

The Free Press Short Story

A Forfeit, a Forfeit, a Very Fine Forfeit

By P. H. CHELLEY

THE six young occupants of the Meado bungalow were seated on the broad front porch discussing plans for the next day's entertainment. They were in the best of spirits, and the delicious supper of pancakes, broiled bacon, apple-turrovras, and butter-milk. The title "aunt" was by courtesy only, Elizabeth Abbot being what Alan Meade called a "community relative."

"What a gorgeous setting you've provided us, Miss Laurell!" Clay Shelby addressed Alan's sister. "You couldn't have done better if you had searched the entire length and breadth of Kentucky."

"The scene spread out before them was indeed beautiful. The Meado property sloped down to a murmuring stream, now swollen to about double its ordinary volume by the spring freshets. On the opposite bank wooded mountain sides rose steeply to a flaming sunset sky."

"Dad's good taste, not mine," laughed back Laurell. "The only drawback is the getting here from town. You saw how impossible the roads are."

"Which makes you all the more of a brick, Vera," pronounced Alan, "to let your car in for the rough treatment it receives."

Vera Howan, a cousin of Clay's and a classmate of Laurell's at boarding-school, had motored all the way from Lexington, stopping for the others, with the exception of Clay, in Dixville. "It was the least I could do, wasn't it," she answered back, "for the invitation I begged for this medicinal relative of mine?"

"Clay, who was studying medicine in Boston, had, it seemed, bobbed up unexpectedly just as Vera was leaving. "And mighty glad was he to see you," remarked Alan, hesitatingly.

"Thanks," acknowledged Clay. "But tell me, how do folks in that wild country across there ever manage to get about?"

"Slipping, mostly, I reckon," spoke up Peter Lisle, fifth member of the group. "And sliding," supplemented Brenda, his sister.

Peter and Brenda were friends and next-door neighbors of the young Meades in Dixville. So far they had been rather quiet the past few days, but they were shy and self-conscious in Vera's presence, for they knew that her family were social leaders in Lexington. In fact, there was considerable of the leader about Vera herself. Even Laurell was always careful not to oppose her.

"What a life!" exclaimed Clay. "The poor outcasts are sure to be pilled."

for Sade's mother myself. Could a car make it to Gower's Gulch?" Clay asked Laurell. "Whose car?" demanded Vera sharply. "Well, yours is the only one available."

"Not available for any such unnecessary errand as this!" came the retort. "Unnecessary?" repeated Clay. "For you, I mean. Let the district nurse do it. That's what she's here for, isn't it? Though what her idea is, goodness knows. I've heard of these mountain missionaries before, travelling horse-back all hours of the day and night."

"But, Vera," remonstrated Clay gently, "think of the lives they're saving." "Well," came back the retort, "suppose they do save them, is that any sign they are worth saving?"

None of the others took sides in the argument between the cousins. Laurell was miserable. She knew Clay was in the right and that she should back him. With his medical knowledge he could do as much as the nurse, perhaps more. As before, however, she was intimidated by what Vera might say or do.

"It did not make Laurell any more comfortable to know that it was in her power to provide a substitute for the car. Her saddle horse, Gem, was sure-footed on the steepest of the mountain roads. "Come, Sade," spoke up Clay.

The child placed her small hand confidently in his big one and they moved toward the door. An awkward silence followed, which was broken by Alan. "It's mighty decent of you, Clay," he stammered, "but really do you think you've called upon to go all the way to Gower's Gulch? It's a stiff hike."

Clay set his jaw resolutely. "If Sade could do it, I guess I'm good for it." Impulsively Laurell followed the quietly asserted pair out onto the porch. It was still not too late to offer Gem. As she determinedly made up her mind that she would do so, a gleam of mocking laughter floated out from inside. "He's done the most ridiculous things all his life!" It was Vera's voice. "What in the world are you doing, Laurell?" she continued.

When Laurell was settled on the horse-sock one more, "A forfeit, a forfeit, a very fine forfeit," resumed Vera; "what will the owner do to redeem it?" In a flash Laurell knew what the owner would do to redeem it! Breathlessly she spoke the words before her fear of Vera's opinion should prevent her. "The owner," she announced, "will get Gem and ride him for a half hour."

"Oh, come now," pouted Vera, "don't be absurd, Laurell. Name something sensible and indoors!" "I don't know of anything more sensible," maintained Laurell. "Well, it happens to be your own necktie," he announced. "If you persist in redeeming it the way you say, we can't prevent you. Only, for a horse to leave her guests in this way and go—"

"I'm sorry, Vera," interrupted Laurell, "but I must, that's all. I'll explain when I get back." A suspicious light flashed in her friend's eyes. "Oh, I understand!" said Vera meaningly. "That child Sade has bewitched you as she did Clay and—"

Laurell, waiting to hear no more, rushed to the kitchen. Leaving word with the astonished Aunt Lizzie to pack some food and simple home remedies, she hurried to saddle Gem. While she packed the saddlebags, her mind was busy trying to decide on the shortest way to overtake Clay and Sade. They must have crossed the bridge and turned back on the Gulch road parallel with the river. Suddenly Laurell knew! She would ford the stream!

Down the steep slope Gem carefully picked his way to the water's edge; then, understanding he was expected to cross the river, he gave a whinny of delight. Laurell urged the horse toward mid-stream. There, to her surprise, the fording was not so easy as she had anticipated. A green, swirling mass of water, released by the up-river thaws, challenged her advance. The spirit of play suddenly left Gem. He realized he had hard work ahead. At times the swift current threatened to sweep him down stream. Finally, in a desperate attempt to keep his direction, he gave a sudden sharp jerk. Laurell was wrenched nearly out of the saddle. She fought to regain her balance, but it, and the next moment was thrown into the greenish whirl. Something hit her on the head and everything went black.

She woke to find herself prostrate on the bank. Gem and a strange horse were standing quietly by, while an unfamiliar person bent over her. "How are you now?" asked the woman. "All right, thanks," breathed Laurell. "My head—what happened to it?" She could feel the pressure of a handage. "You must have struck a snag in the river," came the answer, "but I'm sure it isn't serious. Glad I came along."

SLATS' DIARY

By OLIVER N. WARREN

Sunday: Staub next, are ditty's, leading college graduate, is on the bus with 1 blacked eye. & when some boddie at him how did it happen he said he kist a bride & it was 3 mos. 2 long after the wedding.

Monday: Little Jonnie Tommasos mother was a teaching Jonnie about the Proddle's Sun & Tatted KAT this a. m. & Jonnie started to yell & cry & etc. He said he was so sorry for the kaff. It diddnt do nothin ed Jonnie.

Tuesday: In school today the teacher and are class what did noah most likely do while he was on the ark & they was so much water. He fibbed and Jake. No he diddnt sed the Bled new boy, on the front seat. He only had 2 worms and the fish was all dropped.

Wednesday: Joe Hix was a tryin to take out some more lid, on his better 1/2 life today & the first act. act him what did he grand parents die of. Joe repild & sed his wasent sure but node, it wasent no thing serious.

Thursday: Down town yesterday Iko Tubbs, husband to Lizzy Tubbs are housecleaner, was bleeding—a home owners economic confiring & the skeeker act did it pay to put much munny in coos & Iko spoke rite up repild No. If your wife is a good 1 & watches for holes in your pockets.

Friday: Mobbe Histers sint so dum as I thot he was after all. He joined hands with me in not noing when the teacher act him who is George Washerton & Aberhan Linken but new O.K. when Dixzy Deen & Wallis Bearie was men-shered.

Saturday: We was a tellen each another about the crosshen at supper table & Ma sed Pa why did he expect God made Adam first befor Eve & Pa must have made a hit with her backards when he sed so Adam could get a chents to talk sam. Judging by the look Ms gave him.

POULTRY SHIPMENTS TO THE UNITED STATES. The trade in live poultry from Canada to the United States has again become a factor of considerable importance to the poultry industry in Western Ontario as a result of the tariff reductions made effective under the recent Canada-United States Trade Treaty.

SAVE THE HORSES. The cabby leaned confidently towards the very stout woman who had just given him the exact fare, but no up, for the journey.

Dismissed three weeks ago from an orphanage in Indianapolis, where she has lived since infancy, Mary Ellen Huggins, 18, has landed a job as one of the "Glorified American Girls" in "The Great Ziegfeld" which is being filmed at a Hollywood studio.

PREVENT DANGERS OF CONSTIPATION. "Bulk" in ALL-BRAN is Gentle in Action. Common constipation is largely due to insufficient "bulk" in meals. You fail to get your internal exercise. Millions of people have found that Kellogg's ALL-BRAN supplies soft "bulk" with satisfactory results.

ARMAMENT CORPORATIONS PROFIT FROM WAR SCARES. War threats in Europe, actual war in Africa and border skirmishes with threat of conflict in Mongolia constitute extraordinary sales campaigns for armament corporations. In every part of the world, these factories are working 24-hour shifts in an effort to keep pace with the huge demands of governments for increased armaments.

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SCOTT'S SCRAPBOOK by R. J. SCOTT THE OLD MASTER. JAKE SCHAEFFER, 52 WAS THE GREATEST BILLIARD PLAYER OF THEM ALL IN 1879 RULES MAKERS INVENTED 8-INCH BALKLINE, HOPING TO HANDICAP HIM. WHEN HE BECAME UNBEATABLE AT THAT GAME, 14-INCH BALKLINE WAS DEvised—THAT FAILED TO STOP HIM SO 18-INCH BALKLINE WAS CREATED—BUT "OLD JAKE" REIGNED SUPREME UNTIL THE TURN OF THE CENTURY.

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