

PATTERNS OF WOLFPEN



CHAPTER X—Continued

Then she heard his voice pitched in the oratorical tones of the Pikeville lawyers and reciting: "All children born before matrimony are bastards by our law; and so it is of all children born so long after the death of the husband, that, by the usual course of gestation, they could not be begotten by him. But this being a matter of some uncertainty, the law is not exact as to a few days, forty weeks being the time allowed. . . ."

"Now why in the world is Jesse saying all that for up here in the hollow with nobody around to hear him but the mule and its drowsing like a sleepy old judge on a bench. It must be Jesse's law book."

Jesse went on, stumbling over the unusual words:

"But, if a man dies, and his widow soon after marries again, and a child is born within such a time, as that by the course of nature it might have been the child of either husband; in this case he is said to be more than ordinarily legitimate; for he may, when he arrives to years of discretion, choose which of the fathers he pleases."

She could not see Jesse from where she sat. What would he look like in the role of orator? The impulse to lay eyes upon him overcame her. She went a little farther up the ridge overlooking the hollow and climbed down the rock behind a clump of rebud.

Jesse was standing under a pine tree before a moss-covered rock which had broken away from the cliff. He held the yellow bound Blackstone in his left hand, pointing with his right forefinger at the page, tapping it for emphasis, and making his voice vibrate with his imitation of a mountain lawyer citing a point of law:

"... restraints upon marriage, especially among the lower classes, are evidently detrimental to the public by hindering the increase of the people; and to religion and morality, by encouraging licentiousness and debauchery among the single of both sexes; and thereby destroying one end of society and government, which is concubitus prohibere vago."

She was fascinated by his zeal and the reality of the performance, but after he had halted in the passage, stumbling seriously over the Latin words, the illusion was broken and she felt ashamed at the thought of spying on Jesse from behind a bush and listening to something not meant for her ears. She would go down to him at once.

"But then he will see by my face and the direction I come from that I have been listening. I will go back and come across the field."

She climbed back up the rock, and went down the gully through the cleared space to the plowed field, and came down the young corn rows approaching Jesse directly face to face. He saw her coming, not displeased.

"I looked for you at the sweet-potato patch," she said as a greeting.

"I was just giving the mule a rest and I got to looking at the picture of Blackstone here . . ."

He showed her the yellow-tinged engraving of the enormous-appearing man, solid and legal behind the ample contours of his ermine robe; under the careful twistings of the curled fleece wig stood out the bushy black eyebrows, the big eyes that had faced with the confidence of knowledge and experience, judges and juries.

"They wear funny clothes in England," Cynthia said.

He still kept his finger in the page where he was reading.

"Have you read clear over there?"

"Well, not exactly. Only I got tired of the chapters on the King's Titles, and the King's Prerogative, and his Revenue, and of the Clergy. It didn't seem like it meant anything in this country. So I kind of skipped to this part, 'Of Husband and Wife' and it's right interesting. It says a man has to stand good for his wife's debts as long as she buys necessary common supplies, but not for anything besides necessities."

"Is that what law is?" Cynthia asked.

"Well, that's just one little part. There are so many things here. It makes a body wonder if people really do all the things this book says they mustn't do, and how many people had to do an evil before a law was made about it. It takes a lot of study, and a man needs help on some of it."

"You're going to read with Tandy Morgan, Jesse?"

"That's what I aim to do this fall."

"We'll have ready money, too, and I can go to Pikeville, Mother says."

"The book lays down law on that. It says here, 'The last duty of par-

ents to their children is that of giving them an education suitable to their station in life; a duty pointed out by reason, and of far the greatest importance of any. For . . . It is not easy to imagine or allow, that a parent has conferred any considerable benefit upon his child by bringing him into the world; if he afterwards entirely neglects his culture and education, and suffers him to grow up like a mere beast, to lead a life useless to others and shameful to himself.' This fellow talks straight words like a lawyer ought."

"You'll be a great lawyer yourself some day," Cynthia said.

"I aim to if I can."

They sat, each with their own thoughts, for a minute in silence.

"Is Reuben a great surveyor?" she asked, interrupting the silence.

"Why, yes. He seems to know a right smart."

"Is he as nice out in the woods as he is about the house?"

"I don't see any change in him."

"I like his way of talking about the Ohio river and things," she said.

Then, rousing from the dream in which he was still partly submerged, he said, "I guess you like him a right smart, don't you?"

The directness of it made her self-conscious and she blushed. She retreated into herself a little way in defense, "I think he's right nice."

"You're in love with him. You've been different since that night he came and you put flowers and a white cloth on the table."

"Why, Jesse, I . . . Why do you say that?"

"Oh, Reuben is a nice fellow. I don't blame you any."

Cynthia had not meant to speak to Jesse about Reuben. She had merely sat there with her own thoughts but they had moved so quietly and rapidly that the pressure of the undercurrent had suddenly escaped into words. "What do you do or say about it to another person, anyway? Would even Jesse understand? A body doesn't do or say anything but lets it have its own way. It sparkles in your heart where no one sees, and it lights up the soul; and changes the look of the whole world. You hold it there like it was star vapor from another world or the first green mist of leaves sifting between the willow limbs on Wolfpen and it trembles inside of you with wonder. Maybe if you let it alone and believe in it . . ."

Cynthia changed the subject skillfully back to Jesse.

"You've sure read a right smart in such a hard book."

"I guess I've been getting along right well."

"I came out to lay some of the potato vines up on the ridges for you."

"You don't need to do that; you got plenty to do. It don't look like we'd have much time for House Field this evening, anyway."

"There's never enough time in the day any more. Can I carry your book back with me if you're not going to use it?"

She took the book, and Jesse roused the mule. It was too late for Cynthia to help in the sweet-potato vines. She went on to the house and got the water bucket and went to the well as the sun slipped off of Saul's headstone, drawing after it a veil of dark. She saw Shellenberger and Mullens coming down the path from the Pinnacle.

It was almost dark when the other men came in. Cynthia could see them from the kitchen, a bustle of men around the wash rock rolling up their sleeves, opening their shirts, soaping and splashing and spluttering; thinking how funny menfolk were when they washed. Reuben had come into the kitchen.

"I hope we haven't put you out, Cynthia, being so late. I had this instrument set up and I wanted to finish off a line before I pulled it up."

"It isn't any trouble at all," she said.

"It was slow going and made us late."

The men were unusually talkative at the table and on the porch after supper. Cynthia sometimes listened.

"Yes, we got around all right," Shellenberger was saying. "We'll cut in through Dry creek and work back. We may have to put in a splash dam to give them a start down Gannon."

"Are you actually going to float logs down Gannon?" Abrial asked.

"We certainly are."

"In rafts?"

"Yes, Small ones."

"Can I take one down?" Abrial demanded.

"You certainly can," Shellenberger said. "But we have to cut the logs first. Do you think we can get good men along the creeks here?"

"There'll be plenty out of these hollows," Sparrel said. "The country is filling up fast and plenty of

them have not land enough to keep them busy."

"We'll have to put up a camp there. If you'd rig up a saw on your mill we could rip out boards pretty quick."

The saw ought to be in now any time," Sparrel said.

So the talk went on while Shellenberger explained about the superiority of oxen over mules in lumbering because they draw heavier loads, require no expensive harness, stand rougher treatment, eat less and cheaper foods and graze at night; and of the number of wedges and wooden mauls and cross-cut saws and axes and spike poles and adzes and peaveys required; and of blacksmithing and the hazards of logging and the carelessness of men even where their necks are in danger.

Cynthia had finished the dishes and was moving the lamp from the table. It flashed against the polished brass of Reuben's compass. "That was the first time he ever called me anything. Cynthia. He says it so nice. I hope we haven't put you out, Cynthia . . . I don't reckon many a man would say it about keeping a supper waiting for them. 'It was slow going and made us late.' You're in love with him. You've been different since that night he came and you put on flowers and a white cloth . . . I guess things just happen to a body. They happen deep in you when you don't know it, and then one day, like this, suddenly they come out and there they are."

The coming of Shellenberger had not yet destroyed the singular distinction of mood the Sabbath brought to Wolfpen. Since the days of Saul Pattern it had been set apart by the ceremonial of peace and rest from daily toil and elevated above the other days by a touch of solemnity. Church services were rare. Possibly for that reason the



She Was Fascinated by His Zeal and the Reality of the Performance.

she carried in the presence of these men, and in the slight deference with which she greeted him. He thought of Julia, with her grace and quiet competence, as the beautiful portent of the future years of Cynthia. And so thinking, he came through the barnyard gate. His eyes were on the house, trying to see through it the kind of men whose foresight and energy had built it in this removed place.

Julia had just come to the porch on her way to her flower-beds.

"You are back early, Reuben."

"Yes. I wanted to have a look at the last lines we ran yesterday. The others all went to Dry Creek."

He sat at the table plotting the lines and sketching in the creeks they had crossed and the trees at the corners. Then he journeyed in his mind over the course he had run, contracting it again to the scale of the map and thinking how odd the mind can get turned around, and be unhappy until its map and the one on paper coincide. He examined the yellowed deeds and drew lightly the course to be followed for the next day.

Cynthia came into the kitchen. She was surprised to find herself looking immediately into his eyes.

"Oh! Excuse me," she said.

"Not at all."

"Surveying? And on Sunday?"

"There are so many things to be surveyed here, you have to use every day and Sunday too."

"It's a good day for surveying."

"It's too good to be long indoors. I have finished anyway. I was trying to get yesterday straight in my mind, and projecting tomorrow."

Cynthia stood by the table looking at him and at his map, with an artless and unconfused silence, more becoming than speech. She had a way of lifting her head and offering a simple smile that flushed delicately over her face and into her eyes, and became radiant under the coil of rich dark hair.

In this isolated privacy he felt that he was seeing her for the first time. He thought quickly over the weeks he had been here. Always there had been other people, putting strains on relationships simply because they were physically present. When he had seen her and been affected by her, the consciousness of Sparrel, or Julia, or the brothers, or the other men, had been there, too, and there was no telling what part of the completed effect was provoked by the graceful and sensitive young girl. Now, Julia was in the garden, beyond this new aura, and all the men were far away on Dry Creek, leaving this moment to Cynthia.

"Do you like it up here?" she asked. But even before she spoke, she felt how irrelevant to the rich and powerful underflow of feeling between them was the convention that nothing really exists until it has been dragged forth from its privacy and trimmed, distorted and then sewn up into words.

And there began two movements through time: the significant but unvoiced understandings and the commonplace of talk.

"I never liked a place better," he said. "Do you like it?"

"It's my home. A body just naturally likes home."

"Well, not always. People do a lot of moving about. Do you ever wish to go out in the world?"

"I've been to Pikeville. And I'm going over there this fall to the Institute for the winter. Some day I'm to go down the river to the Ohio."

"My people live right on the Ohio river. You can see the mouth of Sandy and the big bend in the Ohio from our porch. And see the big steamboats come around it. In the night-time, when there is a moon, they look like a great swan with a black neck and a string of red and green heads around it. I guess that sounds kinds of funny."

"Oh, no. I like to think that way about things."

They both felt suddenly confused.

"It's a fine day," Reuben said. "Could we walk, or sit somewhere a while?"

"Let's do," she said.

They strolled across the yard to the path along Julia's garden fence. Julia was among her sweetpeas pulling off the faded blooms.

"You certainly have a fine garden, Mrs. Pattern," Reuben said.

"It's not quite so good this year," Julia replied.

The soft part of the afternoon lay quiet over the valley.

"We're going to sit a little while up there on the rock by the sycamore," Cynthia said.

"Well, don't go far," Julia said, following them with her eyes to the shaded spot by the creek in full view of the house and garden.

They felt strangely happy to be removed from all places where they had been in company with other people, and to be alone together in a new place whose only associations were those they were now making.

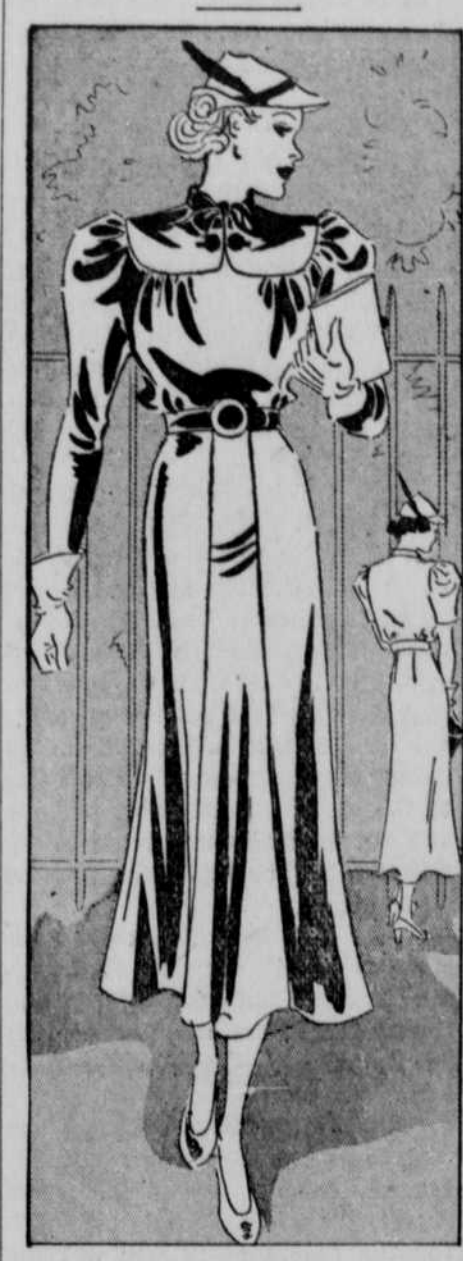
"We found some nice spots back in the woods," Reuben said, "I like the way the hollows fork off on each side of Wolfpen, like ribs on a wahoo leaf."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Psychology in Business

A young woman in the fur department of a big London store was found to be giving wrong change and to be rude and very snappy to customers. Instead of discharging her the firm sent her to a psychology expert, who discovered that when she was a baby, a cat had jumped into her cradle. She was in consequence not at her best in the fur department. She was sent to the umbrella department and is now on her best behavior.

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-WONDER YOU COULDN'T MAKE UP YOUR MIND! JUST LIKE A WOMAN!

SAY - WHO DOES SHE THINK SHE IS? TELL HER SHE'S LUCKY IF SHE GOES TO THE DANCE WITH THE WATER BOY!

CAN I BE EXCUSED FROM PRACTICE TODAY, COACH? I COULDN'T SLEEP LAST NIGHT - AND MY HEAD ACHE!

NOW, LISTEN, DEXTER - THIS CAN'T GO ON! HAVE YOU BEEN BREAKING MY "NO COFFEE" RULE?

AW - WHAT IF YOU HAVE? TELL HIM COFFEE NEVER HURT YOU ANY - YOU'RE NO SISSY!

MR. COFFEE-NERVES

WELL - WE LOST THE FIRST GAME, IN SPITE OF TONY'S TOUCHDOWN! - AND YOU WEREN'T EVEN ON THE FIELD! WHY DID THE COACH BENCH YOU?

AW - BECAUSE I BROKE ONE MEASLY TRAINING RULE! HE WANTED ME TO QUIT COFFEE AND SWITCH TO POSTUM!

TELL HER TO KEEP OUT OF THIS! WHEN DID SHE START COACHING FOOTBALL, ANYWAY?

WELL... IF YOU WANT TO SEE ME ANY MORE, YOU BETTER DO AS THE COACH SAID! I DON'T LIKE A QUITTER!

IF YOU FEEL THAT WAY... I SUPPOSE I MIGHT AS WELL TRY IT!

CURSES! I'M LICKED! POSTUM ALWAYS RUNS ME OUT OF BOUNDS!

MR. COFFEE-NERVES

30 DAYS LATER

WELL - HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE HIGH-SCORING CHAMPION OF THE STATE?

FINE! BUT THEN, I'VE FELT LIKE A MILLION DOLLARS EVER SINCE I SWITCHED TO POSTUM!

MR. COFFEE-NERVES

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