

MR. PRATT.

By Joseph C. Lincoln

Author of "CAPN ERI" "PARTNERS OF THE TIDE"

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SYNOPSIS.

Mr. Solomon Pratt began a narrative of a story, introducing well-to-do Nathan Scudder of his town, and Edward Van Brunt and Martin Hartley, two rich New Yorkers, leaving their city for a latter pair's lavish expenditure of money. Pratt's first impression was connected with Linnettes, Van Brunt, it was learned, was the successful author for the hand of Miss Agnes Page, who gave Hartley up. Adventure at Fourth of July celebration at Eastern Sparrow, a country girl, boy, known as "Reddy," from under a horse's feet 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 poor 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. Eastern Sparrow, a country girl, was engaged as a cook and Van Brunt and Hartley paid a visit to her father, who for years had been claiming consumption as an excuse for not working. Upon another island visit by Miss Page, Eastern Sparrow's case as one of love for Agnes. At a lawn fête, Van Brunt shocked the church community by talking a quilt for the church's benefit. Hartley invited a plan to make Washington Sparrow work. In putting the plan into effect Hartley incurs wrath of Miss Page, for whom the "quilt man" sent Agnes then appealed to Van Brunt. Sparrow to escape the treatment proclaimed himself well and went to work.

CHAPTER XVII.—Continued.

Along about noon the tool-shed—the late lamented Washy's boarding house—blew down with a bang. Then the Dora Bassett broke loose from her moorings and drove into the cove head first. She was bound to bang herself to flinders unless somebody got to her quick, so out I went into the storm. I did think maybe the Heavens would offer to turn to and help, but they was pitching half dollars at a crack in the floor and was too busy to think of anything else.

I had a sweet time plowing through the sand against that wind and rain, and when I got to the cove my job was cut out for me. The sloop was hard and fast aground on the flat and the tide was coming in. She couldn't stay where she was, so I worked for two hours up to my waist in ice water, and more a-pouring on to me from the clouds, getting her off and made fast. The Twins did help me long towards the last part of it. That is to say, they set in an upstairs back window and pounded on the glass and made signs—superintending, as usual. I wish they could have heard some of the language I have back at 'em. Then they'd have realized how grateful I was.

I got supper without changing my wet clothes, and when I woke up next morning I decided without no argument that something else had happened. I was took with the galloping rheumatism—my old trouble—and couldn't move, scarcely, without howling same as a dog with his tail shut in a door. The fire was out—the old chimney had unloaded half of its top rigging in to the wind—the storm was bad as ever, and there I was laid up on the corn-husk. The Heavens was worried. Breakfast was somewhere 'round the next corner.

"Too bad, old man," says Hartley. "What can we do?" "Do?" I answers, between yells. "I don't care what you do. Only don't bother me. Ow! O-o-o-o! my shoulder!" "But what'll we do for eatables?" ask Van Brunt. "I liked them fellers first rate and they knew it. But now they made me mad."

"Do?" says I. "Do? Why, scratch for your living, same's I've had to do all my days! Work, consarn you! work!" I said considerable many other things. 'Twas a sort of jerky talk—I had to stop every minute to attend to my shoulder—but there was meat in it. They heard some plain truth that nothing but rheumatism could have fetched out of me. I didn't skip nothing—leastways I tried not to. I hope it done 'em good; it seemed to help me a heap.

They went to work, but they was way down in the primer class so far as that branch of learning was concerned. I could hear things falling around in the kitchen and a million matches, more or less, a-scratching, and I judged that Hartley was trying to build a fire. And under my window there was the dickens of a thumping and a most astonishing number of cuss words, so I gathered that Van was chopping wood.

I managed to hobble downstairs about half past ten, but I was in plenty of time for breakfast. I was feeling too mean to have any appetite—which was a mercy, and I'm thankful for it. We had smoked mush, Wall street style, and fried eggs with cinders, and one cup of coffee for three. But that cup was strong enough—owing to Hartley's letting it bile for two hours—so nobody wanted any more.

hol on my lame shoulder. 'Twasn't a joyful kind of experience, but 'twas the first real daytime rest I'd had since I got Naturalized. And, I own up, I got a good deal of comfort watching the Heavens try to do for themselves.

Mind you, if the thing had happened when they first lit on Horsefoot Bar, when they was full of simplicity and the love of it, I callate they'd have stood it better. But now they was about sick of the island anyway, only one was afraid to say so and cither dassent. So the more the work piled up the uglier they got.

Dinner was served at four o'clock; scorched eggs again, and coffee. No dish-washing. 'Twas storming hard as ever and the draft kept both the stove and fireplace roaring, so more wood had to be chopped.

"Martin," says Van Brunt, "go out and cut that wood, will you? The ax is by the woodpile—that is to say, it's there if this blessed cyclone hasn't blown it out to sea."

Hartley was poking at the stove, with his face and clothes all covered with ashes.

"Cut it yourself," says he, brisk. "You're doing nothing."

"I cut it before," snaps his chum. "Think I'm a steam engine?"

He grabbed up the day-afore-yester-



"The Natural Life Be D—d," Says Edward Van Brunt.—

day's newspaper and went to reading. Hartley poked at the stove a spell and then went to the closet and got a cigar. Van looked up and saw him.

"Hand me one of those," says he, motioning towards the cigar.

"There isn't any more. This was the last one in the box."

"The devil it is! And you take it? Well, by George!"

"Now, see here. I saw you take four this forenoon, and this is only my second. Don't be a prize pig."

The stove ashes got into his mouth and nose just then, so he had a fit of sneezing. When 'twas over he slammed the poker into the corner and went to the window.

"Where's that idiot Scudder?" he asks.

"You mean Nature's Nobleman?" says I, smooth and calm. "Oh, he won't show up for a day or so. He's too high to risk his dory. Dorries cost money."

Van sat up straight. "You're bluffing, aren't you, skipper?" he asks, troubled. "It isn't possible that that rascal will stay at home and not come near us."

"Rascal?" says I. "Rascal? Oh! yes, yes. No, the 'rough diamond' won't trust himself afloat this weather. He's too expensive a jewel for that. We'll have to do without milk."

"Milk be hanged! It's my mail I want. Why, I'm expecting—"

He bit the sentence in two and looked quick at his partner. But Hartley was scowling and staring out of the window. I guess he hadn't heard.

"Let it go," says Van. Hartley didn't speak.

"Now see here," I says, decided. "I've got the rheumatiz and I don't want to get any more cold. You fellers have pretended to think something of me. If you don't want my remains on your hands, and a funeral to pay for, you'll chop that wood."

Martin got down from the window seat, moving stiff and lame.

"You're right, Sol," says he. "We are ungrateful beasts. I'll chop that wood."

"Hold on, old man," breaks in his chum. "You shan't be the only game sport. I'll match you for the job."

So they matched cents and Van Brunt got stuck. He yanked on his hat and coat and went out, banging the door. Hartley tackled the cook-stove again. 'Twas time to be thinking of supper, if we was going to have any.

Van was gone a long time and he come in soaked with sweat and rain and broke up generally. The wood looked like it had been chewed. I callate they don't do much chopping in the Street.

He slatted himself into a chair, wet clothes and all. Then he commenced to cuss the island and everything that grew or moved on it.

"What we ever came to this lone-some rag end of creation for, anyway," says he, "is—"

"What?" I hollers. "I don't understand you. You can't mean—what place are you talking about?"

"This place. This sand-scoured, blown out heap of desolation. Ozone Horsefoot Bar island, or whatever you call it."

"Well," says I. "Are you crazy? Mr. Van Brunt, I've heard you yourself say that this island was all that's lovely."

"Oh, shut up!" he snaps. "Jolliest old ark you ever saw," I went on, quoting from memory. "'Air to breathe, veranda to set on, ozone

"Tea Lead?" breaks in Hartley. "Have you been buying Tea Lead?"

"Yes I have. I'm carry a pretty good load of it, too, worse luck. Scudder has been bringing my letters and telegrams, and now that he doesn't come, why—"

"Wait a minute! Has Scudder been looking out for your wires and orders?"

"Yes, he has. Oh, I've played you mean and low enough, Martin. Might as well make a clean breast of it, though it will probably smash our friendship. I've paid Scudder three dollars a day to attend to things and say nothing to you. It's—"

Hartley didn't seem to hear nothing but the last sentence. Now he interrupted.

"Three dollars!" he says, low. "Three dollars! Why, the confounded grater's been charging me five!"

And there it was! The cat out of the bag and both Heavenly Twins tarred with the same brush. That's what Nate's secrets and the talks behind the barn, and all, had meant. Van Brunt had been buying the Tea Lead deal ever since he read the Post that day, and Martin had begun after his row with Agnes. And both of 'em bribing Nate Scudder to keep his mouth shut.

First they was provoked and mad at themselves and each other. Then they got to laughing.

"Who?" says Van, wiping his forehead; "you and I came here to rest and break off from business worry. And I've worried more in the last month than I have before since my big deal. It's hard to teach old dogs new tricks, isn't it, Martin?"

"You're dead right, old chap," says Hartley.

They was going to turn in soon after this, but when they went upstairs they found the rain had leaked in through the ell roof and their feather beds was sopping wet. Down they come again, mad clean through and calling Marcellus' heirloom everything but a nice place.

"You'd better set down and rest yourselves a spell," says I. "It'll do you good. I'm sorry I ain't been able to help you more to-day, but there's one thing I can do: I can help you do what you call 'improve your minds.' I'll read you some out of that Natural Life book. Hand it to me, will you?"

Van jumped for the book. But he didn't hand it to me. Not much! He drew back his arm and banged that book into the fireplace so hard that I thought 'twould knock the bricks out at the back.

"Well!" says I, my mouth opening like a clam shell. "Well! The Natural Life!"

"The Natural Life be d—d!" says Edward Van Brunt.

And Martin Hartley says "Amen."

CHAPTER XVII.

Across the Bay.

"Martin, says Van Brunt, 'I guess it's the only safe way. I'll go out on the next train.'"

We was at the dinner table when he said it. 'Twas one o'clock of the day after the Natural Life sermon went up in smoke. The weather was still pretty mean, the sky being all clouded over and the sea running high. But it had stopped raining and the gale seemed to be petering out. I was a whole lot better and was able to turn out and work.

I had my hands full that morning, too. All three of us was close to starvation, after 24 hours of short rations, and it took some time to get us filled up. Then I had the pig and hens to see to. The poor critters' lives had been more Natural even than ours—they hadn't had nothing to eat. The pig was in particular trouble. The rain had turned his pen into a sort of lake and he was playing Robinson Crusoe on a seaweed island in the middle of it. The way he grunted for joy when I looked over the fence was human—yes, sir, human.

Scudder hove in sight about ten and the Heavens fairly fell on his neck when he stepped out of the dory. But they warn't so happy when he'd spun his yarn. It seemed that the gale had blown down the telegraph poles and tangled up the wires and no messages could get through either way, and wa'n't likely to for two or three days.

'Twas that that upset the Twins. The Tea Lead market might be tied up in a knot, for what they knew, and their "friends" in the Street might be robbing 'em right and left. I picked up from their talk that now was the most ticklish time, something about "passing a dividend," or the like of that. So that's what they argued about at the dinner table; and it was decided that Van should go to New York right off and pick up what might be left after their chums and the rest of the forty thieves had got through shaking the contribution box.

"I'll leave at once," Van says; "and be in town to-morrow morning. If all goes well I'll be back here next day. Meanwhile, you, Martin, can be arranging matters with Scudder."

He meant arranging for our quitting Ozone Island for good. They was as anxious now to get out of "Paradise" as they had been to move into it. If I mentioned a word of Natural Life they all but threw things at me.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Rather Tedious.

Caller—Do you think the doctor is going to help you, Mr. Jones?"

Jones—He may, if I can only follow his orders. He told me to drink hot water 30 minutes before every meal, but it is hard work to drink hot water for 30 minutes."

Shortest European People.
Laplanners are the shortest people in Europe, the men averaging four feet 11 inches, the women four feet

Aeneas and Dorcas

Sunday School Lesson for March 14, 1909

Specially Arranged for This Paper

LESSON TEXT.—Acts 9:31-43. Memory verses 40, 41.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole; arise and make thy bed. And he arose immediately."—Acts 9:34.

TIME.—30 or 40 A. D. Three years after the last lesson. Intervening events: The conversion of Saul of Tarsus; His absence in Arabia three years (Gal. 1:17, 18). His return to Damascus. His visit to Jerusalem (Acts 22:17-21), and departure to Cilicia.

PLACE.—(1) Lydda, now Ludd, 30 miles northwest of Jerusalem in the Plain of Sharon, the old Philistine country. (2) Joppa, now Jafa, the chief seaport of Palestine, and especially of Jerusalem, now connected with it by a railroad 31 miles long. Here Dorcas and Simon the tanner lived.

Comment and Suggestive Thought.
V. 31. The story of the conversion of Paul is passed over at this time, to be taken up in the next quarter, when we begin the second division of the Acts, the work of St. Paul. To dwell on that great event here would interrupt the course of the history, and is especially fitting in connection with the beginning of his career.

Then had the churches rest Gk. and R. V. "peace" throughout "the whole province of Palestine, consisting of 'Judea and Galilee and Samaria.'" A bitter persecution followed the martyrdom of Stephen. It may have lasted two or three years.

The Occasion of the Peace was the trouble that fell upon the Jews in a conflict with the Roman authorities. They were so occupied with their own affairs that they had no time to persecute the Christians.

Growth by Multiplication.—The result of this daily life showed itself in their rapid increase; they "were multiplied." There are two ways to be multiplied—in numbers, and in quality and value. The disciples rapidly increased in numbers, and the aggregate of churches was greatly enlarged. Then each addition of zeal, of knowledge, of wisdom, of spirituality, multiplies the value of each disciple and of the church. Every additional gift or virtue or talent in a man is not merely so much added to him, but is a multiplier, for it increases the value of each and every other gift. Add capital to labor, and both are multiplied. Add common sense to genius, and the man is multiplied many fold. Add to these consecration, zeal, grace, and love, and you multiply him many fold more. One note is a sound; add a score or two more and you have an anthem. One color, no matter how beautiful, is innoxious; add other colors and you have a cathedral window.

V. 32. "Peter passed throughout all quarters." Peter's first home missionary work was in connection with John in Samaria (Acts 8). They both returned to Jerusalem preaching in the village of Samaria on the way. Now we find Peter again on a Gospel tour throughout Palestine, preaching the Gospel, and healing the sick, as his credentials, and as illustrating the spirit and nature of the Gospels; visiting and encouraging and teaching the new churches formed by the persecuted Christians, and keeping them in touch with the apostolic church in Jerusalem. The accounts which follow may fairly be taken as specimens of many such journeys of progress, inspection and helpfulness.

V. 32. "He came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda." All Christians were called saints, because that was their aim and the characteristic of their lives.

V. 33. Aeneas. Very nearly the same name as Virgil's hero of Troy. "Eight years." Showing that the cure was miraculous. "Sick of the palsy." Palsy is a contraction of the word "paralysis."

V. 33. "Jesus Christ." That is, the Messiah. Peter guards against being thought the source of the healing. He draws men not to himself, but to the Saviour, and shows that Jesus is still doing the same kinds of work he did when he was living on earth. So the true preacher or teacher always draws attention not to himself, but to his Lord. "Maketh thee whole." The translation "maketh thee whole" is a very expressive term for complete health, where every part of the body is present and in perfect condition.

Vs. 37-43. The disciples at Joppa learning of Peter's presence at Lydda, sent for him to come without delay, apparently with some hope that the unseen Master would work through his disciple Peter a miracle of restoration such as he himself had wrought during his earthly life. Peter went, and like his master at Capernaum, (40) "put them all forth." Then he "kneeled down, and prayed." Then, with assurance of an answer, he "turning . . . to the body, said, Tabitha, arise." If he used the Aramaic, the common language, the expression would be Tabitha cumi, differing but one letter from the Talitha cumi of Mark 5:41, which he heard the master speak in the sick chamber of Capernaum.

V. 41. "Gave her his hand," to help her up after she was alive. Jesus took Jairus' daughter's hand.

The Teaching of This Sign.—1. It called attention to the fact that Jesus, whom Peter preached, was alive in Heaven.

2. That he was the same Jesus whose story the apostles were continually telling, and was able to do the same wonderful deeds of love he did on earth.

3. It was a sign of the reality of immortal life beyond the grave.

4. It was a symbol of the new spiritual life from the death of sin.

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Diplomacy.
"When a man has an argument with his wife, and she proves that he is in the wrong—"
"Yes?"
"Should he own up to it?"
"No. That's bad business. He should maintain he was right, and then go out and buy her something nice."—Cleveland Leader.

Hospitality.
"And did you enjoy your African trip, major? How did you like the savages?"
"Oh, they were extremely kind-hearted. They wanted to keep me; there for dinner."—London Opinion.

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