

Periwinkle House

By Opie Read

Illustrated by
R. H. Livingstone

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SYNOPSIS

CHAPTER I—The time is the late '60s or early '70s and the scene a steambond on the Mississippi river. All the types of the period are present and the floating palace is distinguished by meriment, dancing and gallantry. There are the customary drinking and gambling also. Virgil Drace, a young northern man, is on his way south on a mission of revenge. He meets an eccentric character in the person of one Liberty Shottle, who is constantly tempting the goddess of chance. They form a singular compact.

CHAPTER II

Drace sat musing over the strange creature who had just left him, but soon his mind flowed down another channel, far different from a whim or an amusement—his mission in the South, secret, grim and desperate. But life on a river steambond in that day left little time for brooding for, a few moments after Shottle left to risk his liberty and Drace's hundred, a roustabout thrust his head in at the door and announced that down on the deck there was to be a throwing and tying match. The big fireman of the Leona was about to encounter Vicksburg Joe for the championship of the River.

In an instant Drace was on his feet, all his instincts keen and ready to jump. He was something of a boxer and wrestler, but he had not been taught in this peculiar art of tying an adversary once one has thrown him. And there was that in his mind which made the acquisition of this knowledge seem to him desirable indeed.

As he joined a group of men making their way below, he overheard the Colonel, Miss Lucy's admirer, explaining the gentle pastime. "Tying a man once you have thrown him," the Colonel was saying, "is the climax of prowess. I saw Cal Blodgett throw and tie Nick Pavin at a barbecue at Mount Zion campground, and I have cause to remember it, for the young lady I went with deserted me for the hero, sir—actually stuck flowers into his hair. Here we are."

Two enormous fellows were struggling, while nearby lay a convenient rope. Finally Vicksburg Joe tied the fireman, and he lay helpless, unable to get up.

"I will give you five dollars if you can throw me and tie me that way," called Drace to the victor when the excitement had a little subsided.

Joe looked at Drace a moment. The young man looked powerful enough to be dangerous, but—five dollars was five dollars. He smiled, bowed, spread out the wrinkled rug and took Drace by the hand to lead him forth. To the astonishment of all, Drace threw Master Joe; but he could not tie the champion.

"Show me how it's done," said Virgil, "and I'll give you the money."

For a long time, and until the Colonel and Shottle were worn out with waiting, the two struggled; and so apt was the student that he succeeded finally in turning the master over and tying him. But it seemed that the burly champion was too willing, and Drace insisted on another fall. And now, though the struggle was genuine on Joe's part, Drace tied him. Still more, another five promised, and Virgil was willing to quit.

"Finest sport I ever had!" he said as he turned away to the upper deck again to avoid the questions and felicitations showered upon him.

Drace was musing—not, it must be confessed, upon the serious purposes which had brought him to the South, but upon that girl of the red roses—when Shottle appeared again. Liberty stood in his presence, not with a droop but straight in the manly resolution to discharge the duties an adverse fate had thrust upon him. In the belief that it would make him look more like a slave, he now wore his coat turned wrong side out.

"Master, I salute you," he remarked. "All right," said Drace. "But turn your coat. I want my slave, the grinder of my mill, to appear respectably clad. You may sit down."

"I thank you, sir."

"You didn't last long."

"No, master. The tangled-haired hag kicked me sidewise, like a cow. In only two pots! But what can you expect of a man that has an ace-full beaten? How long can a man preserve his freedom at that rate? And a fellow with a spindle chin and a nose no bigger than the average wart beat me with four jacks. Crushed me! And he would have crushed Julius Caesar just the same. Well, after all, freedom has many responsibilities. As a slave I'll cultivate what virtues I can get hold of, and look toward old age and a cabin on the hillside. And now, as it is natural for every man to hide his degradation, will you permit me to call you Virgil in the presence of other people?"

"I thought you didn't believe in the

natural thing! But all right; I grant your request. And now I suppose I'd better give you some pocket-change. It isn't well for even a slave to be broke."

The slave's face brightened with hope. "You couldn't make it as much as five dollars, could you?"

"No, thirty cents."

Shottle took the money and sat drooping. Drace gave him a cigar, and they smoked for a time in silence. At last Shottle looked toward Drace, his face guiltless of the whimsical humor that had hitherto possessed it.

"Master," he said, "I don't want to be inquisitive, and if I'm prying into what's none of my business, I won't mind your saying so. But I want to be a faithful slave, and I can serve you best if I know what—what are my master's purposes in life. For example, was there any special reason for your learning to throw and tie that way? Is there anybody in particular I could help you to put the rope on?"

Drace made no answer for a moment, but bent a searching eye upon his new servant. Somehow the man's soul seemed to shine transparent in his face; and through it Drace saw sincerity; moreover the longing of youth for comradeship was strong within his lonely soul and won him from reticence.

"Liberty," he said, "did you ever hear of a man named Stepho la Vitte?" Liberty nodded. "Yes, I've heard of him; they say he's an outlaw, a smuggler."

"And worse," said Drace. "He's the man who—Liberty, give me your word, your oath, that you'll keep this a sacred secret!"

Liberty gave his word and his oath with a certain quaint dignity, and Drace went on:

"Liberty, before the war my father, Alfred Drace, was manager of a line of steamboats on the Ohio. In his employ was the creole Stepho la Vitte. After a time it came to my father's knowledge that Stepho was not only dishonest in ordinary dealings but had been guilty of piracy along the Gulf coast. And so my father dismissed Stepho from a position which the creole's dishonesty had made lucrative and valuable to him.

"Just after that," Drace went on, "the war broke out. La Vitte became a guerrilla—one of the men of Quantrell's stamp, who kept out of the army but who gathered in bands and lived by rapine along the border. I was only a little boy, Liberty, when La Vitte's band of guerrillas crossed the Ohio near Cincinnati and raided the little town where we lived. But the horror of that night still burns like a flame in my brain, Liberty."

Drace stopped, drew from a breast pocket a card and handed it to Shottle. On it was written in bold black characters: "Stepho la Vitte, with the compliments of Alfred Drace's son Virgil."

Shottle read the card, then looked inquiringly at Drace:

"Liberty," the young man explained, "those guerrillas under La Vitte burned our little town and killed nearly every grown man in it. For word was brought of their coming, and the men—nearly all of them married men or old—who had not gone to the war seized weapons and went out to defend their houses.

"They were massacred almost to a man. . . . And it was not plunder alone that led them to choose our little town for outrage, Liberty, but a passion for revenge. For next morning my father was found hanging to



And on His Breast Was Pinned a Card That Read: "Alfred Drace, With the Compliments of Stepho la Vitte."

a tree. And on his breast was pinned a card that read: 'Alfred Drace, with the compliments of Stepho la Vitte.'

Liberty looked again at the card he held in his hand, then handed it back to Drace. "I reckon I understand now, master," he said. "You are hunting this Stepho to—"

"To hang him as high as Haman and to pin that card on his breast," declared Drace passionately. "While my mother lived, Liberty, I could do nothing. You know how women are in such matters. But—she died this spring, Liberty, after long years of grieving for the man that a—d outlaw foully murdered. Now I am free

to strike for my honor and my father's memory—to carry justice to that murderer."

With an awkward gesture Liberty stretched forth a hand, caught Drace's and wrung it warmly. "You're like—like Hamlet!" he exclaimed. "I'll do my best to help you, Hamlet. Let me be your Horatio as well as your slave."

Drace returned the fervent hand-clasp. "My Horatio!" he agreed. And then, solemn again, he added: "It's a worthy cause, Liberty. It's not alone my private vengeance, but the wrongs of a whole community that the ordinary machinery of justice can never right. Why, Liberty, dozens of men were murdered by those drunken fiends; little children were trodden under the hoofs of their horses, and women— Near our house, Liberty, an old couple live in poverty. At the time of Stepho's raid their son and his young wife lived next door to them; they were well-to-do and prosperous. The day of the raid the son had received ten thousand dollars from the sale of some lands. When rumor of the raiders came, he hurriedly hid the money somewhere in the neighborhood, scribbled on a piece of paper the location of that treasure and gave it to his wife before he went out with the other men to fight. Next morning he had been shot; and the young wife had been carried off by those devils—her child with her, after the Indian custom, to keep her from suicide. No one knows what became of her. Nor has that money ever been found. Liberty, if I could find Stepho, get him in my power, I believe I could at least learn what became of that poor young woman—possibly find that paper and learn where to find the money those poor people so sorely need. For once, some years ago, a mysterious fellow was caught digging about their yard. . . . But I've talked enough, Liberty. Action! Do you know any more about La Vitte?"

"Not much," replied Liberty. "I believe he is often seen up the River, and sometimes down on the coast. He has his friends, and nearly everybody else is afraid of him. So you—we must keep dark till we get our chance. And you mustn't show your feelings in your face. Remember, master, you're just a young man out to see the world. H'm—here comes Colonel Josh. Suppose we talk to him. He was a mule-buyer in the war and may know something about Stepho."

The door was darkened. In came Joshua Mortimer, the man whom Miss Lucy had plied with questions concerning Drace. He had dodged in for a smoke, he said, when Shottle had introduced him to his master, and it was evident that it was his aim to impress Drace with his military bearing. He had not been actually in the army, but had acquired the title of colonel from his adventurous work of buying mules for the Confederate government. The Colonel "took it" that Drace was from the North.

"Yes, but some of my people were from the South."

"Ah! I congratulate you, sir. I have a match, thank you." Drace had offered him a light. He filled his pipe with tobacco crumbs dug out of his breeches pocket, and long legs crossed, sat back to enjoy himself.

"Well, sir, Mr. Drace, the war has been ended some years; and if we forget an evil as easily as a virtue, sir, it will soon be only a dim memory. I had enough of it." "But you were not really in the army, Colonel Josh," the slave spoke up.

The Colonel pulled at his pipe, stretched his neck and appeared to fish for something down in his collar. "Liberty, my duty was scouting and the incidental picking up of mules, as the records of the War Department will be pleased to exhibit, sir." After a few minutes' more conversation the Colonel rose. "I will now go back to the ballroom," he declared himself. "Liberty, I came aboard to-night with your third cousin, Miss Lucy Sanders."

"That so? Come down, Marse Drace, and I'll introduce you to her."

"I think, sir, that she has retired," the Colonel was quick to interpose, realizing that he had thoughtlessly suggested an invasion of his own territory. "Not while there is a fiddle going," said Shottle. "Come on."

Into Virgil's heart flew the hope that the slave's cousin might be the barbaric girl with the roses; there could be no mistaking her, after meeting her, for in that brief gaze he had carried away a master's painting of her, eased in his mind. So he was quick to hasten below with Shottle, the Colonel panting behind them.

Miss Lucy had just left off dancing. No, she was not the thrilling barbarian, but Drace swallowed his disappointment dry, like a swamp man taking quinine. Shottle might have reflected that never before had his kinswoman been so glad to see him. On his arm she hung as she cooed, but her eyes were on Drace, and he listened, not to her words, but to the music of her accent, soft as the notes of a dove. Like a frost-bitten Shanghai, the Colonel stood first on one foot and then on the other. Drace politely asked Miss Lucy to dance with him, and the Colonel dropped onto a chair. Shottle sat beside him.

"She takes to him like a duck to water," said the slave, looking after his master and his third cousin. The Colonel sighed. "Liberty Shottle," he said, "I am going to tell you something."

"Out with it."

"It is not a matter to be spoken of so lightly, sir."

"All right; go ahead." "Liberty Shottle, it is this: I am deeply in love with your cousin, and before the dawn of another day I shall pop the question to her."

"Pop the deuce! Lend me ten dollars."

"You shock me, sir."

"Tell you what I'll do," persisted Shottle. "Let me have ten, and I'll make her a speech in your favor that will kink her hair."

"Shottle!"

"And I can do it. They've got my speech on the Periclean Age hung up right now at the university. The governor of North Carolina said to the governor of South Carolina, just after making his historic remark about its



"She Takes to Him Like a Duck to Water," Said the Slave, Looking After His Master and His Third Cousin.

being a long time between drinks, that it was the most powerful speech he ever heard."

The Colonel scowled, and swore his refusal to enter into any financial transaction involving his heart; and Shottle, realizing that his efforts were vain, sank down into melancholy silence. Miss Lucy, meanwhile, was introducing Drace to some of her friends, not to young women, but to men and to ladies well advanced along the path. Drace soon realized that this society was far from the caricature that Shottle and Colonel Josh might reflect; for the most part it was composed of ladies of exquisite refinement, and men strong in the dignity of medicine or the law.

"You have not chosen an opportune time to visit New Orleans," an old judge remarked to Drace. "We are forced to live under the infamy of a carpetbag government, sir. Political scoundrels, who in the North could never attain to even the meanest office, come down here where we are disfranchised and elect themselves legislators, governors—representatives of parishes that they have never seen. Heavy taxes are levied, and they pocket the money. The governor was not elected, but named by a gang of freebooters. The real citizens of the state have no vote. Their former slaves and the crooks who now manage them control the ballot-box. This is the true state of affairs. Wait till you see New Orleans, sir."

This talk was too serious for Miss Lucy. She plucked Drace away to walk with her, and she hung laughing on his arm as everywhere his eyes searched for the girl with the roses in vain! And presently he excused himself and went disconsolately to bed.

CHAPTER III

Next day the Leona reached New Orleans. To Drace his first look into the countenance of the famous old city was a disappointment; it had not the quick throbb; its pulse was slow and rhythmic. The levee was too broad and diffuse to appear active. The buildings looked mean and low. Romance and history had painted for him a picture too lively to color. But soon the charm of this half-lazy delta life began to reveal itself to him. The town was ruled like a true French city, it sang. Paris minuetted in the terror of the Revolution, and her youngest daughter in America, singed with powder, and with bloodstains on her dainty feet, danced to the music of her own improvised gait. Drace saw the carpetbag governor driving through the street, surrounded by an escort of black and mulatto cavalry. From a balcony came a gunshot, and an enormous negro in white gloves, sitting beside his political master, tumbled out upon the ground but the carriage did not halt in its speed, and the hoofs of the cavalry beat upon the murdered wretch. In a doorway an old man sat fiddling for his grandchildren to dance on the flagstones.

(To Be Continued.)

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NOTICE OF FINAL REPORT

Estate No. 1854 of Mary Facka, deceased in the County Court of Lincoln County, Nebraska.
The State of Nebraska, to all persons interested in said Estate take notice that the Administrator has filed a final account and report of his administration and a petition for final settlement and discharge as such Administrator and for declaration of heirship and distribution of proceeds which have been set for hearing before said court on October 2d, 1922, at 10 o'clock a. m. when you may appear and contest the same.
Dated September 9th, 1922.
WM. H. C. WOODHURST,
Seal County Judge.

NOTICE OF PETITION
Estate No. 1911 of August Sodtcoot, deceased in the County Court of Lincoln County, Nebraska.
The State of Nebraska: To all persons interested in said Estate take notice that a petition has been filed for the probating of said estate and appointment of Christian Sodtcoot as Administrator of said estate, which has been set for hearing herein on October 10th, 1922 at 10 o'clock a. m.
Dated September 16th, 1922.
WM. H. C. WOODHURST,
Seal County Judge.

Wm. E. Shuman, Atty.
NOTICE TO CREDITORS.

In the County Court of Lincoln County, Nebraska.
In the Matter of the Estate of Rose M. Knox, Deceased.
Notice is hereby given to any and all persons having claims and demands against the estate of the said Rose M. Knox, deceased, that the 17th day of January, 1923, has been set and appointed as the day for the reception, examination, adjustment and allowance of lawful claims and demands of all persons, against said estate and that the County Court of Lincoln County, Nebraska, will at said time receive, examine, adjust and allow all such claims against said estate, as provided by law, at the County Court Room in the Courthouse, in the City of North Platte, Lincoln County, Nebraska, and all persons so interested in said estate, will appear at said time and place and duly present their said claims and demands in the manner required by law, or show cause for not so doing, and in case any of said claims or demands shall not be presented on or prior to the said 17th day of January, 1923, the same shall be forever barred.
IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have signed this notice and affixed the seal of said court this 18th day of September, 1922.
WM. H. C. WOODHURST
(SEAL) County Judge

NOTICE!
In the District Court of Lincoln County, Nebraska.
Mearl E. Jacox, Plaintiff,

vs.
Jones, wife of Joseph T. Jones, deceased, her first, real, and true name unknown, Cora True, True, her husband, his first, real and true name unknown, Ed Miller, Miller, his wife, her first, real and true name unknown, Will Jones, Jones, his wife, her first, real and true name unknown, Ward Jones, Jones, his wife, her first, real and true name unknown, Frank Jones, Jones, his wife, her first, real and true name unknown, Flora Stewart, Stewart, her husband, his first, real and true name unknown, their respective heirs, devisees, legatees, and personal representatives, all other persons interested in the estate of Joseph T. Jones, deceased, and all other persons claiming any interest of any kind in the following described premises, to-wit: The Southwest Quarter (SW¹/₄) of Section Nine (9), Township Eleven (11), Range Twenty-Six (26), Lincoln County, Nebraska, their real names unknown. Defendants.

The above named defendants will take notice that on the 12th day of September, 1922, Mearl E. Jacox, the plaintiff, filed his petition in the District Court of Lincoln County, Nebraska, against the above defendants, the object and prayer of which is to quiet title in the plaintiff to the following described premises to-wit: The Southwest Quarter (SW¹/₄) of Section Nine (9), Township Eleven (11), Range Twenty-Six (26), Lincoln County, Nebraska. The plaintiff prays that the defendant be required to set out their claims and that in the

event they fail to do so that they be forever barred therefrom and that the plaintiff be declared owner of said premises. You are required to answer said petition on or before the 30th day of October 1922.
Dated this 14th day of September, 1922.
Mearl E. Jacox, Plaintiff.
By D. E. Harper, His Att'y.

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