

The Iron Lord

By S. R. Crockett

AUTHOR OF "THE STICKIT MINISTER," "THE RAIDERS," "THE WHITE PLUME," &c.

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Synopsis of Previous Chapters.

The story opens at the home of Jacob Romer, of Gorm House, on the Bay of Biscay. He is a ship owner and mine owner and very rich. Wanting to be rid of his wife, Caroline, he has entrusted the task to his brother, Thomas, who is incarcerated in an insane asylum. This falls because of the testimony of Jacob's daughter, Vida, who, however, cannot believe that she is really his daughter. Jacob sends one of his ships after her, but the Good Intent is wrecked and Vida and her mother thrown ashore. Vida renounces her father and becomes Vida Bryan, the adopted daughter of Billy Bryan, the keeper of one of the coast lights. James Kahn, a cunning and confidential man of Jacob Romer, is seeking to get possession of the Romer mines and mill. In the meantime, Vida is living happily at Kirktown and two weeks are passing. Billy Bryan and Dick Finn, the working of Sire Light. Vida appears upon the scene and is sure that the two men have been thousands of getting her incarcerated in an insane asylum. She is wrong, however, as developments prove. Vida returns to her home, while, in the meantime, they talk about the present she is to receive. The story takes up Vida's life day by day until the time when James Kahn, with an eye to the Romer mines, proposes to marry her. Billy Bryan, thinking him a robber, tells Kahn, and Kahn explains, and Vida's guardians listen to her suit. She refuses Kahn, but no one knows whether it is really in the name of her father or in the name of her mother.

CHAPTER XXXVIII—Continued.

"Janet ought to know better—and she does!" he murmured. And the reading of the letter continued. "You always ask me to tell you more about myself. Well, there is nothing to tell. I rise at six of the morning to see that Susy Mitten does the grates. Sometimes I help her. Then I wake Raff (when he is at home) and we two brush the shoes. (You call yourself an engineer, and yet can't invent a machine to do a simple thing like that!) Breakfast follows prayers—which makes one hurried and the other cold. But what can be done with a father who is consumed with doubts as to eternal punishment? What does he care about cold eggs at breakfast?"

"Then I do my house-books, count the linen for the wash (when there is a wash, which is mostly). If I have a spare moment I go to the piano and play 'Where Is My Wandering Boy To-night'—till Raff's fox terrier Vic scratches at the door to be let out."

"The daughter of a minister and tells such humph!" he broke off aggressively. "I wonder why I care about getting such letters. I'm made different from other fellows. I expect, ah, well! So is she from other girls?"

And he returned to the subject in hand, secretly vexed to see that so little remained to be read. "Dear Mr. Ludovic, the roaring winds do blow—on the Bay of Biscay-O. And you are just at the far side of it, sitting aloft (I have looked you out), like the little cherub mentioned by the late Mr. Didden. So I beg you to pity the fate of poor Miss Janet. Susy Mitten has just broken a cup and saucer out of me only afternoon tea-set, and you can't send me another because you don't know the pattern. Otherwise, I would not say no. Thank you very much, all the same. But keep your for a marriage present to your friend Miss V. B. F. Romer, who has not yet annexed any more fathers. I don't think she will claim Phil Calmont as one."

"Dear Vic—was it mad, then? And did it stride to and fro, and shove about those long legs, in the boots with spurs I saw on the photograph you sent (what do you do with spurs on a mountain? I have heard of mountain spurs, but it can't be that). Well, I know there are people who would make a fuss about it, and tell you how noble and medal-ed you deserve to be. Oh, yes, there are lots—girls, too—much prettier than I. Only, you see, you wouldn't enjoy their letters so much. They would make you yawn. They write all of a pattern. And you seem to have received quite a lot—I know, because you refer their copy headings so closely, dear Mr. Ludovic!"

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The Disappearance of "the Confidential."

It did just as well, to keep Vic Morris' mind in a state of suspense and uncertainty. He knew no difference, bless you! He knew no difference, bless you!

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CHAPTER XL.

A Father's Homecoming.

Phil came running at once. He thought it was a mere faint, the result of some bad news. But the heavy, lifeless drop of the limbs of the left side, the open, staring eyes, the slight drawing of the muscles of the face, soon convinced him of something more serious.

Then they thought of the carriage, and Grogan Junior (who denied having seen it, though he had passed that way very early in the morning) was called upon to make sure. But the coachman, obeying instructions, had gone home. He was bound to have immediate speech with Jacob Romer, and there, as he saw his ancient master in close and familiar talk with Phil Calmont.

There was a certain dodlike fidelity about Grindling's fallings were of quite a different order from those of Hector McKillop. He leaped at once to the conclusion that there was a plot against his old "chief." All the "new hands" were in it—Kahn, Casimir, and now this Phil Calmont was holding his master in talk while his accomplices got away with the booty.

Accordingly as he came on the levels of the moor he quickened his pace to a run, and arrived purple-visaged and out of breath before the cool, quiet figure of the man in gray.

"Mr. Romer—Mr. Romer—sir!" he panted, "we have been robbed—you have been robbed, sir, by a gang, a gang—"

Here words failed him, and Jacob Romer turned on him the bold hawk's beak and dominating eye of other years. "What is this, Grindling?" he said, "ent with it, man! Don't stand stammering there."

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HUNT BRER RABBIT

How the Elusive Cottontail May Be Run to Earth.

Way back in a dim corner of our memory

is the first rabbit that fell to our boyish efforts as a hunter. It matters not how we got him—whether in a snare or gun—or tracked him to the woodpile and, after seeing that all avenues of escape were blocked, demolished the woodpile piece by piece, until, struggling and kicking, we bore our prize to the house in childish triumph.

It doesn't matter one whit that we have become mighty nimble in our later years; many of us, indeed, have gained fame as big game hunters, and have to our credit moose, bear, or elk—but with all the glory and excitement of the chase there lingers with most of us a tender spot for our first rabbit.

Of all the sports that autumn ushers in, none are so fascinating to a young hunter, for the very thought of killing a rabbit is joy in itself. Possibly it is because rabbits are the one game that is ever where in our country; possibly it is because it is at the very door of every one of us; but certain it is that to get a rabbit is in boy parlance a great achievement, and a thing much to be desired.

How many of us can remember when we passed from the stage of onlooker, and with an old single-barrel snare-loader—the "first gun," we spent our Saturday holiday under the supervision of the older boys in search of "Brer Rabbit" and the particular sensations which chased themselves up and down our spinal column when we held in our hand our first, our very first rabbit.

Of all the game which our locality is blessed, Molly cottontail holds first place, both in point of abundance and in general distribution; in fact, so numerous are they everywhere that many a truck farmer and market gardener would be glad to see them go. Accordingly, one need go to no great distance in order to find his game; in fact, the fields on the outskirts of town contain a few, and a tramp anywhere in any direction will give an opportunity for sport.

If you are going out for a day's sport, you will find Molly cottontail a little farther away from town than the other game. The suburban car lines, for they enable one to get out in any direction and as far as one likes. A favorite hunting ground for rabbits borders the Mount Vernon road—the country is liberally stocked with them below the "dyke," and there is little or no objection to gunning providing a man behaves himself. Over in Maryland on the opposite side of the river, less hunting has been done and there is more game.

After a light fall of snow that covers

the old tracks, make for the woods, and follow the first fresh track that you come to. And herein lies one of nature's winter lessons. No matter how close to cover game has kept, no sooner does a fall of snow mantle the earth than everything from the smallest animal to the largest appears to be on the move, and you will have no difficulty in finding all the trails you want.

Having tracked one down, clap the muzzle on your ferret and start him down the hole. On no account ever send him down without the muzzle; if you do you will probably never see him again. He will be almost sure to catch the rabbit, kill him, and after making a good meal of his blood, curl himself up for a long nap. Take your stand about fifteen feet back from the hole and await developments.

In just about a half minute you will hear a low rumble, and that rabbit will shoot out of the hole as though the devil himself was after him and he couldn't go fast enough. Now give him a fair chance; let him get away a good twenty yards, then give it to him! This is the dead easy and as though you had the bulge on the rabbit and could get him every time. Does it? Just try it once. The next thing is to recover your ferret, and it may take several minutes. Presently he will come poking up to see whether his game has gone. Drop the lure or a dead rabbit and let him fasten on to it, draw him out and put him in the box and hike for another burrow.

There is nothing bad about the use of a ferret in this manner. The evil lies in the hands of the market hunter who puts a ferret in his hole and puts him in his ferret he claps a bag over the hole and gobbles every rabbit in a community, bringing down a righteous wrath and indignation on the use of the ferret in hunting.

Lastly, having knocked over a rabbit without killing him dead, don't bear his head to a jelly with a club. A quick, sharp blow directly back of the ears is sufficient to put him out of business, and your game will look nicer when you reach home.

Builds Church in Desert. Eccentric Man Only Inhabitant Within Miles of His abode. George Smith, who a few months ago created a sensation in the district court at Reno by kneeling in prayer in the midst of a murder case and asking God for light on the evidence in the case, and who later severely criticized the judge for passing the death sentence on four convicted men, has built himself a church on the crest of a high hill, several miles northeast of this city, says the Tonopah Sun. The edifice stands in a desolate country to the west of the Wedekind mines, and was found by a party of hunters returning recently from Pyramid Lake. The church is built on a high hill, roads, constructed at much expense. The building is small, but artistic. It stands in a country unsettled, and Smith, who lives near-by, is the only person within miles of the church.

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