



"She sat up and stared at the crowd as if she didn't know where she was."

Clapsaddle's Girl

By ELMORE ELLIOTT PEAKE

Illustrations by Douglas Duer

JUDGE Junius Justinian Crowe, followed by his three callers, entered his official chamber, just off the Circuit Court room. The spring term of court had just closed, and the judge's visitors (attorneys from the northern part of the State) had dropped in for a chat. The afternoon was sultry—a typical southern Illinois brew of weather.

"Judge," remarked one of the men, from the depths of a leather chair, "what ever became of Wallace Brand? Is he still in the penitentiary?"

Judge Crowe fixed his dark eyes on the speaker with more than casual interest.

"It's rather remarkable, Carson, that you should speak of Brand just now," he answered. "At this minute, in all likelihood, he is on a railroad train, homeward bound. I expect to meet him at the station in an hour. The Governor pardoned him yesterday."

"You don't say so! How long has he served?"

"It would be five years in August."

Carson blew a swirling smoke-ring. "Judge, as a special favor, I want you to tell Fleming and Woodward here that story."

Crowe gazed thoughtfully out of the window for an interval, and then addressed himself to the tale.

WESLEY CLAPSADDLE—to go back to the beginning—came here about nine years ago, having bought out our box factory. He also bought the Rutledge place, a fine old mansion on the outskirts of town. The first Sunday after

their arrival, the family came to church in a fine carriage—that was before the automobile bug had addled every third man's brain—behind a span of high-stepping black horses, driven by a darky boy whom they had brought with them from Kentucky. They also imported a cook, a couple of maids, and an outside man—all black. As you may imagine, their plunge into our social pool made quite a splash.

Clapsaddle invariably wore a silk hat, white waistcoat, and frock-coat. Add to these a pair of flourishing burnsides, a deep voice, and the manners of a Chesterfield, and you have an impressive figure. Hence, when he announced, at a reception tendered him by the Commercial Club, that he intended to add a wagon-hub plant to the box factory, and intimated that a favorable site might bring to Loganstown another factory in which he was interested, Main Street hummed the next day with talk of a boom.

There were in the family two sons, then in college, two little girls, and Louise Vivian, sixteen years old. This young lady fluttered the young people as much as her father had their elders, and her beautiful clothes must have inflicted many a pang of envy.

She spent most of her time in a little red dog-cart drawn by a spotted pony. She could be seen on Main Street at almost any hour of the day after ten, and made a pretty and picturesque figure. If she dropped her whip or glove, at least

two young men seemed always on hand to dart into the street to rescue it, after which, of course, it was a natural thing for a tête-à-tête to follow. When she ordered soda-water, the boy brought it out to her cart, where she sipped it with perfect insouciance. If she had a sample of dress goods or a spool of thread to match, the dry-goods clerk brought it out to her. This curbstome service was a courtesy, it seemed, which tradesmen always showed ladies in her former Kentucky home.

IN less than a year, though, Loganstown seemed to pall upon Vivian. She had riddled the hearts, in quick succession, of most of the available young men, meanwhile keeping her own whole, and she was probably looking for new worlds to conquer. So the next fall she entered Goodwin Seminary, where she studied music and French. After that she went to Europe. She was gone altogether more than two years. Wesley Clapsaddle occasionally spoke of her being in Paris or Vienna or Rome, where she was being "finished" in music, art, and the languages.

One day, as I stood on the First National Bank corner with Val Hentzpetter, the cashier, he said: "Isn't that Clapsaddle's girl?"

It was. She was driving with great facility a gaudy little orange-red French automobile—a gift from her aunt. I afterward learned. Just opposite us she gave

the steering-wheel a quick turn, and the car whisked around a half circle like a rabbit and stopped exactly at the curb.

She was the handsomest woman I ever saw, but she appeared entirely unaware of the admiration she commanded. Unlike her mother, she was democratic to the tips of her fingers. She now shook hands with Hentzpetter and me, chatted a minute over her home-coming, and passed on.

Wallace Brand joined us a moment later. As her high-heeled pumps twinkled along the sidewalk, he watched her with a whimsical smile, and said:

"Gentlemen, there goes the most dangerous woman that ever lived in this town. For most women men are called only to work and live. She's the kind they fight and die for."

It was about this time that Clapsaddle's prosperity began to wane. People had discovered that there was more smoke than fire to him. He was a visionary in business. It had leaked out that it was his wife's money—and the last of it—which financed his Loganstown enterprises. He had since borrowed heavily without disclosing the true state of his affairs.

People began to stop calling on the Clapsaddles and failed to replace Vivian's name on their invitation lists.

We were entirely unprepared for the next act in Vivian's drama. When Charlie Holt, my clerk, slipped up to my desk one morning and told me that Vivian and Wallace Brand had been married the night before, I was dumfounded.

Brand was thirteen years her senior, and the longest-headed young fellow in town—a man who loved work as most