

A SUCCESSFUL VENTURE

"I'll advance you 170 months' allowance and that's all I will do," repeated Peter Baylor, picking up some papers as if the question was settled. "And that wouldn't be half enough. You couldn't even hire one of the cottages for that amount," replied Clifford Curtis, angrily. "You should have done a little figuring in the first place," was old Baylor's crisp reply. "There's an old adage, I believe, about looking before you leap."

"Yes, and another about nothing ventured, nothing have," was Cliff's retort.

"Since you seem to like 'em, I'll suggest another," chuckled Baylor. "What about the fool and his money?"

"I'll do you the justice of saying that according to that standard you are no fool," with which parting shot Cliff strode from his guardian's office.

Clifford Curtis had just concluded his junior year at college. Dick Staley, a chum from preparatory days, who had left college to fight bronchial trouble in piney woods, had written Cliff that a good hotel at lake Rokoma could be rented at an astonishingly low figure, \$500 for July and August, and if he could fill it with jolly men it would stand him in a great profit for the summer.

In a short time Cliff had made up a party of forty men at \$8 per week, with a lot more trying to get in on the same terms. And then in response to his enthusiastic letter to Dick Staley, had come this telegram: "I dictated \$5,000, not \$500, as rental. Drat the typewriter."

It would never do to let the boys know of his mistake. They would make life miserable with their jokes, so Cliff said nothing to them, determining to make an appeal to his guardian for the extra money. He would have plenty next year, when the trusteeship would be over, but his father had left the money in trust for Cliff until he should have graduated.

He was striding along with his head down when a girlish voice arrested his furious progress and the

gloom lifted. "What's the matter, Cliff?" she demanded. "I'll warrant you've been having an argument with dad."

"He wouldn't listen to argument," Cliff explained. "Why, the moment I came into the office he shouted at me, 'If it's any more money you want, you can't have it.' I guess I'm old enough to be trusted with my own money."

"Twenty-three," the girl cried in mock awe. "That's awfully old for a financier."

He led the way to a nearby restaurant and while they waited for their order to be served he told her all his troubles.

"And you were going to pay out \$4,500 just to keep the boys from joking you?" she gasped.

"It's worth it," he said, doggedly. "The whole crowd would have found out and I would never have heard the last of it. Now there's no way out of it except to write the boys."

"Never say die," she quoted. "Now, are you going to give me proverbs, too?" Cliff demanded, irritably.

"Poor boy, I forgot," she said, penitently enough, though her eyes twinkled with fun. "But you're giving up without a fight. The boys don't expect a fashionable hotel for \$8 a week, do they?"

"I told them that that they would just be camping out for that price," he said. "You can't give them much for eight a week. I didn't even tell them that I had the hotel. I just said that I had a place."

"There might be some other place you can get," she said, hopefully. "You don't want to give up so easily. Will you come down Friday?"

"Do you really think we can do it?" he demanded.

"There's my hand," he crushed the tiny fingers in his strong grip. "I suppose you think I'm a big baby," he said, shamefacedly. "I guess that I am."

In spite of his faults, she was very fond of Cliff, and praise from him meant much to her. Her affection blinded her at times to the fact that he was lacking in the ability to take the initiative, but today she saw that he must extricate himself from his

dilemma without any assistance from his guardian.

Her father had told her that Cliff had lost much money through recklessly investing his capital in wild-o-the-wisp schemes and that unless he soon learned how to take care of his principal, it would not last long

horses passed them in a mere mockery of a circus procession.

"Here's a lark," she cried, delightedly. "I have not seen a real one-ring circus since I was the tiniest little girl. Do let's go? I'll send word to the Nisbets that I will not be at the house until late. We can



"I'M SORRY TO GO AWAY AND LEAVE ALL THIS," HE SAID, REGRETFULLY.

after the trusteeship was over. Now here was a chance to prove Cliff a man, and she was determined that he should win.

On Friday they left the train at Lake Rokoma just as a couple of gaudy wagons and a few dispirited

look up the house tomorrow."

They staid for the concert that followed the regular performance and Betty was regretfully leaving the lot when back of the dressing tent she espied a woman petting a sick dog.

She darted off to see the dog, dragging Cliff with her, and, with quick sympathy she made friends with the woman.

"I'm afraid it's no use," the latter said, as Betty crooned over the sick animal. "Gyp was the best of the lot. He did all the best tricks. That's why the show was so bad this afternoon. Poor old fellow, he wanted to go when he heard the other dogs barking in the ring, but Bob said it wouldn't do, and I just had to sit and hold him till the act was over."

"Poor little fellow," said Betty, sympathetically. "I suppose that you'll have trouble getting another dog and training it."

"Bob ain't no trainer, he's a rider," explained the woman. "We buy the dogs all trained. Bob knows the uses and he keeps putting them through their stunts, but he can't catch 'em new ones."

"Do they cost a lot of money?" she asked.

"More'n we got," was the dispirited reply. "We've been out six weeks now, and we ain't had nothin' but ad luck ever since we started. We lost the menagerie and two of the best ring horses in the last town, and Jim Cullen's gone up to town now to see if he can attach the other two for his salary. He's Sig Collins, what did the traps—the trapeze, you know—and the wire act. Bob's only been able to pay him two weeks since we started."

"The other two men are my brothers," she added. "I'm Mlle. Dufrane, the juggler, and I work with Cullen on the traps. It ain't much of a circus and we can't get the good towns with a wagon show now. If we had \$200 we'd leave this outfit and join a big show. They'd take us, but nobody'd give that for this old top."

"Do you mean that you'd sell the whole circus for that?" gasped Betty.

"Just the big top and the 30-foot and cook tent," Betty looked at her uncomprehendingly. "I mean the main tent and the dressing tent and that little one over there," the woman explained.

"We'll buy them," Betty said. "Shall we give you the money?"

"Are you crazy," broke in Cliff. "What in the world would we do

with a circus tent?"

Betty glanced at the woman, who had risen and was making her way to the dressing tent.

"Don't you see that this is what you wanted?" she cried. "The big top, as she calls it, is your hotel, the dressing tent is the dining room and parlor, and the cook tent is all ready to set up. You don't need the horses, so you can sell them."

"Betty, I do believe that you've hit it right," he exclaimed. "The tent is plenty big enough for the boys. I can get cots for them. It will be camping out with a vengeance."

"Hush, here they come," said Betty. A sleepy-looking man in a soiled sweater was following the woman out of the tent.

Bob hitched up the tired horses to one of the band wagons and drove them over to the village. An hour later Cliff was the possessor of the tents, two horses and a band wagon.

Cliff drove back to town with Bob after Betty had been deposited in state in front of the Nisbets, to the great astonishment of those fashionable personages, and that night he slept in sole possession of the "big top," while the night train carried the circus people back to town.

The circus people had turned communicative when they heard what he was planning to do, and Bob left with him a paper giving the address of a firm in Chicago which was selling the wreckage of the St. Louis fair hotels at scandalously low prices.

Two weeks later the gaudy band wagon was meeting all trains and conveying loads of jolly students to "Curtin's circus."

A board floor had been laid in both tents, cheap muslin screens hung from ropes out the "big top" into tiny rooms, and the dining room was made gay with bunting.

The fashionable people who make up the little lake colony, and the guests at the big hotel were scandalized at first, but they soon found out that forty young college men were a desirable addition to an almost Adamless colony, and after that the boys were in clover.

The "circus" kept open until the middle of September, and the last

night was marked by the final entertainment of the season. The boys had formed themselves into a glee club and their voices rang out across the lot to where Cliff and Betty sat under the trees.

"I'm sorry to go away and leave all this," he said, regretfully. "I don't know when I ever put in a more pleasant summer."

"Or a more healthful one," suggested, as she took in the lithe figure from which all fat had been trained, for Cliff had worked, and worked hard to make the venture a success.

It had been no easy matter to cater to forty hungry men, even when they were almost over-willing to turn to and help, and there was a healthful tan on his face very different from the pallor that had spoiled good features when he made the camp.

"And you made a profit, too," went on Betty. "Do you know just how much?"

He fumbled in his pocket for a book. "I figured it all out today," he said. "I've made \$1,237.53. Most of the boys are coming back next year. I'm going to store the tent and we'll have a glorious time."

Just then Peter Baylor came puffing up.

"Well, Cliff," he said, as he sat down on the bench beside them. "I guess you're glad now that I didn't let you have that money."

"It's taught me to help myself," Cliff answered.

"It was a great lesson," said the elder man. "There's an old saying: 'He who works, must win!'"

"There's a better one than that," said Cliff, boldly.

"What's that?" asked Baylor.

"It is not good for man to be alone," quoted Cliff.

"I guess that will be all right after you graduate," was the answer. "Betty's made a man of you. Now, she'll be able to make a good husband of you, too."

"I won't need any teaching for that," said Cliff, as his hand closed over the girl's, and the voices of the singers in the tent rose in an old-fashioned love song, ever new and sweet to love and youth.

PAYING THE MORTGAGE

WHEN the father and husband died, leaving Mrs. Graves and Hilda alone, the latter 18 years old, the two women saw a gloomy future before them.

There was not only a living to earn, but a mortgage of \$300 on the cottage in the suburban town to pay off. Being an invalid, the mother could earn little or nothing, though she talked bravely of dressmaking. It was for Hilda to furnish the income—to plan and save and scheme and keep things going.

After many failures and disappointments she found a place in the city with an old-fashioned lawyer who preferred her neat chirography to typewriting, and for two long years she scarcely missed a day. From her earnings she could now and then put aside a dollar to pay the interest on the mortgage, but every penny had to count.

One day a piece of good luck happened to Hilda Graves. In returning from lunch she found a roll of bills on the street. She snatched it up from her feet and almost ran the rest of the way to the office.

Her employer was out, and she counted over the bills and found that she was the richer by \$500. Now, the mortgage could be paid off, and there would be money left for clothes and other things.

The thought that the money belonged to some one else, and that it was her duty to advertise for the loser, never occurred to her. In her own village, it would have been different, but in the great city, findings were keepings. Money was so plenty that it wasn't likely that the loser of this sum would trouble himself about it.

She was so exultant over her find,

and so impatient to get home and tell the good news, that she asked to be excused at 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

When Hilda took the trolley car a well-dressed young man took a seat next to her. A moment later Walter Gifford climbed aboard the same car and took a seat back of her.

The well-dressed young man was out for business as a pickpocket, and young Mr. Gifford, of an insurance company, was going out to the suburb to do some business for his company.

Any ordinary observer would have decided that Hilda was of the army of working women. She might have been superior in looks, but not in dress. Her shoulders were beginning to round a bit, too, and Sherlock Holmes would have detected the ink-stains on her finger that could not be entirely scrubbed off with soap and water.

If she had not persistently kept her hand in her dress pocket the well-dressed young man would not have given her a second thought. His game was the fat brewer on the other side of him.

The car had hardly made half a mile when the girl blew off. It was caught by Mr. Gifford and restored to her. She had to turn and thank him, and, of course, she got a good look at his face.

Then the woman on her right cried out that she had lost her reticule, and during the momentary excitement Miss Graves and Mr. Gifford passed a few more words.

Then came a climax. In rounding a curve the car left the track and brought up against the fence. Everybody was astonished, but no one seriously hurt, although badly mixed

up with the seats and each other.

In the confusion Mr. Gifford found a roll of bills on the floor of the car. He held on to the money until someone should make a outcry. None came. Another car came along after a few minutes and picked up the excited passengers, and not one of them had said a word about a loss.

Mr. Gifford was just as honest as you or I. He shoved that roll down into his pocket and decided to wait until the loser advertised. The victim of a \$500 loss would be sure to do that.

The next day and the next and the next, and in fact, for a whole week, Mr. Gifford looked at the "Lost and Found" in three different dailies, but no advertisement appeared.

He then came to the conclusion that the roll must have dropped from his own vest pocket as the car was trying to climb the fence, or that the motorman, who had fled the scene, had thrown it at him as a solace for barking his shins and skinning his knee. It was therefore added to the young man's bank account.

Miss Graves had suffered a few bruises and a great scare, and it was not until she missed the money that she uttered one single groan of despair and almost fainted away.

The pickpocket echoed her groan. He had come out to pick and got a wrench of the back that would make him walk like a man of 80 for days to come.

When the other car had left the track Hilda must have instinctively withdrawn her hand from her pocket to clutch the seat ahead, and the money had come with the hand. Someone must have found it. Who? This question puzzled her for days

and she finally decided that it had fallen into the hands of the nice young man who had rescued her hat. His nice ways were all put on. He was a bad young man—probably a thief by choice and profession.

She would know him again if she met him in China. She wasn't going to China to experiment, but she would keep her eyes open when on the street, and if she ran across him he must give up that money or take the consequences. The fact that she worked in a lawyer's office gave her a certain amount of nerve, too.

Mr. Gifford had been under suspicion a week or so when one day he walked into the lion's mouth. He had business with the old-fashioned lawyer, and he entered the office at 10 o'clock one forenoon to be told that the old-fashioned lawyer had gone over to Philadelphia.

There was a good-looking young lady there who did the telling. It seemed to him that he had seen her somewhere before. He was puzzling his brains and killing time, when she rose up and exclaimed:

"Ah, it is you! I thought I would find you sooner or later."

"Then—then you have been wishing to find me?" he queried.

"I have, sir. You were on the trolley car that ran off the track into the fence a week or so ago."

"Yes, I remember."

"I lost \$500 from my pocket. I am sure you found it. I have hoped to meet you every day since. I haven't seen in any of the papers that you have advertised it."

"And I haven't seen in any of the papers that you advertised your loss," was the reply.

It was a good answer and Miss Graves blushed. Mr. Gifford could-

n't know that it was money she had found, but she knew, and she had not dared advertise her loss.

He looked at her as if he rather enjoyed the affair, and there was the light of admiration in his eyes as he waited for her next question. He had neither affirmed nor denied that

"I—I had \$500 in my pocket, and I am sure I pulled it out when the accident came. I am also positive you found it. I remember you sat right back of me, and you left the car after I did."

"And if I do not give it up?" he quietly asked, as he sat down.



IF SHE HAD NOT PERSISTENTLY KEPT HER HAND IN HER DRESS POCKET THE WELL DRESSED YOUNG MAN WOULD NOT HAVE GIVEN HER A SECOND THOUGHT.

he had found the money on the wrecked car.

"You had drawn the money from the bank and were taking it home in that careless way?"

"I shall call in the police."

It was a timid girl's bluff. Any man who has ever walked around the block could have spotted it, but Hilda never looked handsomer than

when she stood there with snapping eyes and flaming cheeks and faces the young man she was really afraid of. He laughed heartily but not vulgarly and calmly said:

"Add what if I also call the police? You claim the money, but can you satisfy the police that it was really yours?"

There was no more bluffing. Tears came to Hilda's eyes, and she sat down with her head on the typewriter table.

"But we can settle it without the police," observed Mr. Gifford. "It is a case that can be settled out of court. Yes, you'd lose your money on the car and I found it. I shall take your address and send you my check. Excuse me if I have said anything to cause these tears. You rather jumped on me, if you will remember. I am only too glad to have been the means—"

"It—it was money I found in the street," said the girl, as she looked up through her tears. "Yes, I found it, and I wanted to ask somebody if I was the same as a thief, and if I could be arrested for it, and if—"

And Mr. Gifford quoted the law and made explanations that kept him there an hour longer, and when Hilda took the car home that evening he was there with the lost money, and he had to ride to Golden Heights to explain it all to her mother and to keep the pickpockets away.

He got into the habit of taking that ride very often, after that, and passengers who kept their ears open heard talk of mortgages—lost money—wrecked cars—police—love and bridal tours. All things will come about if you give them time.

SAVING A FORGER

WE had been aboard the steamer for two whole days and every I turned I found Mr. Warner somewhere very near me. Not that I minded very much. I was too much of a woman for that.

I had just come up from breakfast and was strolling about the deck when I was greeted with a cheery "Good morning," and together we drifted over to a spot on the boat where the electrician was trying to find out just what was the matter with the Marconi. Occasionally it would buzz and burr and sparks would fly out, but no message could be received.

We left the man at his work and sought a more secluded corner.

"Mrs. Lawrence, do you mind if I ask you a personal question?"

"Anything but my age. The purser asked me that this morning, and I don't want to fib twice in the same day."

"Oh, I don't want to know how old you are. I don't care, but I'd like to know how long you have been a widow."

"You silly person. I've never yet

been married. My name is Miss, not Mrs. Lawrence, and I'm in mourning for my father."

For two days after that Mr. Warner was more than ever with me and when we landed at Newfoundland for a day's stopover, it was a foregone conclusion that we should go sightseeing together.

We took a long walk out on the cliffs and sat dreaming for a few moments when my companion broke the silence.

"Miss Lawrence—Harriet—I can't wait any longer to tell you something, and this is such a beautiful spot that I want you to listen to me here!"

"Well, I'm all attention, only please don't tell me anything I ought not to know."

"After all, it is not so much what I want to tell you, but that I want to ask you something."

"Please make it something very easy, won't you, like a good fellow?"

"Oh, please don't be frivolous. I want to tell you that I—"

Just at this instant the awful voice of one of our shipmates chimed in.

"And I want to tell you that we

have found you out. Why, you ain't sick at all."

I had declined to go driving with her earlier in the day, pleading ill-feeling better.

In the midst of breakfast that morning there was a sudden commotion on deck, when the captain appeared in the doorway and said:

"The marconi is working, that's all. Then, in an undertone to me, he added, 'May I have a word with you?'"

Drawing me to one side, he asked: "Was Mr. Warner a friend of yours?"

"He not only was, but is," I answered, with dignity.

"Well, my dear, he is no more. We have just received a marconi from Glouce Bay that he is Simeon Alexander, a forger, who has escaped. He was seen walking on the lower deck last night, and has not been seen since. Guess he chose a watery grave."

With that the captain left me, and I stood dazed, while through my dizzy brain rushed the events of yesterday and that face in the moonlight.

Suddenly I realized that it was

Mr. Warner, and yet his expression was so anxious that I tried to persuade myself that I was dreaming still, and turned over once more to a troubled sleep.

In the midst of breakfast that morning there was a sudden commotion on deck, when the captain appeared in the doorway and said:

"The marconi is working, that's all. Then, in an undertone to me, he added, 'May I have a word with you?'"

Drawing me to one side, he asked: "Was Mr. Warner a friend of yours?"

"He not only was, but is," I answered, with dignity.

"Well, my dear, he is no more. We have just received a marconi from Glouce Bay that he is Simeon Alexander, a forger, who has escaped. He was seen walking on the lower deck last night, and has not been seen since. Guess he chose a watery grave."

With that the captain left me, and I stood dazed, while through my dizzy brain rushed the events of yesterday and that face in the moonlight.

Then suddenly another commotion

and instinctively I rushed toward where the crowd had congregated. To my horror, and yet delight, there stood Mr. Warner.

"May I ask if you are Simeon Alexander," asked the captain.

"No, I am not; but no more am I Alexander Warner."

Never once did he flinch, nor did he look at me, but his eye was honest and his voice steady.

"Where have you been all the morning? The ship has been searched and you could not be found."

"It might have occurred to you to look in my stateroom while you were making this vigorous search, for that is where I have been. The fact is, I did not sleep well last night, and tried to make it up this morning. But, captain, I'd like to ask a question. What's all this row about?"

"May I ask who you are, sir?"

"Certainly you may ask, but I don't see that there is any necessity for me to answer. You accepted my passage under the name of Alexander Warner, and until this trip is concluded, I see no reason for changing it."

With this bit of information he

went below and was not seen again until we landed at Halifax.

Here we were greeted by two officers, who searched the boat and peacefully sleeping in the upper berth of stateroom 17 (Mr. Warner's) they found Mr. Simeon Alexander, who willingly gave himself up, but as he left the room he cast an appealing glance at Mr. Warner.

The passengers had all congregated at the top of the gangway with gaping mouths as Mr. Warner, following the fugitive and his captors, came up the ladder. Offering his hand to the captain, he silenced all apologies.

"That's all right, captain—we all make mistakes, and now I'll answer all your questions. My name is Allison Warner of Texas."

"What," gasped the captain.

"Warner that sold his oil lands to the syndicate for \$20,000,000?"

"That's the man, and I took this trip for rest. I came incognito as I'm tired of all this newspaper advertising. But, honestly, though, I did not bargain being taken for a stowaway. But I'd like to start a purse for this poor fellow."

"I told the truth when I said I had not slept well last night. I got up and was walking on the deck and stumbled over this old man crouched in a corner. He was waiting his chance to jump overboard, but I persuaded him to come to my stateroom and promised to help him. I put him to bed in my upper berth, and when morning came I had not the heart to wake him."

"Now I am going to keep my word and run up to see the American consul, and while I'm on shore you boys just fill up the subscription list."

"Just one other thing—yesterday Miss Lawrence promised to be my wife, and unless she has changed her mind we will be married very soon, so save a little money for the wedding. You are all invited, including the captain. And, boys, my parting advice to you is to show up at luncheon or you'll be court-martialed. I speak from experience."

He was off the boat and up the hill on his errand of mercy. I turned around to have Miss Jackson grasp my hand and say:

"Well, I never did. Just to think, a thief and a weddin' all in the same day! Ain't it just too grand!"