

The Free Press Short Story

A TEMPEST RAGED

By HAL COORRELL

HERB LACEY feels kinda cocky, doesn't he? said Don Root, looking after the confident young man who walked slowly up the path toward the door of the community church.

"Well," retorted another man in the group at the gate, "I suppose if we got such a good bargain as he did, and—"

"And—," finished still another, "was going to marry Dorine Martin to boot!"

Murmurs of agreement echoed from others as the speakers fell in behind the last camera and followed to the church door, where they paused to look over the room to find seats.

During the past few years the community had not been able to pay a regular minister, and when one did come, a goodly crowd came to listen to his message. This was one of the fortunate days when a seraman was to be given; therefore, practically the entire scattered population of the township was present to exchange the latest bits of gossip as well as to enjoy the services.

Down toward the front Herb found a place beside Dorine, who glanced around with justifiable pride, as if to seek the approbation of her friends for her victory over the other girls who would have been delighted to announce Herb as their fiancé. Across the room was old Squire Wilson, who had helped Herb raise the money necessary to acquire the triangular tract of land at the fork of the Swift Run road and the lane which the community hoped was to be a section of the proposed state highway. The old man looked across at Herb and Dorine and nodded with satisfaction.

"They'll get along," he thought. "Herb's got ideas, and Dorine'll see that they don't get away from him. He needs a girl like her to keep him cased down and steady. And her—well, she needs him to look after until—"

The filling station was finished, a rustic lunch room would be built beneath the huge locust trees. Dorine was to supervise affairs there and do her bit to build a fortune for the family-to-be.

The congregation sat down, knit, rose again, and the minister took his place behind the pulpit. For a brief space he stood looking over the congregation and listening to the sounds of the rising storm. In the distance he heard a rumble of thunder. A blast of wind struck the building, after which silence followed for a time—before another gust roared through the trees of the church lot.

Dorine unobtrusively moved closer to Herb, whose hand fell on hers in the seat between them. Others moved nervously. The minister spoke quietly, thoughtfully.

this tempest! Give heed to the words of our savior! Do not repeat the words thoughtlessly through familiarity with them; they mean something! He snatched up a book and held it before him to read portions of the song.

"Picture yourself as being tempest tossed," he cried. "But give not up hope! Picture yourself as besieged by sin—almost overcome by temptation. But give not up hope! Listen to the words of the song:

"Torrents of sin and of anguish Sweep o'er my sinking soul; And I perish, I perish, dear Master! Oh, haste and take control!"

A bundle of paper told that the people nervously sought the page in their books. "Let us stand and sing, my friends! Sing and pray! If your spirits are troubled—if temptation whispers in your hearts—if you feel yourself sinking—let this song be your prayer!" When the services were over and the people hurried from the door to their parked cars, Dorine clung close to Herb's stalwart side.

"Do you know, Herb," she said, snuggling down beside him in the coupe, "I just felt that the sermon was aimed right at John Palmer? I don't know why Mama ever married him, for he's always yielding to temptation and getting into trouble."

"It seems to be the lot of man to be tempted, sweetheart," replied Herb, skillfully steering the wheels out of a skid on the wet clay of the road.

"But they don't need to fall for every temptation!" exclaimed Dorine with spirit. "I guess you and Dad don't!"

Herb laughed at her confidence and, passing the wonderful piece of land which he had acquired, called her attention to the possibilities of it.

"The squire is going to the capital the first of next month," he said, "to be on the spot when the highway department authorizes the opening of the road. May be I'll go with him and order some supplies for the building."

Activities on the spot kept Herb from accompanying the squire to the state capital. It was not until the latter's return that dire news caused the young man's heart to feel like a lump of lead in his bosom.

lying visits to the village. Toward the beginning of the summer he sought Herb and greeted him with unwelcome cordiality.

"Listen, Herb," he said, persuasively. "I know that your folks never favored liquor—neither did mine. But I'm telling you, Herb, that's about the only thing there's money in these days!"

"Oh, I don't know," Herb glanced at him quickly. "I know people who have managed to make quite a bit without dealing in liquor. But what do you know about it, anyway? You're not handling liquor of any kind, are you?"

"You'd be surprised at some of the things I've been doing the last few months, Herb," grinned Eph. "One of the things I've been thinking about is this: that place of yours will make a dandy place to distribute stuff when you get it finished."

"Why, your crazy! You know the people around here wouldn't touch it!" "You know I don't mean the natives, Herb. I mean the people who will come through when the road is finished."

Herb almost gasped. Evidently Eph had not heard about the road proposition. Immediately a voice seemed to whisper, "He doesn't know! You can sell the place to him. Get it off your hands!"

With a little shiver Herb thrust the idea from him and told the sad news. "But don't let that stop you," urged Eph, not knowing what a temptation it had been to Herb to unload the property on him. "I'll tell you what, Herb!"

Eph drew Herb to a table with him and spread out a paper, on which he began figuring potential profits from the handling of liquor in a place such as Herb had hoped to have.

"There isn't a place in the state that would suit the fellows I know, half as well as that," Eph exclaimed at last. "They don't want to buy it, understand, Herb. They want a good distributor. If you'll handle the stuff for them, I know that they can say the word to the proper people that will get the road through all right. Beer's back now, and you can handle it with the other stuff. He pictured money flowing into Herb's pocket, money that would come easier than anything Herb had dared imagine.

"I'll be back a week from to-morrow, Herb," Eph said, rising to his feet. "I'm going to bring my big chief down with me. If you say the word to him, he's the boy that can get the road through here, and if he does—you're made! Give my regards to Dorine and tell her she'll be wearing diamonds before she's been married a year."

In the following days Herb was more uneasy than he had been before. He argued with himself constantly. "Why shouldn't I do it?" he muttered. "It's a business, just like any other business. If I do it, they'll get their political friends to put the road through, and this whole district will profit. If I don't, the road will go through Bentley, and it will be my fault if our people here are not prosperous."

motioning for him to leave the building. "Ever since you mentioned it to me, I've been thinking—I've nearly gone crazy thinking of money! Don't mention it to me again! Get out!" He was afraid. He feared that if they remained to argue, he might yield. He settled with conviction; but Eph had mentioned Dorine. Dorine would never wear clothing bought with money derived from such an unclean business. Herb felt that he could not sleep in peace or face his friends if his pockets carried such money. He glanced up at the road—which was to have been a ribbon of concrete. Some one was driving along it, his car raising a cloud of dust.

Eph and his companion moved slowly toward their car, while Eph turned his head to argue. "You'd make enough in a year, Herb, to clear everything," he said urgently. "Understand, I'm not thinking of myself. I'm thinking of you and Dorine—"

"Shut up!" roared Herb, stepping forward quickly. "Don't mention her name again, you dirty dog! Get out—quick!" Almost involuntarily his fist swung and caught Eph on the jaw. The other man made a suspicious movement toward his pocket, at which Herb's other fist shot out. Eph recovered himself and gabbled his friend's arm.

"Come on, Blinky, no dirty work here! Quick—some one's coming, and they'll may know me."

A moment later they were in their car. Blinky swung it viciously and tore along the road past the approaching car with reckless speed.

"Jiminee, Herb!" exclaimed Squire Wilson, stopping his car in front of the building, "them fellows seem to be in a hurry—like they were spein' from something!"

"They are," commented Herb with a wry attempt at humor. "They are temptation fleeing from me, instead of me fleeing from temptation!"

"Why, what do you mean by that? Sounds kind of crazy to me."

Herb briefly told what had happened. "When Eph began to talk about Dorine," he said, "I suddenly remembered that serman we heard last spring—you remember, about temptation raving like a tempest, and how we could get the best of it? Well, I just let some one else take control and I came through all right."

"Now, ain't that somethin' wonderful!" The squire snapped his fingers. "What?" asked Herb, looking around curiously. "I don't see anything."

"Mebby not," commented the squire slowly. "Just a curious thing that happened. Then those runners up here temptin' you while their political friends in Bentley was loatin' their zodiac because they had deals'n with crooks! The papers down to the capital was full of the scandal."

Weekly Garden-Graph. Written by DEAN HALLIDAY for Central Press Canadian. Includes a diagram of a plant with labels: PLANT 12 INCHES DEEP, STEM, ROOTS.

Lilies for spring planting. If you did not plant lilies in your garden last fall they can be planted now, or at least certain varieties can now be set out with safety. Some lilies grow roots from the base of the bulb, while another group, called stem-rooting, send out roots from along the stem as well as from the base of the bulb.

The stem-rooting group of lilies include the Auratum-Elegans, Henry, Longiflorum, Regale, Rubellum, Speciosum and Tigrinum.

Tea At Its Best. SALADA TEA. Includes an illustration of a woman and a testimonial: 'You feel like screaming—but you can't—your throat is dry—you feel as if you were choking with apprehension—your heart is pounding, pounding—what, how—when? Then from the burning chaos of your mind springs a clear, sparkling thought: "I've got to telephone for help!"'

CARROLL'S EXTRA SPECIAL - KELLOGG'S CORNFLAKES - Pkg. 7c. Includes a list of products and prices: DANDEE COFFEE, COFFEE Break O'Morn, DANDEE TEA, TEA Golden Tip, CORN 2 17-oz. 15c, MAPLE SYRUP, COWAN'S COCOA, McLAREN'S PUDDINGS, BIRD SEED, JEWEL SHORTENING, SUNLIGHT SOAP, PEARL SOAP, CHIPS, SUPER SUDS, GRAPEFRUIT JUICE, PINEAPPLE, PUMPKIN, MARMALADE.

Promoting Use of Canadian Fish. Includes an illustration of a man and a woman, and text: 'Promoting the consumption of more Canadian fish, the Hon. J. E. Michael, Dominion Minister of Fisheries, left, attended a fish luncheon at the joint meeting of the Progress and Lions club in Toronto, Dec. 1938.'