

The Finding of Jasper Holt

BY
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"The Obsession of Victoria Gracen," etc.

Jamie looked at her with round, wondering eyes, and his paternal frown grey. He did not like to have his thrilling story spoiled by being told it was not true, but then, his new aunt had pretty eyes and a smile that was good. Besides, she had promised to tell him a story, so, with mental reservations, he said:

"Aw right, I won't!" and sighed to relinquish this choice bit of gossip, even during the period of his aunt's stay.

It was a relief to Jean that her sister came just then and sent the children off to play, sitting down for a real visit about home and their dear ones.

Finally there came a pause in their conversation about home and the two sisters looked at each other contentedly, glad to be together again after the long separation.

"Jean, dear," said Eleanor eagerly, "I hope you're going to have a lovely time while you're here. I've told every man in the region about you and they are dying to call on you. I don't know how many have tried to bribe me to let them be first. There are no end of charming young fellows here. The Post being so near brings some of them, you know, and they love to come over to our house and get a real home meal and a glimpse of something like what they are used to. There's Charlie Evans, you'll like him I know. He's quite serious—thought of studying for the ministry at one time, but I understand he began to be rather skeptical and gave it up. You'll be just the one to do a little missionary work on him. You have great talents in that direction I remember. Mother has been telling me what wonders you've worked in your Sunday school class at the mission. And there's Freeman Thorne, he's grave and serious enough to suit your solemn mood; and there are scores of others. You'll have flowers and invitations, more than you can attend to, pretty soon. We've lots of plans made already to help you have a good time! But I want to give you a little warning, dear. A kind of constraint came in her voice. "Don't speak about Jasper Holt unless you have to, and then the very briefest word. He isn't in good repute at all, indeed, he isn't I understand how grateful you feel, of course; you weren't in a position to judge what kind of a fellow he was. I don't suppose one's manners would show up very badly in the woods when two people had been drowning and barely escaped with their lives. People don't think of manners at such a time."

"Eleanor, he was a perfect gentleman," put in Jean indignantly. There were lots of chances to show unrefinement, and he was a perfect gentleman every time. You don't understand, Eleanor."

"Well, now dear, you'll have to trust me a little. I know just what he is, a bad man—a really bad young man! Papa wouldn't have your name mixed up with his for anything in the world! I know you can't be convinced, just now, because you come through an unusual experience together, and I'm sure I'm glad if he was half decent—it wasn't to be expected—though it's what I've always claimed, that a really nice girl always has the upper hand of a man, even a bad man and he dare not be rude to her. Then, of course, it was quite thoughtful of him to leave these roses the way he did and go away without any message. I'll give him credit for that. But it was most unfortunate that he should have been the one to save you! Papa would not at all approve of your having anything more to do with him whatever."

"That is just what he said!" said Jean quietly.

"What he said!" exclaimed her sister. "Really! Then he does realize a little what people think of him! Well, that is a commendable attitude, of course, and if you think it necessary, you might write a formal little note, very brief, and thank him for bringing you home, but make him understand that he is not to presume—of course, you prefer, I might do it for you. On second thought, I think mamma would prefer that I—"

"It is not in the least necessary, Eleanor; I have thanked Mr. Holt already, and he understands perfectly that it would not be agreeable to you to have him come here. You said you had sewing to do, don't you want me to help you with something? I'd love to."

There was a dignity in the set of the head and the firm curve of lip that made Mrs. Harrington survey her young sister with wonder and silence as they arose and went toward the house. The way can had set aside the topic of young Holt was mastered. Mrs. Harrington had not said nearly all she meant to say on the subject, but somehow she did not see the way clear to open the subject again at present. She looked at Jean uneasily from time to time as they sat together in the house, or went about from room to room, flying from one

topic to another as people will do who have been long separated. Three distinct times did Mrs. Harrington essay to give an extended dissertation on the evil deeds and reputation of Jasper Holt, and each time the subject was summarily closed, and quietly set aside by Jean as if she had no interest whatever in the young man. It gave the woman almost an uneasy feeling, and actually disturbed her seriously, so that she was threatened with one of her nervous headaches; and after lunch, having had to confess to her husband that she had made no headway in doing his bidding about enlightening her sister with regard to his enemy, she retired to her darkened room to sleep. Jean, glad to escape to quiet, fled to her roses.

Broodingly, as a mother would touch her little child while it sleeps, Jean hovered over those flowers. The door was locked safe from intrusion, and the children sent to a neighbor's that the house might be quiet. She drew the little table near the great window chair, and placed the bowl of roses upon it.

They filled the bowl, lying heavy headed in great sheaves over its rim on their cool, luscious leaves, those leaves of that peculiar green touched with burnt sienna on tips and veins, that speak of a high state of cultivation, and rare stock. She laid her cheek against the cool yellow of the flowers, then her lips, then her closed eyelids, while she let her thoughts rove back to the yesterday and the time when their giver had been at her side; the words he had spoken, the way he had looked, the sound of his voice, and the firm clasp of his hand. It all rushed over her in a tumult of joy and sorrow. This was the man she knew, so kind, so tender, so strong, so true; and that other was the one they thought he was! She could never feel that way about him no matter what people told her, for she had seen what they had not. If they had been there in her place and he had been that strong companion and friend they might have understood. She would, of course, respect their wishes, and not do anything to trouble those who loved her; but she would trust him always.

And now there stirred in her mind the remembrance of that paper, the disposition of which she must decide at once. How should she get it to him? It would not do to send for him. He could not, probably would not, come if she had. Even a letter which did not explain too much would be a difficult thing to manage, at least until she knew the way to the post office and could mail it herself. If it were carried by a servant or a member of the family it might be subject to inspection. Yet the paper ought to go to him at once. Still, of course, in her keeping it was at least out of his enemies' hands, if enemies they were, these dear people of her own family. Oh, why were things at once so bitter and so sweet in this hard, bright world? She buried her face in the roses again and let their sweetness rush over her. As she did so a slight rustling sound startled her, and when she lifted up her face and then pressed it close again she heard it once more. Curious, with a fleeting hope floating through her brain, she sat up and began to touch the buds and blossoms softly, eagerly, searchingly with her fingers. Yes, there it was, that sound of crackling paper!

She folded back the petals of the largest bud, and there, laid stealthily in like another flower leaf, she found a tiny bit of folded paper. Eagerly she took it out and opened it, for it was very thin and folded close, and there was writing, small and fine, but bodily, distinctly clear:

"I have to go away. For how long I do not know. I shall not forget my promise. You may trust me. I hope you have a happy time."

The tears were in her eyes as she read the brief message over and over again, and laid her lips upon it. Bright drops fell upon the roses and soaked like dew drops.

She searched the other blossoms carefully, but there were no more messages, and she had known there would not be. He would not think it "square" to write more of the things that were in his heart, and she loved him the more for his sense of honor toward her.

Then she remembered the water contract.

Now, what should she do with the paper? She could not give it to him while he was away. It might await his return and be lost if she trusted it to the mail. She must wait for a few days and see if he came back; and meantime she would listen and watch as far as lay in her power, that no harm came near his rights. If worst came to worst she would confide in her father. He was wise, and he would understand. He would feel as she did about this matter if he knew all. The difficulty would be to make him know all through the medium of a mere letter. But for the present she would

wait. A sense of desolation settled down upon her when she realized that Holt was gone away; yet she was at peace about it. At least she need not always be fearing lest her relatives should be unpleasant to him, or that embarrassing circumstances might arise where she would be obliged to choose between her sense of loyalty to her lover and her sense of loyalty to her relatives in whose home she was a guest. But for a little time she put away these thoughts and let her happy heart dwell on the fact that she had sent these glorious roses with their secret message; and finally she lay down for a rest and slept, with one great yellow bud nestled against her cheek.

CHAPTER III.

The days which followed fulfilled all Mrs. Harrington's prophecies so far as fate was concerned. One round of pleasure succeeded another. The days were filled with picnics and rides and the evenings with merry makings of all descriptions at all the houses in the region round about Hawk valley. There were not wanting many young officers and others who were eager to teach the sweet young stranger from the east to ride. Horses especially trained and gentled for her use were brought as offerings at her shrine, and fowers from near and far were sent to her. The Harrington children were in danger of becoming chronic dyspeptics on the surplus of the confections with which she was constantly supplied; and there was no opportunity for her to become lonely or morbid as the summer days sped by in a round of pleasure.

Yet through it all Jean moved, lovely and serene as a summer morning.

"She acts as if she had been in society for years," complained Eleanor to her husband. "Nothing moves her out of her quiet dignity. She doesn't gush or become enthusiastic at anybody. The sky and flowers and the children please her more than all the adulation she receives. One would almost judge her engaged or married already. I wonder if it can be there is a sweetheart at home we don't know about. I must write and ask mamma. I can't make it out. I thought Captain Hawthorne would surely make an impression, he has such charming manner, and is so deferential to women; but she looked at him today with that sweet far away expression exactly as she might have looked at her grandfather. Of course it made him desperately determined to get her attention but she never seemed to know or care. One would almost think it was a studied pose to get as many at her feet as possible, if one didn't know Jean better."

"Did you ever think that perhaps her thoughts are fixed that seconded Holt?" her husband asked, wondering where the deuce he is. "I'll be 'Nonsense!" said his wife sharply. "She never mentions him. She has forgotten all about him. I think she was extremely annoyed at our making so much of his bringing her home."

"Well, don't you be too sure. I wonder where the deuce he is. I'll be willing to bet he's up to some mischief."

"Don't worry," said his wife. "I'm only too glad he's taken himself away. I hope he'll keep hidden until Jean is safely home again so we won't be annoyed."

"I hope he'll come back and let us see what he's up to," growled her husband as she left the room.

And at last one day shortly before Jean was to return to her father's house, Holt came back.

With him appeared Scathlin, riding into town daily, side by side with the young man, on one of Holt's horses; looking older, with a sheepish expression and a shift eye that failed to meet men's gaze. It was rumored that Holt had found him with a broken leg, nursed him into strength again and brought him home. Those who knew Scathlin felt that Holt's power over him was more than that of gratitude.

It happened that Jean was riding with the Captain one morning when they came down to the post office together, and the glad smile with which she greeted Holt was followed by a frightened expression as she recognized Scathlin. Her escort was so astonished at having to lift his hat to Holt that he failed to notice her startled glance.

No one could have told by Holt's grave how that he was meeting the one of all the earth to him. Only the light in his eyes told of his joy in seeing her once more, and reassured the girl as she glanced from Scathlin back to his own face. It was Captain Hawthorne's annoyed drawl that recalled her to the present, and of the whirl of joy that the sight of Holt brought.

"Where in the world did you ever meet that scoundrel that he should presume to speak to you?"

A flash of indignation rose to her cheeks, her chin tilted just the slightest bit happily and her eyes held a dangerous light in them.

"Excuse me, Captain Hawthorne. Mr. Holt is my friend. He did me the greatest service one can do for another. He saved my life."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Grayson, I didn't mean to offend you. That alters the case of course. One is always grateful for one's life, and may thank even a dog. You can afford to be generous, sometimes, but have a care! You do not know Holt! It's the only good thing I ever heard of him, that he saved your life. I would it had been my privilege instead of his."

"Thank you, Captain Hawthorne," Jean spoke frigidly, "but you misunderstand me. I am not speaking to Mr. Holt because I am grateful or generous, but because I honor and trust him as a

friend."

"You do not know him, Miss Grayson. He is not a man who anyone trusts."

"It is you who do not know him, Captain Hawthorne. I know him better than you, and I trust him entirely. During our terrible experience together at the time of the wreck I had ample opportunity to test Mr. Holt, and I found him a gentleman and a true friend in every trying situation." And now indeed Jean's tone was unmistakable, and the alarmed captain, who had congratulated himself that he was making pretty good headway with the fair lady, made hasty apologies.

"I beg your pardon, of course," he said humbly. "I'm sure I'm glad to hear that he behaved decently. To tell you the truth I don't know much personally about Holt. I've only taken what others say; and I've always thought his reckless appearance bore out their insinuations. Forgive me if I have annoyed you, and try to forget what I've said. This day is perfect and the road is particularly fine. Shall we try a gallop?"

Jean was glad of the relief from conversation, and kept her horse on a wild gait the most of the way; for her mind was in a tumult. How was she to get that paper to Holt and what should she say in explanation of its being in her possession? The question had been much in her mind during Holt's absence, and she had been unable to decide just what she should do when he returned, but now it must be decided at once, for there ought to be no delay about the paper. The sinister look in the faded blue eye of Scathlin as he looked at her made her feel to keep it in her possession any longer.

The ride at last was ended. It had not been a very great success from the captain's point of view and he went away dejected, while Jean hurried to her room and tried to plan what to do. The sight of Scathlin worried her. If the old man knew what papers the wallet had contained he probably knew the significance of each. The conversation she had overheard seemed to include him in the plot, if plot there was, against Holt. Of course, since he had returned, he would seek out the other two men and explain why he had sent the wallet; and perhaps he had the other missing paper himself, the one that contained valuable information about the location of ore. It was even possible that he knew already that she, his unwilling messenger, had the water contract. He must have known it was in the wallet when he gave it to her and it would be entirely natural for him to think she had taken it out. Something in the gleam of his eye as he looked at her had made her tremble; and she longed to fly straight to Holt and give him the paper openly and openly, but it was a matter could not be handled openly, and she was not a diplomat, therefore she hesitated.

Final after careful thought, and much weeping and tearing up of what she had written she framed a brief note to Holt.

(Continued Next Week.)

Behalf of Son-in-law.

From Judge.

"After all, despite everything that has been said against him, a son-in-law has his admirable side," admitted Farmer Grimm. "If you free your mind in full to the bird man and tell him what you think of him and liken him to what he is, he will puff up and demand his pay and quit. If you boss and bully your son too systematically, he will run away. But, just as long as you feed your son-in-law and do not actually beat and maul him, you can do what you please to him, and he will remain faithful."

Would See It Through.

From the San Francisco Argonaut.

Representative Julius Kahn said at a dinner: "What we call a 'desert' the English call a 'sweet.' Offer an Englishman a desert and he wouldn't understand you. I remember a dinner last year at which we entertained a number of English Tommies. At the end of the 11th course the waiter approached one of them with a huge dish of apple pudding. 'Dessert, sir?' he asked. 'Dessert? Not me! Not when I get a feed like this for nothing!'"

His Choice.

From the Dallas News.

Ragged Rogers—If yer had to work for a livin' what would yer do?
Tired Tim—I'd look for a job makin' spectacles fer eye teeth.

Three First Aeronauts.

From the Christian Science Monitor.

Reviewing the story of aeronautics, somebody has raised a rather absurd question and at the same time given honor where honor is due, to the three first aeronauts. The absurd question is whether or the modern aviator is as brave as were Pilatre de Rozier and the Marquis d'Arlandes when they ascended at Paris, November 21, 1783, in Montgolfier's "flimsy bag filled with hot air from a straw fire." One may answer the question without much hesitation; conditions have changed, but the men involved were brave. Historically, moreover, Pilatre de Rozier and the Marquis d'Arlandes were not, in a sense, the original aeronauts. These were the sheep, the rooster, and the duck which had ascended earlier, the king and queen of France and a great multitude of their subjects breathlessly watching, and descended two miles away in the wood of Vaucresson. The rooster, says history, began to grow, and the sheep to graze; but what the duck did is apparently lost to human knowledge.

The Belgian government has decided to be officially represented on the mission which will go to America in September comprising men prominent in commerce and industry in various of the European allied nations.

The American battleship Idaho, carrying President-elect Pessoa, of Brazil, from New York to Rio Janeiro, stopped yesterday off the coast of the state of Parahyba, while Mr. Pessoa spent the day at Cabedelo, his birth place.

Adequacy are handicapping more than 10 per cent of the American children in attaining normal, healthful development in manhood, according to a recent extensive survey in population centers conducted by the United States public health



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She Hesitated.

"And so you proposed to Ethel last night?" asked the young man's sister.

"Yes, I did," replied her brother, sadly.

"And did she give you any encouragement?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Then have I to congratulate you?"

"No; she refused me!"

"But I thought you said she gave you some encouragement?"

"Well," said the youth reluctantly, "she looked at me three times before she refused me!"

Its Class.

"Do you believe in metempsychosis?" "Never heard of it. Is it a new mind cure?"

Stamps for Fiume.

The Hungarian stamps which the Italian forces seized in Fiume and overprinted with the word Fiume apparently were in use only a short time; for now we learn that the Italians have issued special adhesives for this occupied Hungarian port. These Fiume stamps of Italian printing bear each a scene from a street in the city, with what is apparently the Italian flag flying from one of Fiume's public buildings.

Some fellows seem satisfied to be to the world what tartar is to a horse's teeth.

Wise is the married man who keeps private affairs to himself.

Delicate Mechanism

Despite its scope Swift & Company is a business of infinite details, requiring infinite attention.

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