The IRON HORSE

NOVELIZED BY

EDWIN C. HILL

FROM WILLIAM FOX'S GREAT PICTURE ROMANCE OF THE EAST AND THE WEST

BY CHARLES KENYON AND JOHN RUSSELL

CHAPTER I

BRANDON, THE DREAMER

"Reckon that ought to do for this time. Purty good's far as she goes. Anyway, Rome wasn't built in a day, as the poet says."

Big Dave Brandon threw aside the hammer with which he had given the final whack to the last nail he intended to drive that late winter afternoon. He shook his big head, tossing back a mane of long, black hair, coarse as an Indian's; threw out his arms and slowly raised them in a long, refreshing "stretch" which seemed to rid him of the cramps of unaccustomed indoor labor.

For a few moments he inspected the results of his toil, the all—but—completed shack he had been putting together since the previous autumn, working when opportunity offered or the mood impelled. It was to be an "addition" to the one—story cabin, his home, and little Davy's. His eyes, large, deep—brown, intelligent, humorous—yet the eyes of a dreamer—sparkled with amusement.

"Well, little house, you sure ain't no palace," he said aloud, talking to himself, a habit he had, in common with most dreamers, who find so little in common to discuss with the matter-of-fact people of this world. "Can't say you're goin' to add much beauty or majesty to the capital of the sovereign state of Illinois! Ah, well—"

Fumbling in a side pocket of his soil-stained, faded blue-jeans tucked into much-worn high boots, he withdrew a twist of tobacco, shredded a portion into his short, black pipe, twiddled a red-hot coal from the open fire into the bowl and puffed thoughtfully as he strolled to the door and stood leaning against the jamb in the friendly radiance of the low, descending sun. The chorus of the town's life, little odds and ends of echoing activities of the day's decline, familiar, pleasant, came to his ear—the tinkle-tinkle-clang! of the blacksmith's hammer far down the long, straggling street; the rat-tat-tat from Barlow's cooperage; the whine and snarl from the sawmill near the river; the high-pitched, excited shouts of boys just released from school and hard at a game of "one-old-cat" before the inevitable summons to home and evening chores, and, presently, the sharp whistle of the locomotive of the evening train approaching Springfield from the east. It was this sound which shattered Brandon's reverie, straightened him from his lounging pose at the door jamb, drove the slackness from face and figure and brought to his eyes the reflection of some strange, burning exaltation of spirit: Like a drowsing warhorse stirred suddenly by the blast of battle trumpets, David Brandon was awake, tense-strung as a bow.

Fire died in his pipe. He threw it aside, impatiently. Stepping over the doorsill, he strained his gaze eastward, searching for the thin, blue trail of wood smoke which would betray the progress through the low hills of the incoming train. As he gazed, transfixed, transfigured, a little group of neighbor women, Aunt Marthy Lowden and her sisters of the Dorcas Circle, homeward bound from "weekly meeting" passed the doorway, not three feet distant from him. Aunt Marthy, who adored little Davy, but who was accustomed to confiding to all and sundry that she "never could understand his pap," spoke cheerily:

"Howdy, Mr. Brandon. If you'll send Davy over this evenin', I'll have an apple-pie all ready fer him to tote home fer supper. Don't fergit now."

She shook an admonitory finger in the face of the silent, absorbed figure. Brandon nodded, scarcely hearing what she said, his eyes finding and following the faint smoke plumes to the eastward. Miss Abby Peak, the gaunt spinster who "kept" the principal millinery shop, The New York Store, and who was fashion dictator of hat styles to the ladies of Sprinfield, nudged Aunt Marthy.

"Don't seem like he's a mite grateful, Marthy. There's plenty of folks 'at think that man's cracked in his upper story. Lord knows, he's shiftless enough. Don't do nothin' steady like a man has to if he wants to git ahead."

"Tain't that he's ungrateful, Abby," explained Aunt Marthy, charitably. "Dave Brandon'll do anything a person asks him, 'specially fer them 'at does him a good turn. Don't believe he's really shiftless, fer he works at his serveyin' trade, whenever he gits a job, though jobs seem to be skeerce. Dave's as good-hearted as they come, and the men folks say he's straight as a spoke and allus pays his debts, soon as he gits the money. Trouble is, Dave Brandon's a crank and he's cranked on one subjick. Thinks there's goin' to be a railroad built clear across Ameriky some day. Says the time will come when folks'll be able to travel all the way from New York to Californy in the steam cars and do it in a week. Tells everybody there's millions waitin' fer the men that'll take hold of the projick and push it through. Land sakes! 'F that ain't bein' a crank, I don't know what is!"

"Jest as crazy as a loon," said Abigail Peak. "'Tain't in Nature and I misdoubt it's in religion fer folks to travel that swift. 'Twould snatch a body's breath clean away! We ought to feel pretty sorry fer a boy whose father is tetched in the head as bad as that.'

Glancing over their prim shoulders, the disturbed ladies continued along the plank sidewalk until they reached their corner and disappeared into a side street. Brandon was barely aware of their greeting, oblivious of their comments. He was use-hardened to that point of view from his neighbors. He knew what they thought, what they said. His mind and heart were bruised, painfully, but his enthusiasm glowed. They had beaten him down, but they could not conquer his spirit.

"Why can't they see it?" he asked himself. "It's got to come. It's as plain as the skies above."

The train whose progress Brandon had been following as it puffed its jerky way through the hills to the State Capital, reached the end of its journey from Meredosia on the Illinois River and saluted the good citizens of Springfield with a triumphant toot as it came to stand at the rude frame station on the other side of the town. A fair quarter of the population of Springfield in that year of grace, 1853, might have been found in and about the "deepo," for the arrival of the daily train on the Northern Cross Railroad was the great event of every twenty-four hours, scarcely ever to be matched for drama with any other local happening.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Pungent Paragraphs

It's a cinch that auto thieves will observe the muffler cut-out law.—Dallas Journal.

It's as easy for the average person to start a spring garden as it is for the weeds to finish it.—Fort Wayne News-Sentinel.

Germany is said to be arming in secret, but it will be al right if she never lets anyone know.—Norfolk Ledger Dispatch.

Well, if Spain develops an air force the Moors will get a little variety in their target practice.—Reading Tribune.

One may be often defeated and yet never licked; and one may even be occasionally licked and never surrender.—Savannah Morning News.

A girl should never marry a man who throws her money away as fast as she can make it.—Harrisbury Patriot.

Another sign of spring is when the small boy hides the rake and the carpet beater.—Worcester Post.

In the tid of the suffering, money does far more than talk.—Chicago Daily News.

A Night at The Show.

From Northern Daily Telegraph.

He—I took Maud to a musical evening last night.

She—Was it good?

He—I don't know. I didn't hear much of it. Maud was telling me how fond she is of music.

BREEME HOUSE

By Katherine Newlin Burt

19

She bent her head a little, and he went out, going to further punishment with slow, doubtful steps, revolving ambigous speeches in his brain, conscious, as he revolved them, of their flimsiness as defences against Mr. Unterberg.

That gentleman, however, received him with show of cheerful cordiality. He had a great deal to say for himself, and it wasn't for a good quarter of an hour that he got down to business. When he did, however, Alec found himself in the hands of a skilled executioner. His worst method seemed to be a bellowing one. The man would not lower his voice. Alec was in terror lest the words should reach even to his father's sick - room. Reproach, coaxing, bluster, insult - they all passed over Alec in a miserable succession. And last came threats.

"Let me tell you, my dear sir, that there's ways of bringing you slippery young gentleman up; pretty sharp ways, too! Now, sir, you don't get me to believe that you ain't able to raise the stuff. I know better. The Van Dyke alone is worth ten times what you owe me."

"It's gone already, - stolen," said Alec.

Unterberg laughed unpleasantly. "You'd better tell that lie to someone else," he jeered. "If it's stolen, I guess there's more than one thief in on the deal."

"I don't know what you mean, said Alec evenly, standing up, "but I've a mind to thrash you."

It was here that tht door behind him opened and shut. He looked round withan oath - he had been tried a little too far that morning - and there stood Sir Geoffery Brooke and Rufus Tremont.

"Excuse the intrruption, Alec," said Sir Geoffery. "Mr. Tremont called in at my place and told me that he had learned in London yesterday, when he called at Mr. Unterberg's address, that you would be receiving a - a Tremont has to tell you probably has - er - an important bearing on the matter in hand, if you'll listen to him for a moment."

Sir Geoffrey had the manner of one who, while decidedly out of his element, felt that he had let himself in for it, and must see it through.

Alec had gripped a chair - back, and stood, his head bent, fairly glaring from one man to the other.

"I am quite able to listen to him," said he; "but I fail to understand what interest he can have in my affairs." He turned and addressed Rufus: "I took it from Miss Wilton's account of an interview she had with you that you were very kindly occupying yourself in the matter of the Van Dyke."

"I have brought it back." said Rufus tranquilly.

Alec dropped the chair - back. His face flushed.

"Good man!" said he heartily. Then, rather shame - facedly, held out his hand. "Good work! You're a wonder. How did you do it?"

Unterberg burst out into a great guffaw.

Rufus moved one step towards him, and fixed him with a look that change that gentleman's complexion in a twinkling. He decided that discretion was, at this juncture, better than insolent bullying. He subsided with almost comical suddenness.

Then, turning towards Alec, Rufus remarker coolly: "I shall be glad to tell you how I traced the Van Dyke and recovered it when we have completed our business, Lord Tremont."

His tone was stiff, and let no doubt as to which member of the party was in the sadle.

"I offer you here now," he added deliberately, "twenty thousand pounds for your Van Dyke."

Alec could never look back upon that moment without a revival of his helpless hatred towards Rufus Tremont. The man stood there as hard as granite, a cool triumph in his eyes. With Unterberg's gloating eye upon him, Alec was as much in Tremont's power as though those sinewy hands had gripped him. He felt that just then he had seen the American at his worst. Here Rufus was restoring to him a beloved possession, the chief glory and treasure of his house, with one hand, and taking it away with the other. Alec could do nothing, say nothing. His brain reeled.

"My father-" he began doubtfully.

"I will arrange with you," broke in Tremont quickly, "not to take possession of the picture during your father's lifetime. Lord Breeme need never know of the transaction."

There was silence. Breeme House was very still while Alec deliberated. There was no one to set lance in rest for the defence of Lady Jane.

"On those conditions I accept,' he said flatly, with eyes on the ground.

Rufus Tremont took out his check-book and began to write. Almost simultaneously Alec did likewise.

In the course of a few moments Breeme House saw the back of the nefarious Mr. Unterberg, after he had handed a receipt in full to Lord Tremont.

As the door of the room closed upon the money-lender, such a sigh of painful relief rent Lord Tremont as went to the heart of Sir Geoffery. Alec threw himself into a chair, and his face wore a look of dazed bewilderment.

Sir Geoffery felt the need of a tactful easing of the situation.

"And now, Tremont, tell us how you managed it all," he asked briskly. "Let's have the heart of the mystery."

"Gladly - thought it's not so fearfully complex, after all, though one may, in a way call it the climax of a drama of which the first act was played about three hundred years ago."

Alec looked up. To do him justice he was game; he forced himself at least to assume a look that was devoid of all resentment. He half simulated and half experienced in fact the interest that his face expressed.

"You see, it seems to have been in the very blood of the American branch of the House of Breeme to acquire the Lady Jane. Perhaps it was to us the symbol of the act of that Cromwellian, Rufus Tremont, who lost his birthright in the cause of democracy. Who knows? I can only say that determination to possess the Van Dyke came down to me as an inherited obligation, which I must fulfill at every sacrifice. It decided me on my career,-to make money. When I had saved my first twenty thousand dollars, I sent it to the well - known picture dealer in London, Northby, and told him....."

"Good heavens!" Lord Tremont ejaculated. "Excuse me-I begin to get the clue to Cardoni. It all comes back. But it was a forgery, that alleged signature of mine on the qermit, just the same."

Rufus Tremont smiled. "No-I think not. But wait; we'll get to that in a moment. I ordered Northby to buy the Van Dyke if it were for sale. He returned the money, saying that it could not be bought. I sent it back, on deposit, and told him to hold it in case it ever came onto the market."

Rufus turned to Sir Geoffery-"Lord Tremont knows this part of the story. He met Northby on his way back from Canada. I'm retailing the incident just for your benefit."

"Most interesting - thanks," commented Erooke.

"Lord Tremont also met, quite involuntarily a male speciman of the human-race calling himself Cardoni. They shared a stateroom.

"What happened next I've only learned since I tracked Cardoni down, this last week, in Paris, and put the fear of gaol in his liver. Cardoni is by profession a copyist of old masters - a wizard at it. He heard the story Northby told to Lord Tremont on the steamer about the Van Dyke, and my order to buy. He saw a chance for business, and kept mum. That evening Lord Tremont and he played a game of cards, as partners, and lost about two hundred dollars. Cardoni paid, at the table, - Lord Tremont to settle with him when they got to their cabin later. There'd been a drink or two - correct me if I'm wrong, Lord Tremont," he interpolated with a smile, and from this point addressed Tremont directly - "and when you had turned into your bunk he handed up to you what you supposed to be an I O U for your share of the loss, which you said you'd find it more convenient to pay him when you reached London. It was as a matter of fact a permit to copy the Van Dyke, to which you scribbled your signature without detecting his little game."

"The dirty dog!" grinned Alec sourly. "I wondered why he didn't turn up for his money, at the hotel in London, as I told him to do. And then I never thought of the fellow again."

"Wonder you didn't recognize him when he came here," commented Sir Geoffrey, - "or at least recall his name."

"Hu! I don't wonder at anything, Alec retorted scathingly, in disgust at himself.

"He's a mighty slick customer, this Cardoni, drawled Rufus, "I'm not easily hood - winkled, but by gad he managed to double cross me, all right!"

"Why - what do you mean? You've git the original back, haven't you? asked Alec, half in panic.

"Yes - I mean as regards the copy. You see, he added, "he was copying the Van Dyke to my order."

There was a dead silence - until Sir Geoffrey, throwing his head back, laughed aloud.

"For goodness' sake, Tremont, he begged. "Cut the thrills! This is too much for our delicate British nerves!"

Rufus laughed with him.

"Sorry, old man," he apologized. "I suppose I'm making the most of it - 'my hour, you know! Why, it's simple enough," he went on. "As soon as Cardoni got to England, he traced my address, and followed up Northby's clue by cabling me at Seattle to the effect that he had the rare opportunity of making a copy of the Breeme Van Dyke, etc., etc. He gave references as to his competence as a copyist, and I cabled him I should be coming over directly and would see him in London. I sailed at once, and he came to my hotel. He told me that he paid a substantial fee to you, Lord Tremont, for the right to copy the portrait, and that his permit was subject to the condition that nothing whatever was to be divulged either by himself or by the party for whom he might make the copy; the proceeds of the ultimate sale of the copy were to be shared between you, he said. He would only do the work on my agreeing not to communicate with any one, yourself included, regarding the matter."

"And you let him go ahead, on the basis of that cock - and - bull story?" questioned Tremont witheringly.

"It was no business of mine to question it," replied Rufus coolly. "And if you come to think of it, why should I not believe it to be quite likely? I didn't know you then, you see." He smiled humorously.

"And later, when you did, it seemed even more likely to be true, what, Tremont? Go ahead," and Alec leaned back again in his chair.

"But why," asked Sir Geoffery, "since you were quite determined to get hold of the original, Tremont, did you worry yourself with Cardoni's offer of a copy?"

"We - ell," drawled Tremont, "there's many a slip, you know and I forsaw that the copy might serve a purpose in various contingencies," he smiled.

"How came it that Cardoni double - crossed you?"

"He informed me, when his work here was finished, that he must complete it in his studio in London - finishing touches, and a secret process of rapid mellowing', and all that. He said he would let me know directly it was ready, and I could come and take deilvery and pay him the balance due beyond the deposit I had already made on giving the order.

"Meanwhile he came back here the night that I was observed in the hall, and made off with the original - which he expected, doubtless, in due course either to sell at a far bigger price than the copy, or to hold up to ransom as it were. He felt safe, it seems, as regards myself, knowing that the theft would look fish for me, and thus relied on my keeping silence.

"It was not difficult to track him, however; I had pretty well sized the man up and had obtained full information about him at the outset. when he found I was not a promising subject for his futile threat of blackmail, he preferred to deliver me the goods rather than go to gaol.

"That's all there is to it," Rufus Tremont closed. "Thus endeth the Mistery of the Stolen Portrait."

"Or, perhaps, more correctly," smiled Sir Geoffery, "Thus drops the curtain upon the second act of the drama, Tremont, as you say, the first act was played 300 years ago. I prophesy a third, and final act, yet to be staged."

Rufus looked at him sharply, but obtaining no further light on Brooke's comment, he smiled shrewdly.

"As I said once before, Sir Geoffery, you're more of a poker player than I; but unless I miss my guess, the curtain's rung down on the play, for good and all."

The three men rose from their seats.

"Where's your luggage?" asked Alec. You'll ecomplete your interrupted visit to Breeme House, won't you, Tremont," he urged, with a determination to show that he bore no ill - will towards Rufus for the sale of the Van Dyke, however deeply it cut him.

"Thanks, Lord Tremont, but I shan't trespass on you again, with your father's illness absorbing all your attention. I'm delighted to hear he's making such wonderful progress. I'm at the Breeme Arms for a few days, and then I must be getting back to America. I'd like so much to say goodbye to the Earl, before I go, if he should be able to see me for a few moments one of these days.

"I'm sure he will wish to, - and at least come and feed with us," urged Alec hospitalabley. "I shall tell them to set a place for you at lunch ond dinner as long as you're down here."

"That's very kind of you."

And Rufus felt, along with a real admiration of the sporting sprit of his British cousin, something which might have analyzed as a sensation as of coals of fire being poured upon his own conquering head.

TO BE CONTINUED

No Slack In Business.

We supposed, formerly, that everybody at some time or other suffered from dull business seasons, except perhaps undertakers and persons who sell ice in summer and coal in winter. But J. C., the w. k. globe trotter, just back from Oklahoma, tells us of a ferryman on a certain river in the shortgrass country who has the world sewed up in a sack. The road of which his ferry line is a part, is a busy one; he carries motor cars across the stream for $1 each. Last fall the river went dry, and remained so all winter. The ferry can not operate. The ferryman tied his boat up at the point where the road meets the river, and motorists drive off the pier over his boat, then across the dry river bed to the road on the other side. And each motorist pays $1 for the privilege of driving over the ferryboat.

No Law Vacation.

From the Des Moines Register.

Iowa is having a lesson in the impossibility of making a static society. If one were to list the changes that have been proposed in the new code since it was published, only two months ago, he would quickly come to the conclusion that there can be no halting of the progress of reform. The code was designed to capture the laws of the state and fix them, at least for a time. It was hoped that one could put his hand on the code, and say here is the law.

But the result really is that it has been a gathering of the statutes as a platform from which to leap forward to further progress. It has served those who study the law progressively as a convenient compilation for their purposes, a statement of the law as it is in order that the law as it should be can be framed.

The county attorneys are going to meet to suggest changes in the code, the real estate men want other modifications of it. The next legislature, which meets in January, will be full of new proposals, most of them legitimate and serious bills for necessary laws.

We have been issuing new codes and supplements every ten years or less in the last quarter of a century, and probably the rate of progression will increase rather than decrease. Those who wish to stand still will be bowled over, no matter how excellent their motiyes may be. Those who urge that our legislative bodies adjourn for a period will find they have been proposing the impossible.

NEW YEAR'S SOLILOQUY

Same old promise to be good—
Wouldn't keep it if I could.
Same old music, same old song,
Same old work the whole day long.

Same old struggle night and day,
Same old bills I have to pay.
Same old salary all my life,
Same old fashions, same old wife.

Same old friends, and same old foes,
Same old clubs, and same old clothes.
Same old habits—I must shake,
Same old promise—made to break.

Same old sorrow to be drowned,
Same old world—just turned around.
Same old promise to be good—
Wouldn't keep it if I could!

—Catherine Elizabeth Hanson.
Sioux City, Ia., Jan. 1, 1925.

The Duke of Devonshire, former governoro ogeneral cofo Canada, ex-secretary of state for the Colonies and one of England's largest land proprietors, is ill at Lismore castle, his Irish estate near Waterford, Ireland. He is in his 57th year.