonders with no case, and the town ought to send you to congress on the strength of it! I declare, some of your evidence made me feel as mean as a dog about the rascal, though I knew all the time he was as guilty as the devil."

The lawyer shook his head. "I don't blame you, Brent," he said, "for you don't know him as I do. I have seen much of him lately, been often with him, watched him under stress, for he doesn't deceive himself; he has no thought of acquittal! We none of us knew Hugh Stires. We put him down for a shallow, vulgar blackleg, without redeeming qualities. But the man we are trying is a gentleman, a refined and cultivated man of taste and feeling. I have learned his true character during these days."

"Well," said the other, "if you believe in him, so much the better. You'll make the better speech for it. Tell me one thing. Where was Miss Holme?"

"I don't know."

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## Chapter 30

TO stand face to face with Harry Sanderson—that had been Jessica's sole thought. The news that the bishop, with the man she suspected, was speeding toward her—to pass the very town wherein Hugh stood for his life—seemed a rearrange-

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Impure blood will show itself. It makes the skin "muddy" or sallow, with pimples, blackheads or boils breaking out. It takes away the clearness from the eye, coats the tongue, makes the breath bad. It saps the energies and brings on headaches. It is fatal to good health or to the highest happiness or usefulness.

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ment of eternal justice. When the telegram reached her she had already gone by Twin Peaks. To proceed would be to pass the coming train. At a farther station, however, she was able to take a night train back, arriving again at Twin Peaks in the gray dawn of the next morning.

When the train for which she waited came in, the curtailed car at its end, she did not wait for the bishop to find her on the platform, but stepped aboard and made her way slowly back. It started, again as she threaded the last Pullman, to find the bishop on its rear platform peering out anxiously at the receding station.

He took both her hands and drew her into the empty drawing room. He was startled at her pallor. "I know," he said pityingly. "I have heard."

"Yes," he answered. "Yesterday's newspapers told it." She put her hand on his arm. "Can you guess why I was coming home?" she asked. "It was to tell Harry Sanderson! I know of the fire," she went on quickly, "and of his injury. I can guess you want to spare him strain or excitement, but I must tell him!"

He reflected a moment. He thought he guessed what was in her mind. If there was any one who had ever had an influence over Hugh for good it was Harry Sanderson. He himself, he thought, had none. Perhaps, remembering their old comradeship, she was longing now to have this influence exerted to bring Hugh to a better mind, thinking of his eternal welfare, of his making his peace with his Maker.

"Very well," he said. "Come," and led the way into the car.

Jessica followed, her hands clinched tightly. She saw the couch, the profile on its cushions turned toward the window where forest and stream slipped past—a face curiously like Hugh's! Yet it was different, lacking the other's strength, even its refinement. And this man had molded Hugh! These vague thoughts lost themselves instantly in the momentous surmise that filled her imagination. The bishop put out his hand and touched the relaxed arm.

The trepidation that darted into the bandaged face as it turned upon the girlish figure, the frosty fear that blanched the haggard countenance, spoke Hugh's surprise and dread. It was she, and she knew the real Harry Sanderson was in Smoky Mountain. Had she heard of the chapel fire, guessed the imposture and come to denounce him, the guilty husband she had such reason to hate? The twitching limbs stiffened. "Jessica!" he said in a hoarse whisper.

"Harry," said the bishop. "Jessica is in great trouble. She has come with sad

news. Hugh, her husband, your old college mate, is in a terrible position. He is accused of murder. I kept the newspapers for you today because they told of it."

She had caught the meaning of the pity in his tone—for her, not for Hugh. "Ah," she cried passionately, lifting her head, but they did not tell it all. Did they tell you that he is unjustly, wickedly accused by an enemy? That though they may convict him, he is innocent—innocent?"

The bishop looked at her in surprise. In spite of all the past—the shameful, conscienceless past and her own wrong—she loved and believed in her husband!

Hugh's hand lifted, wavered an instant before his brow. Did she say he was innocent? "I don't—understand," he said hoarsely.

Jessica's wide eyes fastened on his as though to search his secret soul. (To be Continued)

## Dropsy— Given up by Doctor

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