

"BELA"

"I am only thinking of you," she said.

"I'll be there."

No better place for a tryet could have been found. No one over had any occasion to use the back trail, and it was invisible for its whole length to travelers on the main road. After issuing from the woods of Grier's Point it crossed a wide flat among clumps of willows, and climbing over the spur of a wooded hill, dropped in Beattie's back yard.

They met half-way across the flat in the tender dusk. The fairy light took away ten years of her age, and Sam experienced almost a bona fide thrill of romance at the sight of the girl, and dropped "beats" her in the meadow toward him.

In his gratitude for her kindness he really desired to feel more warmly toward her, which is a perilous state of mind for a young man to be in. He spread his coat on the ground, and dropped "beats" her in the meadow toward him.

"Smoke your pipe," she said. "It's more cozy."

He obeyed.

"I wish I had a cigarette myself," she added with a giggle.

"Do you smoke?" asked Sam, surprised.

"No," she confessed; "but all the girls do, nowadays."

"I don't like it," said Sam, bluntly.

"Of course I was only joking," she returned, hastily.

Their conversation was not very romantic. Sam, with the best intentions in the world, somehow frustrated her attempts in this direction. He was propped up on one elbow beside her.

"How thick and bright your hair is!" she murmured.

"You've got some hair yourself," returned Sam politely.

She quickly put both hands up. "Ah! don't look at it. A hair-dresser spoiled it. As a child it hung below my waist."

Sam, not knowing exactly what to say to this, blew a cloud of smoke.

"What a perfect night!" she breathed.

Great Sam. "That near-breeze of mine, Sambo, picked up a stone on the beach this morning. I didn't discover what was making him lame until we were half-way round the bay. I wish I knew more about horses. I pick up all I can, but you never can tell when these fellows are giving it to you straight."

"It's a shame the way they plague you!" she exclaimed warmly.

"Oh, it's nothing, now," replied Sam. "I can stand anything now that I've got a man's job. I'll make good yet. I think I can see a difference already. I think about it day and night. I'm very tired, I mean, making good with these fellows. It isn't that I care so much about them either. But after what's happened, I've got to make them respect me!"

And so on, in entire innocence. Sam was aware of no feelings toward her save gratitude and friendliness. He felt that it would have been the first time it happened, if these safe and simple feelings had suddenly landed him in an inextricable coil. Men are babies in such matters.

But nothing happened this night. Sam walked back with her to the foot of the hill, and they parted without touching hands.

"What a see you through the wood!" she asked.

She shook her head. "Some one might see from the house. There's plenty of light yet. To-morrow night at the same time."

"All right," said Sam.

She stood watching until he disappeared among the willows, then turned to mount the shallow hill. Down among the trunks of the big pines it was gloomier than she had expected. The patches of bright light seemed immeasurably far overhead. The wood was full of whispers. She began to be sorry that she had let him go so soon, and hastened her steps.

Suddenly, as she neared the top of the hill, a human figure materialized in the trail before her. She was too much startled to scream. She stopped, petrified with terror, struggling to draw her breath. Her shadowy face was turned toward him. It was a very creature of night, still, and grotesque. It looked at the way she had to pass. Her limbs shook under her, and a low moan of terror escaped her breast.

Finding a little strength at last, she made a dart among the trees so that she could enfold the apparition.

"Stop!" it commanded.

Miss Mackall fell half fainting against a tree.

The figure came closer to her, and she saw that it was a woman. A horrible presence of what was coming still further demoralized her. Women do not require explanations in words. Miss Mackall recognized the adventuress of Musquash, and knew what she had come for. She sought to temporize.

"What do you want?" she faltered.

"I want to kill you," said Bela, softly.

"My finger is hungry for the trigger. She moved slightly, and a spot of light caught the barrel of the rifle over her arm. Miss Mackall moaned again.

"What did I ever do to you?" she asked.

"You know," replied Bela, grimly.

"You tried to kill me."

"How ridiculous!" stammered Miss Mackall. "He isn't yours."

"Maybe," returned Bela. "Not yet."

"I'll write, and let me tell you of my simple method of home treatment, and you'll see how it works."

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But no other woman goes to get him from me."

"I'll be there."

"An old woman? You try catch him lak he is fish!"

Miss Mackall broke into a low, hysterical weeping.

"Shut up!" said Bela. "Listen to what I say."

"Let me go! Let me go!" wept the other woman. "I'll scream!"

"No, you won't," said Bela coolly.

"You not want Gilbert Beattie know you run out at night?"

"I won't be murdered in cold blood!"

"Shut up!" said Bela. "I not goin' kill you lak yet. Not if you do what I want."

Miss Mackall stopped weeping.

"What do you want?" she asked eagerly.

"What do you go way from here," said Bela coolly.

"You got go way from here," said Bela coolly.

"What do you mean?"

"Bishop Lajeunesse goin' back down lake day after to-morrow. If you here after he gone I kill you."

A little assurance began to return to Miss Mackall. After all, it was not a supernatural, but a human enemy with whom she had to deal.

"Are you crazy?" she demanded, with quivering dignity.

"Yes," replied Bela calmly. "So they say."

"Oh!" sneered Miss Mackall. "Do you think I shall pay any attention to your threats? I have only to speak a word to my brother-in-law and you will be arrested."

"They got catch me first," said Bela.

"No white man can follow me in the bush. I go where I want. Always I will follow you—writ my gun."

The white woman's voice broke again. "If anything happened to me, you'd be tried and hung for murder!"

"What do crazy woman care for that?" asked Bela.

Miss Mackall commenced to weep again.

Bela suddenly stepped aside. "Run home!" she said contemptuously.

"Better pack your trunk."

Miss Mackall's legs suddenly recovered their function, and she sped up the trail like a released arrow. Never in her life had she run so fast. She fell into her room, panting and trembling, and offered up a little prayer of thankfulness for the security of four walls and a locked door.

Next morning she was unable to get up in time to see Sam pass. She appeared at the dinner table pale and shaky, and pleaded a headache in explanation. During the meal she led the conversation by a roundabout course to the subject of Indians.

"Do they ever go crazy?" she asked Gilbert Beattie, with an offhand air.

"Yes, indeed," he answered. "It's one of the commonest troubles we have to deal with. They're fanatics by nature, anyway, and it doesn't take much to turn the scale. We'd go to the doctor for insanity. Among the people around the lake there is an extraordinary superstition, which the priests have not been able to eradicate in two hundred years. The Indians say of an insane man that his brain is frozen. And they believe in their hearts that the only way to melt it is by drinking human blood. Among a woman's or a child's preference. That is the real explanation of many an obscure tragedy up here."

Miss Mackall shuddered and ate no more.

Late that afternoon she managed to drag herself down to the road. She waited for Sam at the entrance to a patch of woods a little way toward the French outfit.

"What's the matter?" he exclaimed at the sight of her.

"Ah, don't look at me!" she said unhappily. "I've had an awful night. Sick headache. I just wanted to tell you not to come to-night."

"All right," said Sam. "To-morrow night."

She shook her head. "I—I don't think I'll come any more. I don't think it's right."

"Just as you say," said Sam. "If you feel all right to-morrow afternoon, you might get a horse and ride around the bay."

"I—I'm afraid to ride alone," she faltered.

"Well," said Sam, ever quick to take offense, "if you don't want to see me again, of course—"

"I do! I do!" she cried. "I've got to have a talk with you. I don't know what to do!"

"Very well," he said stoutly. "I'll come up to the house to-morrow night. I guess there's no reason why I shouldn't."

"Yes, that is best," she agreed.

"Drive on now," he said.

Sam clucked to his team, and they started briskly down the trail. "Lord, she looks about seventy!" he was thinking. Miss Mackall stood watching until they rounded the first bend. When she turned around there stood Bela beside a big tree, a few feet to the side of the road. Evidently she had been hidden in the underbrush behind. Miss Mackall gasped in piteous terror and stood rooted to the spot.

Bela's face was as relentless as a high priestess. "I listen if you go in tell him 'bout me," she said. "If you tell him, I'll ready to shoot."

The other woman was speechless.

"You not goin' be here to-morrow night," Bela went on quietly. "Bishop Lajeunesse leave to-morrow morning."

Miss Mackall turned and flew up the trail.

The trader's house was built on a narrow strip, all the rooms on a floor. Miss Mackall's room was at the back of the house, her window facing the end of the back trail, where it issued from the woods. The night was now mild and fragrant, and stars were shining wide. Looks are never used north of the landing. Or if they are, the key hangs bravely within reach.

Miss Mackall, however, insisted on looking the door and securing her window. There were no locks, and

she hung a pistol under her arm, and kept her door locked. She was a further safeguard against nervousness during the night, she had one of her nieces to bed with her.

There was no sleep for her. In every little stir and breath she heard the footfall of her enemy. She was tormented by the suspicion that there was something lurking outside her window. She regretted leaving the petticoat up, for it prevented her seeing outside. She brooded on it until she felt as if she would go out of her mind, if she were not reassured.

Finally she mustered up sufficient courage to get out of bed and creep to the window. Holding her breath, she gathered the petticoat in her hand and smartly jerked it down. She found herself looking into the face of the native girl, who was peering through the glass. There was a little light in the sky behind her.

Bela sprang back, and Miss Mackall saw the gun-barrel. She uttered a piercing scream and fell fainting to the floor. The whole family rushed to her aid. Hysterics succeeded. They could make nothing of her wild cries. When she recovered she was numb.

The morning Gilbert Beattie and his wife discussed it soberly. "Nerves," said the man. "We'd best let her go out with the bishop, as she wants. This is no country for her. We might not get another chance this year to send her away with a proper escort."

"It's too bad!" sighed his wife. "I thought she would make such a good wife for one of the new men that are coming in now. They need wives so badly!"

"H-m!" said Gilbert.

Gilbert Beattie, driving home by way of the French outfit, after having seen his sister-in-law embark, found another party of settlers had arrived. Many of the natives, attracted by news of those events, had also come in, and the settlement presented a scene of activity such as it had never known.

It gave the trader much food for thought. Clearly the old order was passing fast, and it behooved an enterprising merchant to adjust himself to the new. Beattie was no longer a young man, and he felt an honest anxiety for the future. Would he be able to maintain his supremacy?

When he reached his own store he found a handsome native girl waiting to see him. He had, seen her before, could not place her. He asked her name.

"Bela Charley," she answered.

"O-ho!" he said, looking at her with a fresh curiosity. "You the she, eh?"

Whatever they might be saying about this girl, he commended the calm, self-respecting air with which she bore his scrutiny. "Do you want to trade?" he asked. "One of the clerks will wait on you."

She shook her head. "Want see you."

"What can I do for you?"

"Company got little house beside the road down there. Nobody livin' there."

"Well, what of it?"

"You let me live there?" she asked.

"You'd better go home to your people, my girl," he said, grimly.

"I have left them," she returned.

"What would you think of doing?" he asked seriously.

"Plenty people here now," she said. "More comin'." "I got keep stoppin' house for meals."

"Alone?" he asked, frowning.

"Sure!" said Bela.

He shook his head. "It wouldn't do."

"Why?"

"You're too good-looking," he replied, bluntly. "It wouldn't be respectable."

"I tak care of myself," averred Bela.

"Anybody say so?"

"How about that story that's going the rounds now?"

"Moch lies, I guess."

"Very likely; but it can't be done," he said, firmly. "I can't have a scandal ring in front of my wife's door."

"Good for trade," suggested Bela, indignantly. "Mak the new people come up here. Now they always hangin' round Siffy and Mahooly's."

This argument was not without weight; nevertheless, Beattie continued to shake his head. "Can't do it unless you get a chaperon."

"Chaperon?" repeated Bela, puzzled.

"Get a respectable woman to come and live with you, and I'll say all right."

Bela nodded and marched out of the



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In an hour she was back, bringing Mary, Batesse Otter's widow. Mary, according to the standards of the settlement, was a paragon of virtue. Gilbert Beattie grinned.

"Here is Mary Otter," said Bela, calmly. "She poor. She got live with me. I guess she is respectable. She live in the mission before and scrub the floors. Pere Lacombe tell her come live with me. Is that all right?"

Since Bela had secured the sanction of the church upon her enterprise, Beattie felt that the responsibility was no longer his. He gladly gave her her way.

The astonishing news spread up and down the road like lightning. Bela Charley was going to open a "restaurant." Here was a new and fascinating subject for gossip.

Nobody knew that Bela was in the settlement. Nobody had seen her come. Exactly like her, said those who were familiar with her exploits in the past. What would happen when Bela and Sam met again? others asked.

While everybody had helped this story on its rounds, no man believed that Bela had really carried off Sam. Funny that this girl should turn up almost at the moment of the other girl's departure! Nobody, however, suspected as yet that there was anything more than coincidence in this.

The main thing was Bela was known to be an AI cook, and the grub at the French outfit was rotten. Mahooly himself confessed it.

Within two hours six men, including Big Jack and his pals, arrived for dinner. Bela was not at all discomposed. She had already laid in supplies from the company. Dinner would be ready for all who came, she said. Six bits per man. Breakfast and supper, four bits.

To-day they would have to sit on the floor, but by to-morrow, proper arrangements would be completed. No, there would be no accommodations for sleeping. Everybody must go home at ten o'clock. While they waited they could cut some good goods to mend the roof, if they wanted.

Some of the guests, thinking of the past, approached her somewhat diffidently, but if Bela harbored any resentment, she hid it well. She was the same to all, a wary, calm, efficient hostess.

Naturally the men were delighted to be given an opportunity to start fresh. Three of them labored at the roof with a will. Husky, who only had one good arm, cleaned fish for her. The dinner, when it came on, was no disappointment.

Sam, rattling back over the rough trail that afternoon, whistled in his empty box-wagon and stamped cheerfully. Things were going well with him. The long, hard-working days in the open-air were good for both health and spirits. He liked his job, and he was making money. He had conceived a great affection for his lively little team, and, lacking other companions, confided his hopes and fears in them.

Not that he had yet succeeded in winning from under the load of derision that had almost crushed him; their men still greeted him with their

complaints. In their cheeks. But now that he had a man's job, it was easier to bear.

He believed, too, that he was making progress with them. The hated gibe "white slave" was less frequently heard. Sam, passionately bent on making good in the community, weighed every shade of the men's manner toward him, like a lover his mistress.

He met Big Jack and his pals driving back around the bay in Jack's wagon. They had staked out their land across the bay, but still spent most of their time in the settlement. Both drivers pulled up their horses.

The men halted Sam with at least the appearance of good nature. As for Sam himself, he had made up his mind that since he was going to live among them, he would only make himself ridiculous by maintaining a sore and distant air. He was learning to give as good as he got.

(To be continued.)

VEGETABLE WAX.

Old-Time Domestic Industry is Spreading Out.

Vegetable wax is already filling an important place in the economic needs of the world, and there are many indications that the production of wax from certain plants will increase as time goes by. It was not long ago that the world supplied certain of its needs with animal oils and development of the vegetable oil industry, as well as the development of the mineral oil industry, has been remarkable.

The uses for wax have increased, and a number of wax-producing plants are being employed on a commercial scale. The industry of making high grade wax from the candleilla plant has made long strides in the last few years, and there are several big factories for the extraction of wax in the candleilla-growing sections of the United States. It has been estimated that there are 1,000,000 acres of land on which candleilla is growing wild and in great profusion in what is known as the upper border regions of Texas. It is believed that not only may the candleilla-bearing territory be enlarged, but that the wax-producing qualities of the plant may be improved by cultivation. There are also large areas of the wild candleilla lands in northern Mexico.

The recovery of wax from the bayberry was for centuries a New England household industry, and it has lately become a factory industry, the wax of the plant being generally used in the making of bayberry candles, held in high esteem for use and ornament by New Englanders. A bushel of the berries yields, as a rule, between four and five pounds of wax. Another plant belonging to the same genus is the "sweetgale," which grows abundantly in the bogs and marshes of Scotland. It is a small shrub with leaves somewhat like those of myrtle or willow, having a fragrant odor and bitter taste, and yielding an essential oil by distillation.

The wax of the candleilla plant is used in making candles, phonograph records, wood and leather polishes, floor wax, certain varnishes, linoleum, rubber compounds and celluloid, and it also enters into use in pharmacy and in making of electrical insulation. The candleilla plant grows on the poorest quality of soil, and before it was found to have a commercial value for the wax contained it was considered a pest.

Though candles are not so generally used as they were before the days of mineral illuminating oils, gas and electricity, they still constitute an important article of manufacture. The candle is an ancient form of lighting. The word comes from the Latin word, "candere," which means to "glow."

Beeswax and tallow were used for lighting purposes by the Romans. Lengths of cotton or flax fiber were dipped in these substances and they usually burned with much smoke and soot and little light. The rush-lights of the middle ages, and even of modern times, were rushes that had been stripped nearly to the dry pitch and dipped in wax or tallow. When "candlepower" was adopted as the unit of light measure by the London gas act of 1850 it was taken to mean the amount of light which would be given by a sperm candle, six of which would weigh a pound, and which consumed 120 grains of the candle each hour.

Candles are made and have been made for centuries by four distinct processes called "dipping," "pouring," "drawing" and "moulding." Few candles of commerce are now made

of pure beeswax. But even today the pure beeswax candle is a valuable article.

One of the most common types of candles is the tallow candle, which is made from the fat of animals.

Many of the candles which are sold in the market are made from a mixture of tallow and beeswax.

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