(Continued from last week.)

CHAPTER XVII.

MAKING AMENDS. Sim Banks walked slowly homeward. Since leaving Sam Morgan he had grown calm, very, very calm, but his heart was as heavy as lead. His was the calmness of hopeless despair and complete resignation.

"I see my duty," he repeated over and over, "an I'll do it if it kills me." His face was white, but there was a firm, set expression there which showed that his mind was made up to a purpose and that there would be no wavering in fulfilling it. Like his class in general, he was slow to see his duty. but once having seen it there was no shirking it and no faltering in its discharge.

He believed all Sam Morgan had told him. In view of all he knew he had no shadow of reason for doubting. It was true, every word of it. Yet before he acted he would hear it from Louisa's own lips. He even hoped-hoped against hope-that she might in some way satisfactorily explain it all. Whatever she said he would believe. He would take her word against all the

When he reached home, he went directly to her. He noticed that she looked more sad and worn than he had ever seen her, and a feeling of pity and compassion stirred his heart to the very bottom. In his sympathies his own sufferings held the second place. His wife's were first.

Even as he stood before her he hesttated to speak, but not for long. Duty with him was duty, and it must be done, no matter how bitter the cost. With a quiet firmness that was surprising under the circumstances he

"Loueesy," he said, "I'd rather be dead this minute than to speak the words I've got to say, but I feel it's my duty to speak, so that once an for all we may understand each other." He paused a moment, and she glanc-

ed up inquiringly, then again bent her head over her work. "Do you know, Loueesy," he went bb, "what all people are sayin about

you an Melvin?" She shook her head, and he saw the

color creep into her face. "They are tellin that you met that man in the woods out thar an that you -Louesy, it's bard to say the rest, cruel hard, but it's best to say it. They say you told that man you loved him."

It was out, all out, and he waited for her to speak. But he waited in vain. Her head bent lower over her work and her whole form seemed to droop, but she remained silent.

"Is it true, Loueesy?" he asked after awhile, his voice strangely gentle and tender. "Tell me, is it all true, as they

She did not answer. "Say 'Yes' or 'No,' Loueesy," he in-

"Yea," ahe said in a tone scarcely "An is it true, Loucesy, that you do

"Yes," Then after a pause she add

ed; "I can't help it. God knows I can't, 7 wish I was dead," him turned to leave the room, but at the door he stopped

"Loueesy," he said, "I ain't blamin you. It ain't your fault that things has turned out like this. God knows it

Then he passed on and went to his own room. He picked up his gun and examined it and saw that it was in perfect order. He set it down where it

"That's all I'll need, an it's all I'll

would be handy to him, saying to him-

Then he took some papers from a little locked tin box and went out. He walked down the street until he came to the office of Squire Beeson, the justice of the peace. In all his movements he was as calm and deliberate as though nething out of common had transpired, and there were no outward indications of the fire that was trying his soul.

Appearing before the squire, he placed the papers on the desk, saying

"Can you make out a deed for me right away, squire?" "Shore," was the prompt reply.

"Been sellin some of your land, Sim?" "No. I want the deed made out to Loueesy."

The squire, having heard the talk about Louisa and Melvin, thought he understood the situation, and he was not surprised at Sim's words. It occurred to him at once that Sim and Louisa were going to separate and that Sim was going to divide his possessions with her.

"All right," he said, bringing out some blanks and preparing to fill in the deed. "What part of your land are Fou goin to give Lousesy?"

"All of it," Sim replied "All!" the squire exclaimed

"Sim," he said slowly, "it ain't none of my business, of course, but if I was Fou I wouldn't do that."

tice to Fourself."

"Wouldn't do which?" Sim asked. wouldn't give Loucesy all the

"Cause it ain't right. It ain't jes-

"But it's jestice to Loueesy, all the

ca I can do her now. God knows

her." The squire looked puzzled.

it's little enough, considerin an'i owe

"I don't understand about that," he said. "From what I've heard, it ain't your fault that things are the way they

"It is, though. It's all my fault." "I can't see how that is, Sim. ain't never hearn of nothin you've done to wrong Loueesy."

"But I have, squire. I've done her a wrong I'll never forgive myself for, the cruelest, wickedest wrong ever any man can do a woman."

The squire stared in astonishment. "Why, Sim," he said, "I can't understand you. I've knowed you all your life, an I've never yit bearn of you doin anybody wrong, much less Loueesy." "But it's so. I have wronged her, as I say."

"When?" "The day I married her."

"It's the truth, squire, the God's

truth. I didn't know it then, but I know it now. I'd 'a' better 'a' killed ber any day than to 'a' made her my The squire shook his head. "I can't see," he said, "how you go

bout makin that out. Men have been a-marryin women ever sence the beginnin of creation, an I ain't never before hearn it looked on as a crime." "It ain't no crime whar the man an the woman love each other," Sim re-

plied, "an whar they're ckal ever' way an suited together. But whar them things ain't so it's a crime, an they ain't so in our case," "But you loved Loucesy, Sim?" "I did, squire, an I love her yit, an

I'll go on a-lovin her till I draw my last breath. How much I love her nobody but Ged knows. Thar ain't no words strong enough to tell," "Then it ain't your fault 'bout what's

happened, Sim. Loucesy ain't done you wight an"-



"Hold on, squire,"

Sim sprang to his feet and held his hand up warningly.

"Hold on, squire," he said. "Don't you go an say nothin ag'in Loucesy, not nary a word, 'cause thar'll be hardness betwixt us if you do. I've allus liked you, squire, an I like you yit, an I want to go on a-likin you, but I won't if you talk ag'in Loucesy."

The squire shrugged his shoulders and turned back to his desk. A little curtly, it seemed to Sim, he said: "Tell me what you want in this deed,

an I'll go to work an make it out." Instead of replying, Sim drew nearer to the squire and placed his hand on "Squire," he said pleadingly, "I hope

I ain't gone an made you mad. God knows I never meant to do no sich a thing, an I'm sorry if I have. I don't want to cause no more hard feelin's than I can help, an specially now, when I feel like I ain't got no friends on earth."

The squire softened immediately. "I ain't mad at you, Sim," he replied. "nor I ain't a-goin to git mad at you. I jest can't make out no jestice in your way of reasonin; that's all."

"An yit it's jest, for all that." "Mebby it is. I dunno."

You know, squire, Loueesy an me don't suit. You know that, don't you?" "Yes, ever'body knows that now."

"Ever'body knows it now, an I guess a good many knowed it 'fore we married. That's whar I done wrong. I

ort a' had sense enough to know fi then, an mebby I would if I'd 'a' keered enough to stop an think. Loueesy was young, an she couldn't know, but I was older, an I ort to 'a' seen that she couldn't never be happy with a man like me. I done wrong to urge her to marry me, an that's whar all the fault lies. I've ruined her life an destroyed her happiness, but I was too blind to ee it till it was too late."

I can to make amends. I'm a:goin to give her all I have, then take myself

a long time, and when at last he spoke "Your reasonin may be jest, sim but whether it be or not I ain't a goin

The squire was silent and thoughtful

to argue with you bout it, 'cause it wouldn't be no use. You've got your head sot that a-way, an nothin ain't a-goln to change it." "Nothin."

"But, as I was a-goin to say, Sim, dan't give all your land away. It ain't

right, an nobody can't expect you to o sich a thing." "I'll give it all, squire, ever' inch of

"Jest think, though, Sim. You'll be set out in the world without a home

without a dollar an"-"I have thought of all that, squire. I've thought of ever'thing." "But suppose Loueesy gits a divorce

an her an that other man- You know

what I mean?" "Yes, suppose they marry." "Waal, would you want him to have what's your'n, while you didn't have

"If it is to be so, squire, so let it be I'll have the consciousness of knowin that I've done my duty, as far as

The squire sighed and drew the blank toward him and took up his pen. "I hate to make any sich a deed," he said, "but if you will have it so, so let

could, toward Loucesy."

it be." The deeds were made, and Sim signed them. Then he went back home, stopping at Hicks' store on the way to settle a little account he had there.

"Ever'thing must be left in as good shape as possible," he said to himself, "so Loucesy won't be pestered no more than can be helped." When he was back in his room, he

took a piece of paper and a pencil and sat down at the table and wrote a note to his wife. It was slow and laborious work, and it took him a long time to put down the few words he had to say. With each word his heart grew heavier and sadder, for that was the last thing he was ever to do for Louisa, and when it was finished his life and hers would part, never to meet again.

"I am goin away," he wrote, "an I'll never see you no more an never no more stand in the way of your happiness. It is hard, cruelly hard, but it is best, for I know that I can't never make you happy, an mebby when I'm gone it'll be different. You ain't to blame for nothin, Loueesy. All the blame is mine. What you done is nat-'ral, an you couldn't help it, but what I done I could 'a' helped. I ort to 'a' knowed you couldn't never be happy with me. It was like draggin a bird down an tryin to make it live with a mole, doin like the mole does. I ruined your life by urgin you to marry me when I ort to 'a' knowed better, but I hope you will forgive me, an I pray that God will too. I've paid the debt at the store, an I leave what money I have. If you need any advice 'bout anything, go to Pap Sampson. He'll be glad to help you, an I know you can trust him. I've done the best I can for you, but I know it ain't much. All I want is to make you happy, an I hope you will be. Don't think I blame you for nothin, for I don't. It's all my own

fault. But I didn't know. Far'well." He placed the deeds on the table, then folded the note carefully and laid it on top of them. Then he took from his pocket all the money he had and placed it in a little heap on the note. When it was all done, he stood for a little while looking at it, then turned away, saying to himself:

"It ain't much, God knows, but it's all I can do, an mebby Loueesy'll understand."

After that he walked back and forth across the room for a long time, and his



"It ain't much, but it's all I can do." head was bent in deep thought. There was one thing more he longed for before he went, but he was afraid it might not be best. It was this of which he was thinking, and at last he de-

"No, I'll not do it," he said. "I'd give the world to see Loueesy once more. but I dasn't do it, I dasn't, for I'm afeard I'd give way to all this I feel. and that might give her somethin sad to remember. No, I dasn't see her no more, never ag'in in all this world."

He took up his gun and went out. An hour later Sam Gordon and Jason Roberts, returning from Jonathan Tur-

ner's, heard a gun fired off in Sim Banks' woods. "Somebody's shot a squirrel, I guess,"

Sam remarked. "Reckon so," Jason replied. "Seems like it's kind of late to be shootin squir-

The next morning James Melvin was found dead in Sim Banks' woods, with a bullet hole through his heart.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A MATTER OF INTEREST Never since that day on which the battle of Lexington was fought had there been such intense excitement on Possum Ridge. The people, forgetting their everyday duties, collected in little groups and all day long talked in low, aushed tones of the terrible thing that had happened. A thousand questions were asked, many of them of a most frivoleus nature, but prepeunded in all seriousness; a thousand surruises were made, and those who happened to pessess a fragment of information relative to the one subject of absorbing interest repeated that information over and over again for the delectation of their less fortunate fellow mertals. In a little quiet place like Beckett's

it, that was the first and the only time Pan Samuson took any nart in the talk Mill. where but few things out of the

common ever transpire, a murger is an event of supreme importance. It is sufficient to claim the entire and undivided attention of the people for a day and to remain the chief topic of conversation for a week or even a month. It is an event which marks an epoch

and from which time is reckoned. Lying in state in a little wareroom just off Hicks' store was all that remained of James Melvin. Jim Thorn in passing through Sim Banks' wood had found the body lying across a little footpath, in almost the same spot where Melvin and Louisa had met. Thorn, in a mild state of excitement, had appeared at Hicks' store to report his find. Hicks and others had repaired to the scene and had removed the body to town.

Soon the news spread, and in an incredibly short time everybody at Beckett's Mill knew of the tragedy. Then the people came to see and to ask questions. Of course every one, man, woman and child, had to pass through the little wareroom and look on the lifeless form. Then, having looked, they gathered in little knots to talk it all

Jim Thorn, having been the fortunate one to make the find, occupied the pedestal of chief importance in the village that day. Wherever he went, whichever way he turned, there was an eager group about him, listening anxiously for every word that fell from his lips. Time and again, and always to interested listeners, be repeated the story of the find down to the minutest details. And the story Jim Thorn told was this:

"When I got up this mornin, I says to my woman, says I, 'Lucindy, I guess I'll jest step over to Joe Beckett's pasture an look at that calf of Joe's.' Joe an me's been on a trade for a right smart while, an he's been a-wantin me to take a calf he's got over thar. Waal, I put on my hat an went over to Joe's, but Joe's woman told me Joe wa'n't at home, but that he'd gone off to look for a pig that'd strayed away. So I jest went an looked, at the calf, made up my mind Joe wanted too much for it, then started back acrost the woods for home. Waal, I'd walked a right smart piece an was a-goin along with my head sorter down, a-thinkin bout somethin, when all at once I kinder glanced up, an right thar before me, not six feet away, laid that dead man." "Lord, but I bet you jumped an hol-

ered!" some one exclaimed. Thorn gave the speaker a look of mild contempt.

"I bet I never," he replied. "I never moved a inch, nor I never give a "Waal, I bet you was skeered any-

"No, sir, I wa'n't skeered, not nary grain more than I am this minute."

"Did you tech him?" somebody ask-"No, I didn't tech him, but it wa'n't 'cause I was afeard to. I 'lowed meb-

by it mought be ag'in the law, an I wa'n't figgerin on gittin into no trouble There was a short pause, after which

some one said impressively: "Lord, jest to think of a feller walkin up on to a dead man like that! My land, I wouldn't 'a' done it for nothin on earth! I bet I'd 'a' been skeered, an I'd 'a' jumped an hollered, too, an I reckon I'd most broke my neck a-gittin

"Land of gracious," another exclaimed, "if that had 'a' been me in place of Jim Thorn, I'd 'a' been skeered plumb out of my skin, an I'd jest 'a' tore the earth up an knocked the bark offen all the trees round thar a-gittin out of them woods,"

away from thar. Lord!"

If the truth had been known, the only reason Jim Thorn didn't knock the bark off the trees getting out of those woods was because the bark was too tight to be knocked off. But that was something no one save Thorn knew, and he had no idea of mentioning it. Then Jim Thorn had to go out to him Banks' woods and show where the body had beed found and explain in detail just how it had lain. He had to show the exact position of the head, the feet and the hands and describe in full the precise attitude of the whole

After that he had to show just hew he had made the discovery and how he had acted and what he had done and everything about it. All this he did by going through a rehearsal of his move-

He placed a stick across the path where Melvin had fallen to represent the corpse. Then he went a little way off and, turning, walked back slowly. with his head down, just as he had been walking that morning. At a certain point he raised his head. His eyes fell on the stick, and he stopped short in his tracks. For a minute or so he stood there, looking calmly on the stick, then quietly walked by it on his way to the village.

All these things the curious crowd drank in with open mouthed wonder, leaning eagerly forward and craning their necks in order to catch the smallest and most unimportant detail of the movements.

Then, having absorbed the last particle of information Jim Thorn possessed, the crowd fell to speculating regarding such things as Thorn could not explain. Sam Morgan started it by "I wonder whar the feller that done

the killin was when he fired the shot." Then everybody looked around in search of what might be considered a likely place, and two or three were on the point of hazarding a reply, but it was Jason Roberts who spoke,

"Thar's only one place," he said "whar the feller that done the shooting could 'a' likely stood, accordin to my way of figgeria it out." "Whar's that?" somebody asked

"Behind that big tree whar Pap

Sampson killed the six squirrels is"-"Seven squirrels, Jason Roberts," Pan quickly corrected; "seven squirreis if thar was one." It was a curious fact, but in the excitement of the moment no one noticed

that day. He, the oracle of the village, the first always to give an opinion, lapsed into a silence from which nothing save the old force of habit of opposing Jason could arouse him. It was strange, passing strange.

"Behind that tree whar Pap Sampson killed the squirrels," Jason repeated compromisingly. "is the only place whar the feller could 'a' been." Then he took a stick, to represent a

gun, and went behind the tree and demonstrated just how the murderer had hid there and how when Melvin came along down the path the gun had been thrust out and the fatal shot fired. Everybody saw and readily admitted the wisdom of Jason's conclusions, and two or three hastened to assure the others that they had formed that same

conclusion the nament they arrived on the ground. These last belonged to that class of ready liars who abound in every community, that large family of "I told you sos."

While the interested crowd was still talking a stranger appeared among them. It was Mr. Waite. No one there knew him, for none of them had ever seen him, and the moment he appeared all conversation ceased, and everybody stood with his eyes fixed inquiringly on him. Looking coolly around, he asked: "What's the occasion of all this ex-

citement?" There was a momentary silence, dur-

ing which every one turned his eyes on Jim Thorn. That worthy, understanding what was expected of him, stepped forward and said in turn: "Why, stranger, ain't you bearn?" "Heard what?" Walte asked.

"Why, Lord, 'bout the murder." The stranger shook his head and look-"Murder!" he exclaimed. "Why, have

you been having a murder here?" "My land, I'd sesso! I'd 'lowed ever'body knowed 'bout it before this. An you ain't hearn a word of it?" "How should I when I just arrived in

the neighborhood?" "Oh, you jest now come, did you?" "Just this moment. I passed through here a few days ago and engaged board with Mr. Jenkins. Then I went on down the country and am just now getting back. But about this murder. Who was it that was killed?"

Thorn answered. "One of your citizens, I presume?" "No, he was a stranger. He'd only been here a few weeks. Stopped over to Jonathan Turner's an claimed he

"It was a feller named Melvin,"

was a-prospectin for mineral." "Oh, that's the man, eh?" "Yes. Did you know him?"

"No, I didn't know Mr. Melvin, but that day I passed through here I stopped at Mr. Turner's, and I remember hearing him speak of him. So that's the man that was killed?" "That's the man."

"Well, well! Do you know anything

of the particulars of the murder?" Then Thorn embraced the opportunity for which he had been waiting and proceeded to repeat the story he had been telling all day. He even went through the pantomime of his discovery of the body, not forgetting to show how calmly he had viewed it and how fearlessly he had passed by it on his way to the store. To all this Walte listened with seemingly the greatest of Interest, and Jason Roberts was encouraged by that to demoustrate for his benefit just how the murderer must have fired the fatal shot from the shel-

if any one and been observing the stranger's face closely, he must have noticed that it became quite pale as Jason proceeded with his explanation, but Jason was claiming everybody's +tention at that moment, so no one

"What do you think?" Jason asked when he had finished, "Don't you b'lleve I'm right, stranger?"

Walte gave a little start. "Eh?" he exclaimed, "Oh, yes, very likely you are right; yes-s, very likely." "Hound to be," Jason said. "Ain't no other way it could 'a' been done."

"But what was the object of the murder, do you think?" Pap Sampson, who had followed the crowd about all day in silence, listening to all that was said, leaned for-

"I guess that's so," Waite admitted,

ward and waited expectantly for the answer to this question. "I don't know," Jason said. "I ain't no notion."

"Do you suppose it was robbery?" "No. His money an his watch an ever'thing was found in his pockets un-"Humph! He couldn't have had an

enemy in this section. He was a stranger here, I believe you said?" "It seems to be rather a strange case. five minutes walk of the market.

You have no idea who the murderer could be?" Sam Morgan looked down at the ground and trembled, while Pap Sampson leaned forward again and waited

breathlessly for the reply. "I ain't no idea in the world." Jason said: "not a ghost of an idea." There was a short pause. Then Jim Thorn spoke, saying significantly:

"I wonder whar Sim Banks is." Sam Morgan started and turned pale Pap Sampson walked away, leaning heavily on his cane, murmuring: "It's come at last! Oh, my Lord, It's come! I was afeared of it all the time. Pere Sim! Pere Sim!"

(To be Continued)

A Hint fer Yacht Owners Orllin News-Letter; Walter Dear taunches and in these boats he introduess to this country a novel ide in bollers. The steam-creating arragnament is called a flash boffer. A small straam of water drops on a hot eylinder heated by a burner and an explosion results much similar to that induced in a gasoline engine. By the new method steam can be aised in five minutes. The machinery is very compact, the five horse power boiler and engine to be install-

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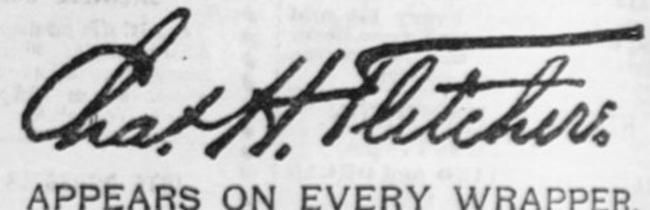
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