

The BANNER of BLUE

by S. R. Crockett

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CHAPTER XXXIX.

There was no more than that. But how packed with matter for decision was that little flimsy half sheet. Should I obey my father or my husband? For I had given John the right to call me that when he liked. My father was not here to consult—and it would have been a thousand times worse if he had.

A sudden impulse came to me. I cannot tell what it was that made me do it—perhaps the sight of Veronica's pale, set lips and disappointed face. I was fond of Veronica and I did not like to see her looking at me like that. Though, of course, the main part of her trouble I could not help.

I handed her the letter with a quick gesture of appeal. I could see her waver. Nevertheless she shook her head in refusal. "Help us, Vera!" I said and laid my hand upon her arm. She took the note and read. Then, when she had finished, she read it over again carefully. And then she drew a long, long breath.

"What Kate told me tonight is true, then?" she said, looking very straight at me, "about Mr. Rupert Glendonwyn, I mean?"

"It is true," I answered.

"When will you see you," she said, slowly. "I may think you are a deceitful little brat, Fairlie Glendonwyn, but I can't help liking you in spite of it. I hope you will be more straightforward with—will you—than you have been with me."

"Thank you," I said. "It will be difficult to get Kate to go, but if she will come at all it will be with me."

"First, let me write a note home—one of the boys can take it," said Veronica. "I will tell my father that there is great need for me here and that he is not to expect me home tonight. There will be merry pandemonium at the manse, but never mind. They must wait without me for one night in a good cause. I have all the rest of my life in which to make it up to them!"

She went in, and while she was writing (she wrote very large, half a dozen words to a page) I brought Harry out of the kitchen and bade him take Johnny Clatoum to his mother, as well as deliver Vera's letter at the manse of Kilgour. He was, of course, all curiosity, but, being in fear of Will, asked no questions. Then I showed the letter I had received to Will and bade him get ready to come with us to Gower castle.

"I will not," he cried. "You heard what my father said about these Glendonwyns."

"Well, you can stay then," I said. "It is quite the same to me whether you go or not. I am going to take the responsibility. I have Veronica Caesar and can go quite well. Only it would look better afterward if the acting head of the family—"

"The acting head of the family, indeed!" he said scornfully. "I should like to know who that is, if not Miss Fairlie Glendonwyn!"

"Well, at any rate," I said, "you are the head here—our brother, and people will look to you to protect us. But of course—if you are afraid—there is no more to be said!"

"Oh," he cried, "if you put it that way, I will come. You know very well, Fairlie, that I am not afraid. No, not of all the Glendonwyns in the burying ground and out of it!"

It was a more difficult and delicate matter to break the matter to Kate. But at last I hit upon a way and in her then state of mind found it easier than I had anticipated. Her dress was done at last, thanks to Vera Caesar's note to me, lazy little pig that I was! Now Kate had in her a root of love for nice things to put on. I, on the other hand, cared more for nice things to eat, after the manner of the unclean four-footed beast aforesaid. I told her that we had been sent for to attend a meeting of the family and friends of Rupert and how it was a great blessing that she had her dress finished in time and the pretty lace collar and cuffs stitched upon it all in readiness.

"But I can't go and leave Babe Rupert," she said, just a little wistfully. "do you and Vera go. I will stay with him."

"But," cried Veronica, enthusiastically, "we will all go. Babe Rupert, of course, must go, too. It is a family gathering."

"And I can hold him in my arms all the time," she said, anxiously, "and we will come away soon?"

"Yes, quite soon," said Veronica, "that is, whenever you are tired, Fairlie and I will give you a turn sometimes. But you can keep hold of his hand lest we take you into our heads to run off with him. He is so wonderfully lovely that we might, you know!"

At this our poor Kate was very much pleased and sprang up all eager to be dressed. She carried Babe Rupert upstairs to have his prettiest clothes put on. And with Veronica's wonderful talent for getting people to do things, and her facility in dressing others, gained by many years' expiatory suffering at the manse of Kilgour, we soon found ourselves at the door.

"Dick, mind the house! Don't go out, and don't answer questions!" I said, as I went through the door.

"Nor ask them—" growled Will, who saw

the unspoken interrogative on his brother's lips, "or I'll knock your head off! You hear?"

"Umph!" growled back Dick, in a yet lower tone, intended solely for home consumption. "Think you're the great man Will, don't you?—Mr. Sir William—Wallace—Bruce—Tom—Crip—Duke—o' Wallington!"

"Get in there and stay!" said Will truculently.

So Dick returned to the fireside, with as much lacking of grace as he dared to show.

CHAPTER XL.

The Last of Mr. Surgeon Warner.

I thought I possessed some courage and I believe so still. But I own that that night as we drove through the lodge gates of Gower into the avenue of the castle I felt just a poor little school teacher who had strayed out of her proper sphere and would

And indeed there was a certain fitness in it after all, which I could not help but acknowledge.

So we passed up a grand staircase, on and on. I saw down long, dim vistas, servants gliding with downcast heads and silent feet here and there, making no sound on the thick carpets. There was a curiously pleasant smell of old roses leaves and furniture polish everywhere and then came a lighted room, and a tall, gaunt, angular man, whom I had never seen before, rose to greet us.

"This is Mr. McCrosby, my lawyer," said John; "also for many years that of the Glendonwyn family, though my father has recently been ill enough advised to supplant him."

Then, turning to Kate, he introduced the old man specially to her. She stood up, tall and straight, with a grave, stoic

And it was pleasant thus to be ordered by him before them all.

So I told the story as briefly as I could and when I had finished Mr. Ingalls said, "Then I am to understand that Miss Glendonwyn considers Dr. Warner's narrative to be a fair and correct account of the facts?"

"Perfectly so," I said.

"Then I presume you will have no objection to swear to the fact," he proceeded in his official tone, "my friend Mr. McCrosby is fiscal of the county—perhaps he will put the young lady on her oath before signing."

"Which being done, I signed the document in due form.

"There can be no harm in your friends also putting down their names as witnesses of the signatures of Dr. Warner and Miss Glendonwyn," continued Mr.

marriage and to the birth of the child.

"This, my friend and I agree in thinking," continued Mr. Ingalls, "would have been sufficient for the purpose which my client has in view—that of putting the legitimacy of his heir outside the limits of serious dispute. But it would be well to have in addition the signature of the other witness to both marriage and birth—that of Mrs. Rupert Glendonwyn's sister, Miss—Miss Fairlie Glendonwyn is, I think, the name."

Mr. Ingalls looked across to me as if he expected that I would speak, but I waited in order that he might invite me to do so. It was, however, John who spoke.

"Tell them what you know, Fairlie!" he said.

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ing with difficulty. Then he continued.

"But it is all useless. I know it. I can feel it. Besides, Warner told me the truth. He had every reason for lying to me. It was that which fixed me in my resolve to get him off. He has the means of escape, and tomorrow he will be beyond the reach of pursuit. Now I am weary—so weary! Let me lie down and rest awhile."

And, John, when Dr. Chisholm comes and Arbuthnot, do not let them probe the wound or give me pain. Let an old man die in peace. It was done in defense of his dear son's good name!"

His breath seemed to be slowly drawing out.

"Where is my daughter?" he went on with increasing difficulty of utterance.

"Rupert's wife—I want her! She had a soft hand—a winsome way! But Rupert should not have married—not without telling me. And then he would not have married at all. Nevertheless, send for her!"

Kate came, in her arms Babe Rupert. She stood before the bed, still a little hunched because she had been asked to take the babe away. She did not know that Mr. Glendonwyn had done it to spare her the knowledge of her husband's past willfulness.

The old man looked at her strangely. Then he smiled.

"Have you any message?" he said, simply.

She understood instantly. A dark flush overspread her face, rising to her brow.

"Yes," she answered, bursting into a passion of tears, "tell him that I love him—"

end of the matter as well as the beginning).

Having thus performed my duty to the best of my ability by the inclusion of such narrative as seemed most pertinent to the case and which told the story most succinctly and clearly, it is laid upon me to satisfy posterity as briefly as may be concerning the outcome of all this.

These memoirs are intended primarily for the children of both branches of the house of Glendonwyn—that is to say, for the son of the late Mr. Rupert Glendonwyn, now a lad of growing form and much personal comeliness, dwelling in the manse of his uncle, the Reverend John Glendonwyn, minister of the Free Presbyterian church in the parish of Gower, in which house also Mrs. Rupert Glendonwyn, his mother resides.

The Great House is shut up—that is so far as any public entertainment is concerned. But I had the pleasure of taking tea with Mr. and Mrs. Duncan Gierston in the housekeepers' room the other day and am bound to say that a more affectionate husband and a more douse and amenable housewife it had never been my lot to see together. It was a pleasure merely to observe them.

As to David Glendonwyn and his sons—the Old Gray Wolf duly removed himself according to his pledged word, and for long held the reins of both branches of his daughters. But a severe illness which Fairlie had in the second year of her married life brought him over to see her. Since which time intercourse has been not only frequent but cordial. The matter of his vow, I suppose, he has reconciled to the extent of the parish of Gower, in which his wife brought about the reconciliation of Kate and her husband's family took place during his absence, as also the marriage of Fairlie and Mr. John Glendonwyn.

But I think it will be pretty clear to any impartial student of these records that, if David Glendonwyn had not intended something of the kind to happen—at least as to Fairlie and John were concerned—he would not have dispatched Fairlie up to Benangoe that June afternoon with the important deed transferring the Boatecroft property to the deacon of the Free Presbyterian kirk, and then—brought himself out of the way. To and fro at least of it, the solicitation of events is instructive.

As for Veronica she has never married, being, as she often goes out of her way to prove, a thousand times better employed in making other people's children happy than in making other people miserable with her own. As she forgot long ago, she is a paragon of "saints," and so universally in request that her father (now, alas, a widower) declares that he only sees her at breakfast or at baptisms!

Lastly, there is the larger manse that now stands beside the beautiful kirk which has arisen on the old Boatecroft property by the great bend of the Gower water. Kate is still there, sweet, beautiful, lighted—her mind calm as the mountain water. She is happy in her boy—bright, generous, truthful, brave, to whom John is like a father, and who himself is an older brother to the two children of the manse.

And when I was last present at the morning oblation there—John Glendonwyn read aloud from the great bible (which is all he had taken from the house) words which might once have been served their these words amongst others—perhaps the most beautiful and harmonious I ever heard of our solemnities: "thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation. For there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams, wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby."

I had not previously understood the meaning of these stately and solemn phrases, but now, looking out on the shining breadth of the Gower water, with its sail and untired by oar, with the hills of heather and the apron of Kilgour dremy in the distance, I seem to catch a glimpse of that other Zion and its peace where the inhabitants shall not say I am sick, and where the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.

THE END.



"YES," SHE ANSWERED, BURSTING INTO A PASSION OF TEARS; "TELL HIM I LOVE HIM, I LOVE HIM!"

be glad enough to be back again into the simple world I knew so well.

I was glad to have Veronica with me, who on her part sat playing with baby and talking to Kate, perfectly unmoved by all the beauty and grandeur. I once heard Vera say that she only liked a sunset because it told her that it was getting on toward supper time.

Kate also took everything with Indian-like stolidity. She held up Babe Rupert to the window, calling out to him to look at the bunny rabbits.

"See, baby," she was saying, "all these were your father's, my dear, dear Rupert's. I am so glad that we are going to visit some of those who loved him and who owed so much to his kindness."

At last at the top of a long ascent the woodlands suddenly ceased and darkly massive before us stood up the ancient towers of Gower Castle, with such a red and gloomy sunset flaming behind them that the sun himself appeared to be dying on an ensanguined bed.

Somehow the sight made me shudder, though I knew not what I had come there to see.

Then came the outer gate, which was open, and a drawbridge like that of a real ancient castle, which indeed it was. The wheels clattered harshly on the pavement, anon rumbled solemn and hollow as we passed beneath the arch. Then came lights and lo! at the carriage door John's hand and above it his dear, much-tried, kindly face.

"My father is no better," he said quickly to the servant Greg; "put in another pair of horses and be ready. You may have to drive to Drumferm tonight with Dr. Warner!"

He helped us out one by one, opening his eyes wide at the sight of Veronica, but making no remark, save that long in my ear he whispered the words: "Thank God, you have brought them!"

He took us into the lofty hall, with beads of red deer, great horns of foreign animals, bison skins and bear skins, which Rupert had brought home from his travels. I would have taken Babe Rupert from Kate, but she would not permit me.

"He shall be carried into his father's house for the first time by his father's wife!" she said, simply and determinedly.

And indeed there was a certain fitness in it after all, which I could not help but acknowledge.

So we passed up a grand staircase, on and on. I saw down long, dim vistas, servants gliding with downcast heads and silent feet here and there, making no sound on the thick carpets. There was a curiously pleasant smell of old roses leaves and furniture polish everywhere and then came a lighted room, and a tall, gaunt, angular man, whom I had never seen before, rose to greet us.

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back awhile with closed eyes. He waited reverently, such an awe had even the ante chamber of death. Then he motioned John and he came near.

"I have something to say—" he said in a hurried staccato voice. "Lift my pillow—no—not you! Let Rupert's wife do it. She loves him—she loves him. What she has done of good or ill was for his sake. If I have sinned, it was for his sake—his sake."

So, unjust to John and hating him to the last, the old laird would not permit the best son in the world to lay so much as a finger on him in the day of his mortal sickness, and indeed made no attempt to conceal his distaste at his mere approach. Well, I could make that up to him—and I would.

Very gently Kate adjusted the pillows. If I had had to do it, living or dying I would—but I am told that I must not say that I would do it, and it is true that it does not come into the story. Yet how can one help one's feelings at the sight of justice, wherever one sees it!

There never was a son like John, and I who know him so well, will maintain it.

"I have not much to say," Gregory Glendonwyn continued, clearly and feebly, "not yet as I think a great while to say it in. I have arranged that the money belonging to my wife—which was left to my son John, and which I ought never to have used, as I did to pay my son Rupert's debts, shall be refunded to him year by year, principal and interest, as the estate will allow of it. My son and son-in-law the forger and malversation of trust which was committed on that occasion, and therefore shares with Mr. Ingalls here and Mr. Fiscal McCrosby the criminality of compounding a felony! I am going where Letters Criminal do not run, and in a few hours I shall be safe under the great seal of statute of limitations. And, indeed, a greater penalty than I have exacted upon me for my sins. I told you that Dr. Warner told you that I have gotten a stroke. It is a true word! Behold it, gentlemen!"

And with a quick movement of the hand Gregory Glendonwyn threw aside the brown dressing gown and showed a bandage stained with red, drawn tightly across his left breast.

The same movement revealed under the covert two small swords, one of which was stained with blood six inches from the point.

The two lawyers started to their feet and came hurriedly forward. John Glendonwyn cried out a loud, sudden word and leaped to the door. But his father called him back.

"Nay," he said, "do not go. You heard what I promised to Dr. Warner. Bear him witness—and me, Rupert. I have said is the truth. But stay—take the babe away. He troubles me!"

Kate snatched her Babe Rupert to her bosom.

"None shall ask me twice to take my child away," she was beginning indignantly, but Veronica took her gently by the arm and led her out, throwing a glance back at me which said, "Stay where you are—I will take care of her!"

As soon as the door was shut Mr. Glendonwyn took up his tale.

"I am the brief," I quarreled with Dr. Warner about the matter. He had been his companion abroad, and desired to trade upon certain knowledge he possessed in order to blackmail me. I struck him in the face for something that he said about my son, and the tablet which I had put up to his memory. He would have gone away, but being angry, I challenged him to fight, giving him his choice of sword or pistol. We fought in this room. And at the second engage he ran through the lung. It is bleeding inwardly, he says, and I cannot live. The doctor from Kilgour will be here in an hour—Dr. Arbuthnot, Dr. Drumferm, in the morning. Warner was to send them on as he passed through. He will keep his word, I know, as I did mine to him.

He lay a good while motionless, breath-

CHAPTER XLIII.

Lecture and Addition.

(Being the concluding observes of the first editor, which are made by him comfortable to the usage of that late excellent historian, Mr. Robert Dodrow of Eastwood, who could never be content to set down anything without telling (as it were) the

love him—love him—as when I first put my hand in his!"

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CHAPTER XLII.

Kate's Last Message.

There was a possessing silence in the room till the door closed and the abyss of soft carpet, wide hall and outer dark swallowed up the surgeon.

Then we heard the voice of Mr. Glendonwyn again, a little firmer now, but still weak and far-away.

"I would like to see my grandson," he said. "Will you bring him forward?"

Kate rose and went swiftly to the old man's side.

"See," she said, "this is his son—I have called him Rupert, too—Rupert Glendonwyn. But he has really no name yet, for my father would not let him be baptized."

The brow of the old laird darkened ominously.

"I have at least an equal right," he said, "moreover, I have no long while to live. I desire that it shall be done forthwith, John!"

The son, so quiet, ready, humble, worth a thousand of that other, was at his father's side in a moment.

"I educated you and put you into the parish which you have despised and deserted," he said. "I have no sympathy with you or your work. But that is not what I meant to say. You have not laid aside your ordination vows, with your parochial ones. Baptize this child! He has no earthly father. I will present him for baptism."

John looked down at Kate.

"Do you wish me," he said, softly, "to be a bigamist?"

"Indeed, I have seldom seen her look so radiant and happy—certainly not since Rupert came that last time to Inch Jonet."

"Of course," she answered, in that clear, sweet voice that was always to me like the singing of a bird, "Rupert's father

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