Synopsis

Chapter XX: The two riders find the body of a 19-year-old boy suspended on a cross. Juanita starts out on the trail of the killer's horse. Michael comes across a wagon of three westerners, headed for Deep Water Valley.

Chapter XXI

Settlers! Probably about to get their first glimpse of the valley by moonlight, and so anxious to get to their promised land that they had not waited until daylight, but were traveling on by night. And bitterness against the fate he knew they were facing swept over the tall man beside the tree. He could read their futures for them—tell them tales of other families which had come to this Deep Water Valley in hope that Don Attero's peace and plenty was still to be had.

"Coming straight to the haunt of Satan," gritted Valdez. "And they don't know it."

He mounted, ready to be on his way. But the woman, or girl, was singing alone now—a song so appealing to his Celtic-Latin soul, so full of peace and the contentment she hoped to find, that it loosened Valdez's gloved hands on the reins.

Why he looked down into the valley at that moment he did not know. But what his startled eyes saw there, an instantaneous decision was made. He would—he must—tell these hopefuls the truth about what they were riding into now!

* * *

For below, far to the south, a pillar of flame and smoke had shot suddenly up toward the night sky—one that told Michael Valdez a plain story. In a moment he saw that the blazing structure was a tobacco drying shed—and knew in that instant that all the tales of arson and murder he had heard were true.

Abruptly he sent the blue roan tearing through the night. He would make that bend in the trail before the wagon made it, run the risk that always attended El Caballero Rojo's every contact with other human beings. But he must see these people. He would say what he must say to them, and let the newly arriving settlers make their own choice as to whether they would remain here or not.

Right around the bend in the Mission Ridge trail stood a wagon drawn by a double team of horses. The wagon was piled high with farm tools and household goods. The young woman who sat on the front seat was worried. Her hopeful song of a moment before was not forgotten. She sat like one who had expected a caress, and instead had been given a harsh slap.

* * *

El Caballero Rojo saw the trouble at once, from his unseen distance. A lame horse! That was a calamity, for not yet had they even entered Deep Water Valley.

The man who sat beside the girl puffed on quietly. His hands were clasped over his knees.

Another man was out of the wagon, at the head of the left lead-horse. He had lifted the horse's hoof and was struggling to get it between his knees and into the moon's rays. Success brought an exclamation of relief, a laugh of thankfulness.

"Told you!" he cried. "Only a stone wedged in beside the frog. I'll have it out in a minute."

The animal jerked its foot free. The man jumped side, narrowly escaping an angry lash of the steel-shod hoof. But without hesitation or any sign of wrath he tried again to lift the animal's hoof.

"You get down there and help Chet, Clark Weber!" Ellen Maxon said sharply to the man beside her.

Clark Weber, the man who had led this little expedition into Deep Water Valley country, from far to the east, looked at her and scowled.

"He can manage alone," he grumbled. "Why, it's—there you go! He's got the stone out."

Chet Maxon climbed back to his seat and the wagon moved on. Ellen and her brother exchanged rueful glances, but they said nothing. After all, had it not been for Weber's ambition and his persuasiveness, they would not be heading into this homestead valley, and they were much too contented with the prospect to bother about how Weber behaved.

Clark Weber was a heavy-eyed man, sharp-nosed, loose-mouthed. He slouched in the seat, staring straight ahead, as if famished for a sight of the promised land, even by moonlight. When the wagon was partly around the bend, he snatched at the reins in Chet Maxon's hands, stopped the team and hungrily gazed down the bit of valley that was visible.

"There it is!" he breathed. "The place to plant an acorn and watch an oak grow!" He touched Ellen's hand. "A small beginning — but fast, steady growth. In time I hope to own the whole valley! That man, Russ Bartle, who sold us our piece of land, is a fool to sell any of Deep Water Valley. If I owned all he does out here, I know I wouldn't sell a foot of it. With such soil and climate there's a fortune in the tobacco alone."

The blue eyes of the girl—the eyes of a day-dreamer — were trained ahead.

"Fortune?" she said musingly. "Who cares about that? If we find peace here, and enough to eat, I'll be satisfied."

"Same here," her brother promptly agreed. He glanced at Weber. "Clark, why are you always thinking about fortunes, and a kind of a kingdom of your own? Three times you've staked everything you had on: try to double your money — and lost it all. When we started for Deep Water Valley you said you were cured."

* * *

"Ambition runs in my family, I guess," snapped Weber, moving restlessly. "Anyhow, all I expect to do here will be done for Ellen's sake, and . . . Well, let's get on. I'm anxious to see how the house looks — whether it's anything like Bartle's description of it or not."

A hundred feet of trail went under the wheels. Then three faces changed, three bodies stiffened, and three pairs of wide eyes were on the red sky ahead where sparks shot up from a blazing pile.

Even as they stared at that unexpected sight down below them, from the distance they heard the hall muffled bark of a gun. And then, the next moment, they faced a greater shock.

Where the apparition that confronted them had come form, or how, none of them knew. But sudden as death he was at the head of the team—a man so glitteringly attired like a conquistador of old that Weber and the two Maxons blinked unbelievingly.

"Great glory!" Weber squeezed out wheezingly. "That's that El Caballero Rojo I've heard tell about as sure as you're alive!"

Even back in his Eastern home he had heard of El Caballero Rojo. He had heard more in the saloon back in the town of Gold Creek while Ellen and her brother had been struggling to load the wagon, and he had listened avidly. Instantly now his nimble brain was recalling how he had been told that the red-headed, gaudily bedecked Caballero was worth a small fortune, dead or alive.

* * *

The man in the conicha-trimmed hat that hid most of his features walked his mount beside the horses and stopped so close to the trembling girl that he could have touched her hand.

"Settler?" he asked, his voice surprisingly soft. "Moving into Deep Water Valley?"

"Y-yes," the girl quavered.

He looked at her pityingly. "Change your mind, senorita," he advised, his tone low and insistent. "I know it will hurt for you to give up your plans, but if you stay here you will get hurt much more."

Ellen Maxon had expected the scarlet-masked man to behave like the road agents she had heard about. Gun out. A harsh order: "Hands up! Shell out!" But this man seemed only to want to help them, to advise them about something of which they did not know. And there was a gentleness in his voice that eased her fear.

"Around this bend is Don Attero's Cross," he said. "A man is nailed to it—as a warning. That fire below is another warning that farmers are not wanted here. The cowmen are getting restless because so many outsiders are coming into their valley. There's trouble here, senorita. Plenty!"

"But we couldn't turn back now!" Ellen Maxon cried. "We'd lose—"

"You'll lose your lives, maybe, if you stay!"

(To be Continued)

ISSUE 1—1948

Sunday School Lesson

By Rev R. Barclay Warren

John 20:30-31; Acts 16:11-15; I John 5:1-5.

Golden Text—Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and everyone that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.—I John 5:1.

It is frequently said, "It doesn't matter what one believes as long as he is sincere about it." This is a grave error and would be laughed out of court in any field except religion. For example; the man was quite sincere when he swallowed arsenic thinking it was baking soda. He died in spite of his sincerity.

John points out that the miracles were signs recorded that "ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name." In this scientific age some have difficulty in believing miracles. But these are not stumbling blocks to faith if we remember that the fact that Jesus walked on the sea, fed a multitude with a lad's lunch, healed the sick and raised the dead are not the deeds of a mere man but evidences that the man Jesus was the Son of God. Believe in Him and receive life and you will have no difficulty believing the record of His miracles.

* * *

Good beliefs are not sufficient. Paul exhorts Timothy, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee?" Doctrine is only effective as it is translated into experiences. When we are born of God, we love Him and keep His commandments. We also love the children of God.

He that is born of God overcometh the world. The Christian life is not one of defeat. By faith he is victorious. He has no occasion for worry for he knows that in everything God is working for his good. Financially, he has the promise, "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." If you would have satisfaction, poise, calm when all is stormy about you, victory both within and without, believe on Jesus Christ, the Son of God and experience the new birth. It will help you in every way.

Your Handwriting and You

By Alex S. Arnott

Handwriting Identification

As I sit in the theatre watching a Hollywood murder mystery I cannot help but smile at the melodrama which takes place with the young hero tracking down hoodlums and gangsters single-handed, or perhaps I should add with the assistance of his lady love. The detectives involved in the picture are apparently baffled and are not clever enough to apprehend the crooks and are consequently helpless to do anything until our hero, after discovering numerous clues eventually corners the culprits which he gives over to the police. This is done only after a wild chase, an exhibition of gunplay or possibly a fist fight to finish out a rousing good thriller. It is positively amazing the police accomplishments these movie heroes are able to attain without the assistance of criminal technicians.

As a matter of fact, in every day life the detective is a particularly clever person, well-trained in his job of crime detection, so much so in fact, that he does not hesitate to call upon the criminal experts for advice and special technical work in following up clues which may be the means of "cracking" a puzzling crime.

In many criminal cases, the handwriting identification expert makes complete evidence after checking all questions involving forged cheques, altered documents, age of ink, identification of written documents, the validity of suicide notes, love letters, and other written evidence which may be necesary in court to prove innocence or guilt of the person or persons on trial.

Handwriting identification experts, chemists, finger-print experts, ballistics examiners, and other well-trained personnel, each experienced in their profesion, make up the staff of the modern police force. Without the assistance of these specialists the work of bringing criminals to justice would be very difficult.

Anyone wishing a more complete analysis please send self-addressed stamped envelope to Box B room 421, 73 Adelaide St West Toronto There is no charge for this service

Time—The Great Healer—Three years have passed since terror-stricken Suzanne Oliphant, young survivor of a flying bomb blast in London, sobbed miserably in the arms of her rescuer, air raid warden Florence Kelly, as pictured at left. Time has erased the tragic fear from their faces, permitting them to smile happily when (right) they were reunited at the recent wedding of Miss Kelly to a former infantryman.

ANNE HIRST
Your Family Counselor

Long Engagements Are Hard On Both

A MOTHER ASKS my opinion about her daughter's being engaged. The young man is entirely

acceptable, but four years of college stare him in the face before he can hope to start upon his career. Like most arden lads, he has asked her to wait for him. What, her mother asks me, shall she say?

The girl should say no.

If she consents, she will feel duty bound to play fair. She'll not feel it proper to date other young men. She will become absorbed in her dreams of the future and she'll neglect her friends, spend her leisure hours in building air-castles. She will cut herself off from many activities she has been part of, pouring out all her energies and emotions in love-letters and as frequent meetings as the two can arrange.

She is apt to become a very dull number indeed. And in the process of becoming dull, she may grow less interesting to her fiance, too

● PLAY SAFE

These are the years that present her best opportunities for meeting other men and making friends in general. She is 19. She should be dating more than one lad, having fun, enlarging er social interests and responsibilities. If she is through school, she should be getting some business experience to help her understand the male point of view and give her a practical idea of handling her own money. It will provide a discipline which most girls of her age can very well use, and it will help teach her how to get along with people of different temperaments. Perhaps she'll be energetic enough to take a course in one of the arts, or sciences, or world affairs, too. That will keep her well-balanced and interesting, and develop her personality and character.

Entering into a four-year engagement is a strain on both people. Either may fall out of love with the other, for several reasons If an engagement exists, it is apt to be too confining, for the very vows they exchange can become irksome.

Better to stay free—to learn to know each other better through letters and occasional meeting. To cultivate the best in both, study the other's temperaments, get acquainted with innate prejudices and preferences, learn how to compromise pleasanty. They are free to stay in love—or not. It is better so. There are excepions, of course. But young minds are at once so stern and so impulsive that both are best left free to change them if they want to, with no regrets.

* * *

Stay in love, but don't bind yourself to a long engagement. Anne Hirst's counsel will help. Write her at Box A, Room 421, 73 Adelaide St. West., Toronto.

● BRIEF ANSWERS

To "PUZZLED G.": When a boy doesn't date you over the weekend, you can be pretty sure you aren't important to him. Stop letting this lad drive you home, and refuse any week-day date he asks for. That should wake him up.

* * *

XXF

TO "WORRIED": If you are not engaged to the Navy lad, I don't understand why your mother won't let you date other boys. Explain to her that you don't care for him anyhow, and you miss the fun your friends are having. I think she'll understand.

* * *

XXD

TO "PUZZLED READER": You are right. Such a note could only be in the worst possible taste. If the girl wants to meet this boy, let her tell a mutual friend.

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