

The BANNER of BLUE by S. R. Crockett

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CHAPTER XIX.—Continued.

His face looked sterner than ever, for the fatigues of the night had caused it to take on an ashen, corpse-like hue, out of which his small gray eyes looked with the curious nobility of living eyes from behind a mask.

But he raised his hat as politely as before. For in nothing did Gregory Glendonwyn fail, save in humanity. And I could not but admire the fortitude of the man who at his age had undertaken a task so exhausting as this.

"We must leave as soon as the water has advanced a stage higher at the little pier," he said. "Our destination is yonder!"

He lifted his hand and pointed to a faint blue cloud which stretched itself against the brightening horizon. "The island be-

down carrying our slender effects. For, as I say, in the smaller courtesies he left nothing to be desired.

There was a boathouse nearby, as I was at first glad to notice, but the iron door was locked and in addition secured with a stout padlock and chain. We took our way among sea holly and starwort, thrift and water plants, skirting heathery hillocks and benty warrens over which the rabbits scurried and where the sea birds were beginning to nest, in the direction of the ancient and ruinous building which we had observed from the sea.

At first I thought the place wholly deserted, for nothing was to be seen but a plain ridge of ancient stone and lime broken at the time and above it the jackdaws' tower or keep. But Mr. Glendonwyn went on steadily, following a path which every

or not Rupert had ever been upon the isle. Nor did we find her husband, when he came in, in any communicative.

Hamish McColl proved not to be a man to waste words on any subject—a yellow-faced, scrub-bearded, middle-aged Celt, the ruddy hue of whose hair was invaded and modified by a certain grizzled gray, which gave the effect of imperfectly applied whitewash.

I asked Hamish the name of the place. He appeared to experience a difficulty in understanding the bearing of the query. But at last he answered: "It is the maister's isle—no mine!"

"Well, then, Hamish," I said, "what does your maister call it?"

"He never called it owt that I mind on," was the answer.

"But what is the name on the letters that

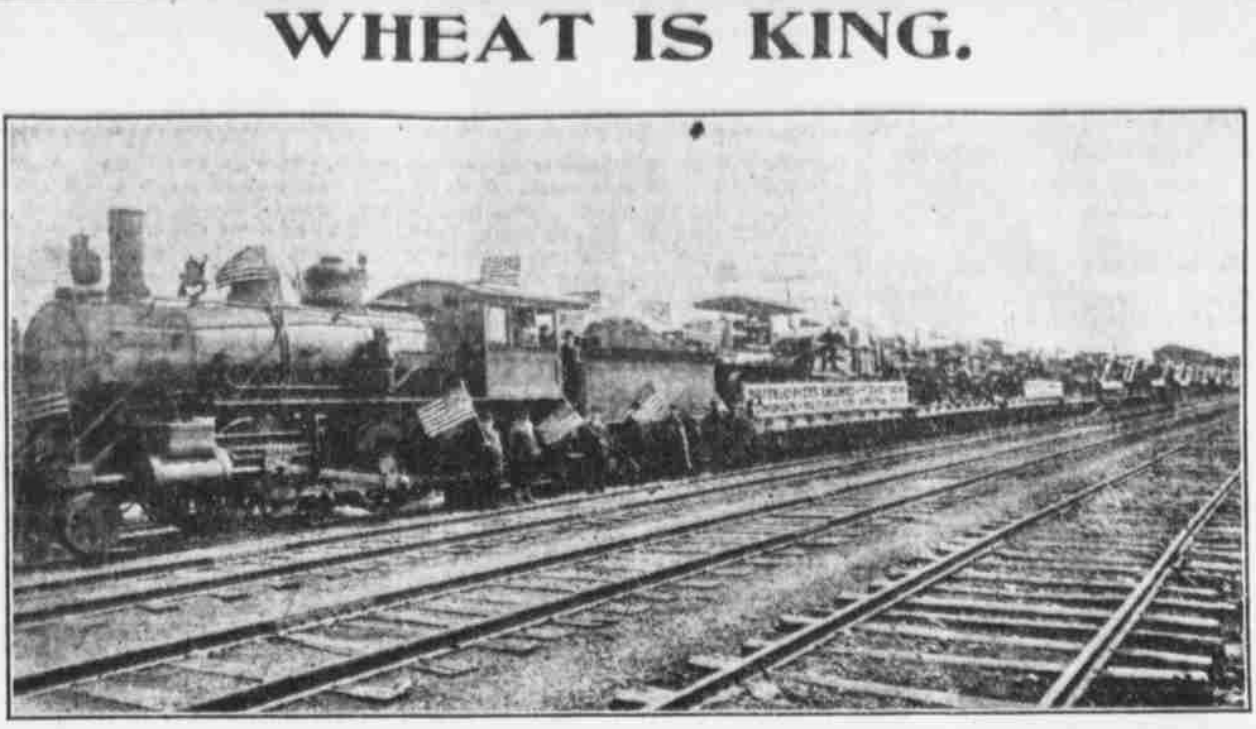
great deal. But by a peculiar mercy there was in the dining room, under the great sideboard three tall volumes of "Curtis' Flora Londonensis," the more ancient edition, with all the colored plates. This I studied diligently and was soon able to identify all the plants which we found during our daytime ramblings.

Generally I managed matters so that Kate should find the flower or herb, and it was to bring this about naturally that I first took these morning strolls which in time grew so dear to me. Then also I could think undisturbed about my father and John and all the things which were to be or might be.

And, oh, above all, the freshness of the time! I used to steal to the door of her bedroom after I had dressed me, and listen to Kate's quiet breathing, sometimes even venturing to steal in and close the shutters lest the light in her face should awake her. For we slept with the windows open in that fine far-carried air and genial summer weather.

Then with a bounding heart I would slip out (Hamish and his deaf wife being withdrawn to their den in the mysterious back parts of the kitchen) and, shutting in the collies lest their bounding should scare the seabirds, would set myself to scry out the abounding richness of the land.

There, above me, were the gannets already hard at it all the way from Albia, which they must have left behind indeed—scorning their beds at sight of some fertile in the water, falling plump like a stone, and sending a great jet of water straight up, then leaping out again, bolting



SPECIAL TRAIN OF TWENTY-FIVE CARS STEAM THRESHERS, CONSIGNED TO LININGER & METCALF CO., OMAHA, MADE BY BUFFALO-PITTS CO., BUFFALO, N. Y.

Anyone interested in the phenomenal agricultural growth of the state of Nebraska cannot fail to view with pleasure the immense growth of winter wheat in Nebraska. That it should be necessary to thus early make single shipments like this, valued at \$100,000, speaks volumes for the prosperous outlook for the coming wheat harvest.

Speaking of this train, Mr. F. L. Haller, secretary of Lininger & Metcalf Co., says: "We started out of Creston, Ia., Saturday morning at 7 o'clock with our special train. All the agents living on the line of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy, through which this train was to pass, had been notified of its coming. When the train drew up to the depot its arrival was announced by the screaming of a calloppe whistle, a twin of the Bemis Bag company's tooter. As soon as the crowd gathered around the exhibition car we would start up the machine, which consists of a twenty-horse engine and threshing machine complete. By means of the blow stacker, used in elevating the straw, circulars were distributed among the crowd, giving interesting particulars of this immense shipment."

The improvement in machinery for taking care of wheat has been most phenomenal. It is within the memory of any old man that wheat was still threshed in his time by means of falls in this country. For 6,000 years prior to 1852 there had been no advance in the process of threshing wheat. It was beaten out by falls, or tramped out by horses and cleaned in the primitive way of letting it fall through the air from a small sieve. Even twenty years ago, with what

was considered improved machinery at that time, a visit of a threshing outfit to a farmer was little less than a devastation. I remember with what dread my grandparents used to look forward to the coming of the threshers. It meant a stay of from ten days to two weeks, with sixteen teams and men. The voracious appetites of these roving bands of threshers made the proverb, "To eat like a thresher," a common one in agricultural communities. The old threshing machine, with its fourteen to sixteen horse power, was a never-ending source of interest and danger to all who came in contact with it. It took two men with sharp knives to cut the bands, and at the same time feed the bundles into the machine. Formerly it took from two to four men to stack the straw as it left the machine, and the position directly back of the straw stacker was almost unbearable by reason of the dust and chaff which covered the unlucky man on the straw stack. This has been done away with, and now the straw is blown through a long sheetiron tube, which looks like the barrel of a 12-inch rifle cannon. The straw is blown several hundred feet and placed automatically wherever wanted without the aid of any man. Formerly the grain was measured by means of half-bushel baskets, and it was no small trick to take care of the grain as it

came from the machine. The count was always a matter of dispute between the thresherman and the farmer. Now the grain is delivered automatically and weighed by a patented machine which cannot be tampered with by either the thresherman or the farmer. The recording of the bushels of grain measured is automatically done and cannot be questioned. It is a common sight during the nights in harvest time to see these mammoth outfits along the road. All moving is done at night to save time and to keep from frightening horses. Two men attend to the whole matter, the engineers and the dreamer. It is interesting to see a procession consisting of the traction engine followed by the coal and water tender and the threshing machine climbing a hill with the ease of a locomotive drawing a passenger train. These outfits run from \$2,500 to \$3,500 in price, and they generally finish threshing out a farmer's grain in one day.

The demand for Buffalo-Pitts double engines handled by Lininger & Metcalf Co., has grown to such immense proportions within three years that it is necessary to make shipment in trainloads, thus early in order to insure a supply of machines when wanted. If the wheat crop comes out as expected this firm expects to run at least three more trains during the season. This train will be an exhibition today and Monday on the B. & M. tracks in front of the Burlington station, a sight well worth seeing. The Buffalo-Pitts company have been building threshers for sixty years and their product is a household word throughout the United States.



"SOMETIMES EVEN VENTURING TO STEAL IN AND CLOSE THE SHUTTERS LEST THE LIGHT IN HER FACE SHOULD AWAKE HER."

longs to me, and there are good and kind people upon it. I have used it as a refuge myself for many years and have always found it an Isle of Peace. So, I trust, say you."

I told him that I would like to write to my father, that I might set his mind at rest. Mr. Glendonwyn took a while to consider, and at last gave his consent, but only upon condition that he should see and approve what I wrote.

"Otherwise," he said, "the whole advantage of our arrangement might be thrown away. Complete secrecy in your retreat is your only hope."

I had, in fact, to write the note which finally went to my father from Drumferrie no less than three times before I could find a form of words which was acceptable to our guide. Kate never opened her mouth once during these negotiations, save to ask when Rupert would be well enough to come to her. The reply which Mr. Glendonwyn gave was reassuring but somewhat evasive. The young man would follow as soon as his medical adviser thought it safe—that was the gist of it. Whereat Kate sighed and became silent.

The letter was written in the comfortable shelter of the hut, in which were only a rude slab for a table and some packing boxes for seats. But I had been able to light a fire with the new invented phosphorus matches which Mr. Glendonwyn carried with him, and which I struck upon a piece of glass paper. He also brought some provisions from the carriage and we ate all together. Rupert's father sitting opposite to us, in thick blue pilot-cloth coat, wide trousers, like a sailor's, and a huge knitted comforter about his neck.

In an hour he announced that the time of our departure had arrived. It was now clear day, and we could look about us upon the bleak, unkindly landscape. For, by my part, thought it dreary enough. But Kate, on the other hand, saw only Rupert and his coming in all, and stepped with a great deal of courage and assurance into the little sailing boat which was to convey us to our destination.

Mr. Glendonwyn rowed with ease and vigor till we came to the mouth of the little winding river, which somewhat gingerly felt its way down through these sullen marshes to the sea. As soon, however, as we began to feel the life of the salt water, he shipped his oars and began to set a small launch, which, having been well taught in water lore by my brother Will, I was glad to be able to help him to raise.

And nothing shows more clearly the great change which had come over my poor Kate than this, that she who before had never been a moment idle and who had ever been the most eager to handle oar or sail, should now be content to sit idly by, looking out over the water without any apparent interest in what we were doing, or whether we were going. And the reason of that I knew not then, though afterward it was plentifully and pitifully plain to me.

It was a matter of three hours before we landed on the island, which all the while had been gradually rising before us across the water—a long, low, desolate, sand-dune place, with a fringe of sand and pebbles all round it, a plantation or two covering under shaggy heathery heights of rock and boulder, and a vast clamor of sea birds strutting and screaming about it everywhere. As we drew round a spit of sand, over which the waves were breaking white, we came in sight of a long, low building, gray, ruinous and weather-beaten of aspect, from which an ancient square tower rose, backed by great trees and overgrown with ivy. But from the sea it appeared to be roofless and desolate, and the jackdaws rose in a cloud protesting against our intrusion as we came nearer. I tried in vain to recall the aspect of the map of Scotland at this point.

Mr. Glendonwyn presently brought us up to a rude pier similar in construction to that which we had left on the mainland. Here we made fast, the sail was taken down and we stepped ashore. Mr. Glendon-

step grew plainer till we turned an archway and found ourselves, by one of those quick surprises which always affect my spirits with pleasure, in a small, well-kept plot of the greenest grass, aflame with lent lilies and slender nodding daffodils. And whereas without we had seen only the gray crumbling of the wall, rude as a stone dyke, the lime moldered away by the eager hands of the sea air, behold within was a little whitewashed house with its back to the ruined keep, white blinds to all the windows—three above and two below, with a door painted green, like the houses you see on shores of Highland lochs.

In the doorway stood a good, sonny, well-pud on Scottish dame, smiling and nodding her head as if well pleased to welcome us. This surely could be no prison, but a refuge indeed.

After shaking hands Mr. Glendonwyn made some signal and the woman pointed out over her shoulder in the direction of the dark, heathery crest of the isle. I followed her to a large, open space, the whereabouts of some third person.

"Old Jonet is deaf and dumb," he said, turning about to us, "but you will find her both kind and attentive. I brought her and her husband, Hamish McColl, from the Highlands many years ago, to keep the house here. You would not want for anything I trust. I have made every preparation for a somewhat lengthened stay. Indeed, I habitually keep most things here, as my own visits are made at uncertain intervals and generally without warning."

The old woman shook hands with us, putting Kate's arm affectionately, and repeatedly touching her own lips with her finger tips, as if to say that she was sorry she could not talk to us.

"She understands something of the finger language, however," Mr. Glendonwyn went on. "But neither she nor her husband want such English beyond the which will enable them to understand what you want. Hamish is my shepherd, a man in whom I trust and am altogether dependable. He will convey any message to me that you may think it necessary that I should have. But I must warn you that he has his orders and will neither permit you to leave the island without communicating with me nor forward any letter or message except through my hands. For the rest, I think you will have no reason to complain."

Without entering the house or asking for any refreshments he held out his hand in farewell.

"I will now take my leave," he said. "For it is essential that this letter should be sent to your father immediately. My service to you, ladies. I think you will find your retirement not wholly disagreeable."

And the next moment we were watching his long, active legs carry him down again toward the pier, where, presently, from the outer gateway of the ancient abbey, we saw a figure join him.

come!" I perished.

"There's nae letters ever comes to this island," he spoke the words slowly, as if each had to find its way unassisted through the grizzled scrub of his beard.

I was nonplussed, and for the moment could contrive no other leading question. I rallied, however, sufficiently to ask, "What shall I call it when I speak of it?"

"'Caa' it 'The Island!'" he said. "What ails ye at that?"

I thought I caught a saving gleam of humor in Hamish's eye, and I cried, clapping my hands, "I have it—it will call it 'Inch Jonet!'"

So Inch Jonet it was as long as we abode there.

But the incoming of Hamish and our discussion (together with my acknowledged defeat) on the question of the name of the island, have interrupted my description of the rest of the house. The kitchen premises were to the back—carved out of the ruins of the ancient Priory, or "Holy Hoose," as Jonet called it upon her fingers. A new "Carron" stove looked curiously out of place among the half-effaced arches of ancient tombs and low, rounded arches of the abbey chapel.

Above there were three bedrooms reserved for our use, two of which opened out of each other and looked upon the court, while the other had a little window looking over the sea, and a door which led out upon the top of the tower, where, from a wide stone gallery, there was a marvelous view of the distant coasts and the sweeping miles of blue waves.

Now, at this point I must give a day out of our lives, while we lived so peacefully upon Inch Jonet. Our minds were pretty easy—or at least mine was. For every fortnight Hamish crossed to the mainland for supplies and took over the letter to my father, which Mr. Glendonwyn had promised to forward. I know now that these never got further than the study fire at Castle Gower. But I did not know that then and so rested fairly comfortable in my mind. I knew that I was doing the best I could for Kate—who in so strange a manner had been committed to me. As for myself, if any thought the worse of me for what I was doing they were entirely welcome. I had good reasons for knowing that there were some who would not.

But I cannot so speak of those occasions when Mr. Rupert came to see me, or my peaceful occupation of Inch Jonet. For as I shall have hereafter to tell, he came at first pretty frequently, though as the months drew on his visits waxed rarer and rarer, and at last, as I shall have to tell, ceased altogether.

Yet even when he was most pleasant and Kate happiest, it was always an infinite pleasure to me to see him off from the pier—Hamish pulling a great round fisherman's stroke like the hoop of a basket, and Mr. Rupert sitting in the stern, beautiful as a god, kissing his hand to Kate, and waving away adieu to "made-moiselle," as he never ceased to call me.

But there were long days and high days and happy days for all that on Inch Jonet. I set myself as I had never set myself before, to study for examination—no, not even to that of the Latin grammar, most superior, sir! to the task of making Kate happy. And to this extent I succeeded; that if she did not think less about Rupert Glendonwyn, she began at least to take a greater interest in preparing for the future. Her eyes were not forever fixed on the line of the distant shores, and she could pass the boat house without turning aside to see if, by any unlooked-for chance, it had been left unlocked.

It was my study also to keep Kate so constantly in the open air that she should sleep soundly at nights and rest as long as possible in the morning. Indeed, sleep she did, and that infinitely sounder and longer than I. Often I was out by four-of-the-clock. For in June and July it scarcely ever got dark there, and even if I chanced to awaken early, it was no hardship to walk on the hard, close-felted turf of Inch Jonet, the rabbits all safe in their holes, and nothing but the sheep moving restlessly about or lying down with a sigh like a tired man, only to rise again in five minutes and fall to their champ-champing and crop-crooping again.

It was the pleasure of my life (or at least one of them) to teach Kate as much of birds and flowers as I knew myself, which, indeed, at that time was no very

their prey, and then anon heavily taking wing for yet another plunge.

Seamews, gulls and terns mingled their screams, and truth to tell, I never heard a concert that I liked better. Sweeter was the noise of the water, the splash of the flowers and the song of the birds, the races of France or among the gardens of Como.

All this eased my mind and made me glad. For I cannot say that I was unhappy on the isle of Inch Jonet. I knew the fact that any other place would be fullness of the time I could do no more. Kate was my charge as surely as if she had been committed to me by our father. Also I had time to think, which, in the press of study and work I never seemed to have had in all my life before.

Day by day, therefore, we went to and fro searching for plants, rock plants, sea kale, whorled caraway, pale butterwort, green sea-spleenwort and filmy fern, netted in soft mossy places hard to find and harder to reach when found.

These and other treasure troves were a continual delight to Kate, and I never regretted the fact that any other place would be fullness of the time I could do no more. Kate was my charge as surely as if she had been committed to me by our father. Also I had time to think, which, in the press of study and work I never seemed to have had in all my life before.

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