



The Banner of Blue by S.R. Crockett

Copyright, 1902, by S. R. Crockett. CHAPTER II—Continued. John Glendonwyn answered readily. "It is true that in our childhood the parents of Veronica Caesar and myself agreed together that we should marry. But since no man has a right to arrange the life of his fellow, she and I have long ago decided mutually that we will never fulfill the contract."

Glendonwyn, the Lord hath forgotten to be gracious! John's hand was shaking and his eyes were dim as he said the note. This it was in clear, unmistakable characters: "Our dear, very dear father. "This at the first will make you sad, but it is for the best and there is no other way. Trust your Faithie and the time will come when we shall creep happily home to your hearth and heart. All is not well, but this seems the only way to make ill things better. Meantime, God keep you and the boys and all who truly love you. Do not cast us off, for we love you—and that is why we go!" There was no signature, but the letter was unmistakably in Faithie's hand, the characters vivid and distinct, written without haste and without tremulousness. The girl might have been setting one of her copy-heads, for all the signs of emotion

satisfied first. My landlady here will tell you I have never been away, save to college and for an afternoon walk like that to Craigville today. I have dined here alone every night—breakfasted here every morning. My professors and fellow students will bear me witness what I did with my mornings, and if further testimony be needed, the quartermen at Burdickhouse and Eskside, the pitmen of Newbattle and Borthwick will declare what days I spent with them." But David lifted up his hand. "Nay," he said, "mine own eyes have seen! I do not need landladies and professors to advise me. I am content. Not you, and you, ladies—both dose this. And O, John—while—while I would to God that it had!"

CHAPTER I. RECONCILIATION.

John found his brother alone in the great

Stop and see the dressing, John. It will save your looking. The Butler of Castle Gower showed in a tall, slim, dark man with sinister eyes. "How do you do, Mr. Gower?" "How long is it since I was laid by the heels here? Three weeks and two days," says you. "Thank you, doctor—all goes well. This is unwrapping day and you forgotten? My brother wants to stop and see the operation. Not much to see now, is there, Warner? He ought to have been here a week ago, eh, doctor? Then we could have shown him something worth looking at. At this moment Grier's name is again. He had gone out in the midst of Rupert's chatter. "If you please, Master John, Mr. Glendonwyn is waiting to see you in the library." "Where—where?" whistled Rupert. "I hear me the red in your cheeks, my son. Headmaster to see you in his room, you know. God, how I remember the feeling! And I've not gotten over it yet when I have any little hatches of wild oats the old man doesn't know about. Deuced sorry for you, dear fellow. Good luck!"

John had been able to make little of Rupert, still less information did he gain from his father. Small love as there had been between father and son in the past, John had been wholly unprepared for Gregory Glendonwyn's attitude. "You admit that you have been making love to the girl here in the parish which was so soon to be your own. You tell me plainly that it was for her sake that you spent your Christmas holidays teaching in that two-penny ha-penny dame's school at Kilgour, you are so fond of. You have written, according to your own showing, kept up a correspondence with the young woman during your absence in Edinburgh, the elder girl being privy to your intrigues. "These things being so, something like the present comes about as surely as the setting of the hempened prodence lamp. You were not out of Edinburgh, you say. You are able to prove the fact. Then prove it. Far worse, I have nothing to do with the final misadventure. Only I advise you, if you wish to obtain a quiet settlement in your parish to explain yourself in a way there is no mistaking to Dr. Caesar and his daughter, Veronica." "Then you do not believe me, father?" said John, standing rigid and angry opposite his father's chair. "Their father did!" "Whose father?" said Gregory Glendonwyn, throwing back his head haughtily. "The father of Kate and Faithie Glendonwyn," answered John, with a whitening and distended nostril. "Ah," said Gregory, smiling sarcastically, "but you see, my boy, I have studied you from youth up, and, secondly the man you refer to is an ignorant country joiner, even



MRS. DR. AUGUSTUS CAST UP HER HANDS MORE PITHEOUSLY THAN BEFORE.

you the same gladly. I never meant to marry any boy of woman save little Faithie—that is, if she would have a little like me. "To speak greatly like an honest man, I admit," said David, looking slyly at him from under his shaggy gray eyebrows. "But I am mair than ever perplexed, my even dumfounded and put to confusion. I ken no what to think. My pur innocent lassie." John sat down and put his hands affectionately on the knees of David's black trousers. "Tell me all there is to tell," said John. "I will go straight back to Gower with you and will find Kate and Faithie—never fear. I know their hearts, believe me, for I have watched them—at least Faithie, ever since as a child of 15 she rode my pony to school while I ran contentedly by her side." The father shook his head sadly. "Ah, would that I could think so," said he, the tears for the first time trickling down his furrowed cheeks. "What there no message?" said John. "Can you tell me how it happened?" "Tell ye, laddie," said David, "there is no muckle to tell. Mair is the peety! Ye see it was this way: Faithie was lang in comin' home frae the schule as night and Kate said to me that she had got on her cloak and gang and meet her along the road." "What need?" says I. "I was plain!" the old o' Sanders Dew's stepmother's coffin at the time, and that's the way I mind." "But she answered that she was anxious and had gang home." So I didna sicker her—indeed, when did I say her say? And in another moment she was back at her bonnet on and the muckle dark-blue serge cloak that I codd at Drummers at Michaelmas about her shoulders. "Guld nicht, father," she says, standing on her tiptoes to give me a kiss as she says her heartsome way. "Hawers, lassie," says I, "ye had wis' ye war gane to the mune or to London town at the least. Ye will meet Faithie afore ye get to the Brig-end." "But she only gied a kind o' queer laugh—I mind it now. It comes back to me as clear as clear. It was like the way she laughed when she had the scarlet fever as was light o' the head! But (me no mindin' w' hawers' Sanders Dew's coffin to bush that night) I had her be back to make the tea for the ladies, and she gied out through the door. Ah! frae that hour to this I have never set een on either o' my lasses."

which the manuscript betrayed. One thing struck John Glendonwyn as curious. There was no direct mention of Kate, and save in the phrase "and" and "no reference to her. Yet, hitherto it had always been Kate who had taken the lead in everything, and her sister who acquiesced in her decisions, made in many cases without her knowledge. Why so suddenly should the elder sister have abdicated her position, and permitted Faithie to take the lead? David lifted his head and now sat earnestly regarding the young man, his eyes fixed in his head as if he desired to read into his very soul. "Well," he said, gravely and sternly, "what think ye?" "On my soul," said John, earnestly, "I think that the matter may not be so serious as it appears at present. I am glad to have read Faithie's letter. It seems my heart to some extent. She speaks as if a return were not only possible, but certain. She looks forward to peace and happiness. Would she write in that strain, if any great or fatal peril were hanging over them? Have you ever known Faithie to tell a lie, or to hide anything from you that she ought to have revealed to you?" "She did not exactly reveal these to me," said David, drily, laying his hand upon the little packet of schoolgirl letters to John Glendonwyn. "But you forget—there is another thing. Be good enough to explain the David Gray comfortable and harmless supposition!" And once more he laid before him the crumpled scrap of paper which in his first anger he had snatched from John's hand and thrown upon the floor. "Carriage and coachman and secret trappings—to carry them frae aw' their father's house, what's her never yearned but to do them good! They leave him alone and shamed in his old age—see the words—'trust him to care for all'—him—him—'Who is him? God, who set his mark on Cain, gie me this ye thing in north—gane to thine unworthy servant that while in the flesh these hands may meet about the throat of him—him—who—will—care—for—all!'" He said the last words with a concentration of bitter hatred which made John shudder, thinking as he did of the evening prayer that first night when Rupert had an earth—gane to thine unworthy servant that while in the flesh these hands may meet about the throat of him—him—who—will—care—for—all! "There is much that is mysterious in this disappearance," said John manfully, "but on my soul nothing at all that is surprising. The solution escapes me, that is all. Tell me, have you inquired at Drummers as to the arrival of a carriage with two girls? It seems to me that it was impossible that such an equipage could escape remark in a place of the size of Drummers."

John rose and handed the note back to David Glendonwyn. "You," he said, "after you have satisfied yourself that I have had neither art nor part in the business I will accompany you to Kilgour and do my best to unravel the mystery. But I wish you to be thoroughly

if we suppose that his loudly expressed anxiety for his daughter is genuine. On the other hand, I am your father, a magistrate, and accustomed to weigh evidence. "Then you do not believe me, sir?" John asked in a stifled voice. "Then, sir," said John, "I bid you goodbye. I shall never come willingly into your presence again. I care not whether I receive the parish or not. You yourself have placed the greatest barrier in the way of that ever being my lot in life. But, thank God, I will have my integrity, my youth and the portion left to me by my mother. As to the last, I have not claimed it during the last two years, but I shall ask my lawyer to write to you that the details of the final settlement may be arranged between us." John did not say this in the least by way of threat. Nothing was further from his thoughts—nevertheless the change which these words produced on his father's countenance was marvelous. His voice, as first clear and resonant in denunciation of his second son, cold and dry in the rejection of his final appeal, became suddenly hoarse. "No—no," he cried, "your mother's portion is due to you on the day when you are presented to the parish of Gower and settled as the ordained minister thereof. Till then principal and interest both remain in my hands." "I think not," said John; "both my mother's marriage settlement and will make it perfectly clear that her fortune is mine from my first birthday. I was at the trouble to obtain a copy of the last-named, and submit it to Mr. McCreevy, who corroborated it from the deeds in his hands with regard to the marriage settlement. I requested and obtained a copy of that also in so far as it concerned myself."

with chronic crepe, dizziness, quail, overworkings, palpitation. Indeed all the weaknesses of woman is heir to. She was a martyr to indignation, and fainted at the idea of taking a walk in the garden or performing the least domestic duty. But to make up for all she had owned a tongue into which all the superabundant nourishment of her urinary organ she ruled her husband, made herself the hatred of the few overworked domestics and the aversion of her own children, who were accustomed to crawl past the drawing room as if it had been the lair of a tigeress. Only Veronica feared her not, with the obvious consequence that Mrs. Dr. Caesar feared her daughter and spoke much evil of her behind her back. To this lady John had in the absence of Veronica, been introduced as she sat with the very wildest last year's novel out of the town circulating library on her knee. She lifted up her hands at sight of him. "John Glendonwyn," she cried, "I am surprised that you have the face to appear among decent people, sir. You have broken my poor girl's heart. Is not that enough pain to be sent to you? You have not had the spirit of a woman ever since the violence of your conduct was broken to her. She cannot even bear to answer me, her own mother, when I speak to her about it, but goes instantly out of the room. But you will suffer for this—er, bitterly!" "I think not," said John; "both my mother's marriage settlement and will make it perfectly clear that her fortune is mine from my first birthday. I was at the trouble to obtain a copy of the last-named, and submit it to Mr. McCreevy, who corroborated it from the deeds in his hands with regard to the marriage settlement. I requested and obtained a copy of that also in so far as it concerned myself."

"And stretched out the letter. "You are quite sure that you wish me to read it?" said John. "With a groan the old man cast his hands out from him, laying his arms around the table. "Read, laddie, read!" said David

"I canna help t'wath' ye, laddie," he said, "in spite o' your an' father—are, in spite o' myself. I canna believe ye has had signification of any hurt done to my lasses. Had ye not better or news of any kind?" "Are—this!" said David Glendonwyn, putting his hand in his breast pocket. He drew out a note folded small as Faithie was in the habit of doing with her correspondence. John knew the fashion of it at the first glance. The sight of that little oblong of bluish paper on his table had often made his heart leap as he entered his room at night.

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world are you talkin' about now, mama? O, John—I am glad to see you! Come and speak to me when I have got the nurse off with these young Abodites. And you mother, be good enough to let John and me settle our own affairs. I told you plainly what would happen last night if you did not. I will go to aunt Fisher, and ask her to let me help in laundry. You know whether she will be glad of me or not. Then you can undertake the management of this household, which you think I look after so badly. Come along, Bobby. You will find me in the nursery, John. Now, mama, remember what I told you!" And the energetic young lady vanished, adjusting the ebon collar as she marched her prey upstairs—whereupon at the opening of a door the sound of civil strife ceased and there was a great calm. John, who, during all this, had not spoken one solitary word, stood uncertainly with his hat in his hand looking with alarm upon the relaxed countenance of Mrs. Doctor Caesar. At Veronica's departure she had fallen back on her sofa, as an erected bolster subsides when smitten in the middle. Now she lay back feebly wagging her hands and calling variously, "Water! Water! My vinaigrette! Augustus!" so that John, to whom these symptoms were new, became seriously alarmed for her safety. Accordingly he filled a glass of water and held it to her lips. He dabbed her large, florid face with cologne water. He held a small counterpane of smelling salts to the lady's nostrils, and in a little had the satisfaction of finding the lady come to herself. "Where am I? What have I been saying? Some folly, I fear me. Dear John, if in my paroxysms I have said or done anything to hurt your feelings I pray you pardon a dying woman—a heartbroken woman—a woman who has suffered in her family more than the lot of a score of women. You have seen me in the dreadful grasp of one of these attacks which are despised, made light of by my own daughter—no, too often by my husband, also. O, I do not say a word against dear Augustus. He is a man of many affairs, but Veronica—it hurts me even to speak the name—O, sir have you ever known what it is to be a mother—to have cherished in your bosom the serpent that bit you? No, of course not—you, too, are a man and cannot feel for mother. Yet were I to reveal to you—yes, even to you—one-tenth of the misery, the hapless, hopeless misery, the insults, the slights, the absolute and fiendish tortures that have been inflicted upon me in this my own household—even you would shudder and turn pale. O, sir, my boy, my son (I must call you so), I feel that you have always been in sympathy with me. You have ever been kind. Never have I permitted anyone to speak a word against you in my presence. Oh, it is coming again, I feel it! My smelling salts! Water! A little drop of—that third pill—my medicine—Ah! Ah!—when doctored, had an odor of—of a certain species largely used in Scotland—and succeeded in warding off the threatened attack. She waved John Glendonwyn out of the room with a gesture truly dramatic. As the girl had said, he found Vera Caesar putting together the debris of the last general engagement in the nursery. Martha, the single domestic other than the cook, who was "kept" at the manse of Kilgour, had been dispatched in charge of "Caesar's army," as they were called throughout the district. "I fear you have found mother more than ordinarily trying this morning," Veronica began cheerfully, without any other greeting. "The certainly talked rather wildly," admitted John, "and once or twice seemed so ill that she quite frightened me!" Veronica's lips, heavily dosed and lying upon each other with the large dose of those of Athene Parthenos, were compressed a little more as John spoke. "Has she been abusing you or me?" she inquired, without the shadow of a smile. "Both," said John, equally gravely. "Ah!" When I was ill I found my mother out. Could any child's reverence have survived such an upbringing? I wonder I am not indeed the perfect tyrant and heartless wretch she tells every one I am. Perhaps in some ways she is right. But think how many things I have borne in silence and how much I love. I don't think that these extenuating circumstances are quite ad-

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