



SYNOPSIS.

Mr. Solomon Pratt began comical narration of story, introducing well-to-do Nathan Scudder, of the town, and Edward Van Brunt and Martin Hartley, two rich New Yorkers seeking rest. Because of latter pair's lively characters, the story, Pratt's first impression was connected with lunatics. Van Brunt, it was learned, was the successful suitor for the hand of Miss Agnes Page, who gave Hartley up. Adventure at Fourth of July celebration at Eureka Springs, where a boy, known as "Buddy," from under a horse's foot and the urchin proved to be one of Miss Page's charges, whom she had taken to the country for an outing. Out sailing later, Van Brunt, Pratt and Hopper were wrecked in a squall. Pratt landed safely and a search for the other two revealed an island upon which they were found. Van Brunt rented it from Scudder and called it Ozone Island. In charge of a company of New York children Miss Talford and Miss Page visited Ozone Island. In another storm Van Brunt and Hartley narrowly escaped being wrecked, having aboard chickens, pigs, etc., with which they were to start a farm. Eureka Springs, a country girl, was engaged as a cook and Van Brunt and Hartley paid visits to her father, who for years had been claiming consumption as an excuse for not working. Upon another island, by the name of Eureka, diagnosed Hartley's case as one of love for Agnes.

CHAPTER XII.—Continued.

Hartley was so unburdened that you couldn't have told if he had blushed. But he acted nervous and uneasy. "It was nothing," he said. "I knew the youngsters liked such things, and the stuff you get here isn't eatable. Then James is a success, Miss Talford, you say?"

But he didn't get off quite as easy as that. Agnes looked up surprised and I thought, pleased. "That you, Mr. Hartley," she said. "It was kind of you, very thoughtful."

Of course the Talford girl thanked him, too. He acted a good deal like he wished he hadn't come. But I guess that feeling wore off after a while. It seemed to me that Miss Page was considerable pleasanter to him than I'd seen her yet. She talked to him more and there wasn't so much of that chilly "hands-off" kind of manner in her voice. Two or three times they seemed almost friendly, as you might say, and toward the end of the day Hartley's bluntness, that was always with him when she was in sight, had pretty nigh disappeared. He seemed quite happy, for him—not his usual careless, don't-care kind of jollity, either.

One thing that I think Agnes noticed was the way the boy, Reddy, stuck to him. You could see that the little chap's idea of a first-class brick was Martin Hartley. And another sure thing was that Reddy was the Page girl's favorite. She was always running after him to see what he was doing, that he didn't get hurt, or such like. One time when she'd gone on this kind of an errand, and the Twins and Miss Talford and me was left together, I spoke up and says:

"That small fire top is considerable on Miss Agnes' mind, ain't it?" Margaret Talford laughed. "He's the apple of her eye," says she. "She fairly worships him. I'm sure I don't know why, for he's the worst mischief-maker in the school. But Agnes' sympathy seems to run to the black sheep. Were you a black sheep, Mr. Van Brunt?"

Van shook his head, very solemn. "I was," says he, "but the cleansing influence of the Natural Life has removed the upper coating. You can see that she doesn't find it necessary to run after me. I flatter myself that I'm rapidly becoming—what is it that our new cook sings, skipper? Oh, yes! 'Whiter than snow.' Do you notice my alabaster purity, Miss Talford?"

"I hadn't as yet," she says. "I'll call Agnes' attention to it." "Pray don't," says he. "I'm not altogether certain of its lasting qualities. Suppose you keep an eye on me instead, until I'm sure that it is enamel and not whitewash."

That was a sample of the talk of them two. Just nonsense, but they seemed to enjoy it first rate. At dinner Van entertained the crowd, as usual, with stories about the island and our doings on it. He told how the Ark upset, and 'twas woe enough anyhow, but when he'd finished embroidering it 'twas a regular crazy quilt. Then he begun with Eureka. He didn't know much about Washy, except from the girl's talk, for Hartley nor me hadn't told much of our experience. So all he said was that the old man was sick. Agnes Page seemed a good deal interested.

After they'd finished eating she asked me considerable many questions. "Is he all alone there, the poor sick man?" she asked. "No, no!" says I. "There's children enough to help out a whole hospital. He's all right."

"But those children ought not to have to stay at home," says she. "They need the air and exercise and schooling." "They don't look as if they was wasting away," I told her. "Eureka's as good as a ma to 'em—and better than a pa—her pa, anyway."

She seemed to be thinking. "The poor fellow," she says, referring to Washy, I judged. "I must drive over and see him." I told her Hartley had promised to help Eureka. She seemed real pleased. Her face kind of lit up. She walked away then and didn't say no more. Lord James and me had our dinner together. I pumped him about the girls and how he liked 'em.

"They're all right," he says. "As perfect ladies and as generous and open 'anded as I could wish."

What do you think of that? There wa'n't anything slow or dull about that Sparrow girl—not enough to fret yourself over, there wa'n't.

CHAPTER XIII. The Lawn Fete.

It was August now. The nice weather held out right along and one day on Ozone island was a good deal like the next.

And yet it seemed to me that there was little changes. For instance, take the matter of reading. When we first arrived 'twas nothing but that Natural Life book; the Heavenly Twins was at it continuously, and such a thing as a newspaper or magazine was what Van Brunt called an "abomination." I couldn't get a paper even to kindle fire with; had to use poverty grass for that. But now the Natural Life sermon laid on the dining room mantel piece most of the time, with a layer of dust on it, and Scudder fetched the Boston and New York newspapers every day. And magazines and books begun to come in the mail.

I remember one day Hartley set reading the New York Evening Post, that part of it he called the "financial page." All at once he spoke. "By Jove! Van," he says. "Consolidated Tea Lead is up three points from last week's quotations. There must be something doing."

Van looked at him, kind of sad and disappointed. "Martin," says he, "are you falling from grace? Get thee behind me, Satan. Give me that financial sheet." Hartley laughed and tossed it over. "There!" says his chum, crumpling it up and shoving it into his pocket. "That disturbing influence is out of the way. Let us discuss the simple and satisfying subject of agriculture. There is an article on 'The Home Garden' in this month's number of The Rural Gentleman, which should be instructive to our friend Mr. Pratt, plowboy of sea and soil. Skipper, lend me your ears. I'll return them shortly."

Then he commenced to read that magazine piece out loud to me, very solemn, and stopping every once in a while to chuck in some ridiculous advice on his own account. This had got to be a regular thing. Every bit of farm news I had to hear. The garden was Van's pet joke.

"What," says he, when the reading was done, "is the latest crop bulletin, Sol?" "I have the honor to report," says I, "that from the present outlook we'll have two cornstalks, one to-matter vine and three cucumber plants really in sight by to-morrow morning. That is, if the sand don't blow in and cover 'em up in the night."

"Good!" he says. "I move that the report be accepted. Martin, don't let me see you wasting your time on the frivolity of the street when there are such serious matters to claim our attention." "Which was all right, only that very

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afternoon I saw him, himself, out behind the barn, reading that Post financial page and looking mighty interested.

They were more anxious to be doing things than when they first come. Hartley's health was improving all the time, and that probably accounted for his liveliness. I took 'em sailing 'most every day and they wanted to fish and shoot and the like of that.

Once we went on a cruise after shore birds. I bagged a few, but the Twins couldn't hit a flock of balloons with a cannon, so they didn't have no luck. But a little later Van went out alone with Nate Scudder and I'll be blessed if he didn't come back with a dozen peep and ring-necks. Then the way he crowed over me and Martin was scandalous, till, a week later, Hartley himself went gunning with Nate and fetched home 15, bigger and better than his chum's. And after this, of course, 'twas nothing but what a great hunter Scudder was, and rubbing it into me.

The hotel boarders and the town folks was mighty interested in the Ozone islanders by this time. The picnic boats from the Old Comfort house generally sailed close to our point to give the passengers a chance to look our outfit over. Sometimes the boats stopped, and then the Twins would take an observation from an upstairs window, and if they liked the looks of the crowd, would come down and keep what they called "open house."

"Open house" always meant more work for Eureka and me. Lucky for us, 'twas pretty seldom that the Heavenlies liked their callers' looks well enough to open up.

The Baptist minister and his wife came over to call. There was going to be a lawn fete and sale at the church pretty soon, and the idea was to get the Twins to "donate" something. Van Brunt was full of his high jinks that day, and he took that poor parson and his wife in to w.

First he carted 'em out to the henyard. He paraded up and down in front of the coops, pointing out the scraggly Plymouth Rocks as if they was some kind of freaks, like ostriches. He said they ate a bag of corn a day and laid one egg a week, so he figured that every egg was worth five dollars or so. What did the parson think of a donation of half a dozen of them eggs?

"Not to eat, you understand," says Van; "but as rarities, as curiosities." The minister was a young feller, not long out of college, and pretty straight-laced. But he had some fun in him.

"If I might suggest," he says, "I think one of the hens themselves would be more acceptable and profitable. Among our summer people there is a great demand for 'antiques.' Now one of those hens—"

That tickled Van. He told Hartley afterwards that the minister was a trump. He donated liberal—not with eggs nor poultry neither—and promised that he and Hartley would attend the sale.

And they did. And so did Eureka and me. The lawn fete was held in the meeting house front yard, and 'twas all rigged up fine with flags and tissue paper and bunting. There was a grab bag and a cake table and a fancy goods table, and I don't know what all. All the summer folks was there, and most of the town women and girls, and the prices charged for things would have been highway robbery if it hadn't been a church that was charging 'em.

The Heavenlies bought and bought and bought. They bought everything—the foolishest things. Van bought three pair of embroidered suspenders and a crocheted tidy and a pin cushion, and Martin got a worsted afghan and a hand-painted soft pillow, so fresh that the paint come off on your hands when you touched it. And 'twasn't any quiet colored paint neither. And when you rubbed off one layer there was another underneath. Lucretia Daniels' daughter had painted it; she was taking lessons and her ma said that she'd painted that pillow over much as a dozen times, because the colors wa'n't "blending right" or the subject didn't suit her. 'Twas so stiff with paint on top that 'twould have been like ramming your head into fence to lay on it.

We stayed till most everything was sold but a log cabin bed quilt that the Christian paupers at the poor-house had made. Nobody seemed to want that, although they was gay rags enough in it to build a rainbow. The minister's wife said she was so sorry. The poor things at the almshouse had worked so hard.

"You wait a minute," says Van. "I'll get rid of it." He took out his vest pocket memorandum book and tore about ten pages into little squares. Then he made numbers on these squares with a pencil. Half of these he put into his hat, and the next I knew, he was standing on a chair, waving the bedquilt with one hand and the hat with 't'other.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Said the Chinaman: "That is better than heathenism—it is cheaper."—Philadelphia Ledger.

To Cure a Hopeless Heartache. I must go to some place where I can't take the first train back; where I won't live through the day expecting a letter from you. It isn't easy in these times for anybody to be really "out of reach." When we all know that we've only to go to the nearest telegraph office for news, we can't know what it would be like utterly to lose someone—unless death teaches us. The nearest approach to the sort of thing I mean—this side of Kingdom Come—is the Klondike.—From "Come and Find Me," by Elizabeth Robins.

Uncle Eben's Definition. "Envy," said Uncle Eben, "is generally due to de way you lets yoh imagination run away wid you in picturin' good times dat et'her folks ain't really havin'."

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