THE FORESTER'S DAUGHTER

A Romance of the Bear Tooth Range

By HAMLIN GARLAND

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SYNOPSIS

Wayland Norcross, an eastern youth seeking health in Colorado, meets Berea McFarlane, called Berrie, typical ranch girl, daughter of the supervising ranger of Bear Tooth forest.

CHAPTER II.

"This is our ranch."

BEFORE Berea could reply a man's voice called, "Hello, there!" and a tall fellow stepped up to her with confident mien.

Norcross awkwardly shrank away. This was her cowboy lover, of course. It was impossible that so attractive a girl should be unattached, and the knowledge produced in him a faint but very definite pang of envy and regret.

The happy girl, even in the excitement of meeting her lover, did not forget the stranger. She gave him her hand in parting, and again he thrilled to its amazing power. It was small, but it was like a steel clamp. "Stop in on your way to Meeker's," she said, as a kindly man would have done. "You pass our gate. My father is Joseph McFarlane, the forest supervisor. Good night."

"Good night," he returned with sincere liking.

The hotel was hardly larger than the log shanty of a railway grading camp, but the meat was edible, and just outside the door roared Bear creek, which came down directly from Dome mountain, and the young easterner went to sleep beneath its singing that night. He should have dreamed of the happy mountain girl, but he did not. On the contrary, he imagined himself back at college in the midst of innumerable freshmen yelling: "Bill McCoy! Bill McCoy!"

He woke a little bewildered by his strange surroundings, and when he became aware of the cheap bed, the flimsy washstand, the ugly wall paper and thought how far he was from home and friends he not only sighed, he shivered. The room was chill, the pitcher of water cold almost to the freezing point, and his joints were stiff and painful from his ride. What folly to come so far into the wilderness at this time!

As the eastern youth crawled from his bed and looked from the window he was still further disheartened. In the foreground stood a half dozen frame buildings, graceless and cheap, without tree or shrub to give shadow or charm of line—all was bare, bleak, sere. But under his window the stream was singing its glorious mountain song, and away to the west rose the aspiring peaks from which it came. Romance brooded in that shadow, and on the lower foothills the frost touched foliage glowed like a mosaic of jewels.

Dressing hurriedly he went down to the small barroom, whose litter of duffle bags, guns, saddles and camp utensils gave evidence of the presence of many hunters and fishermen. The slovenly landlord was poring over a newspaper, while a discouraged half grown youth was sludging the floor with a mop. But a cheerful clamor from an open door at the back of the hall told that breakfast was on.

Venturing over the threshold, Norcross found himself seated at table with some five or six men in corduroy jackets and laced boots, who were, in fact, merchants and professional men from Denver and Pueblo out for fish and such game as the law allowed, and all in holiday mood. They joked the waiter girls and joshed one another in noisy good fellowship, ignoring the slim youth in English riding suit, who came in with an air of mingled melancholy and timidity and took a seat at the lower corner of the long table.

As he looked about the room the tourist's eye was attracted by four young fellows seated at a small table to his right. They wore rough shirts of an olive-green shade and their faces were wind scorched, but their voices held a pleasant tone, and something in the manner of the landlady toward them made them noticeable. Norcross later asked her who they were.

"They're forestry boys."

"Forestry boys?"

"Yes. The supervisor's office is here and these boys are his help."

This information added to Norcross interest and cheered him a little. He knew something of the United States forest service and had been told that many of the rangers were college men. He resolved to make their acquaintance. "If I'm to stay here they will help me endure the exile," he said.

After breakfast he went forth to find the postoffice, expecting a letter of instructions from Meeker. He found nothing of the sort, and this quite disconcerted him.

"The stage is gone," the postmistress told him, "and you can't get up till day after tomorrow. You might reach Meeker by using the government phone, however."

"Where will I find the government phone?"

"Down in the supervisor's office. They're very accommodating. They'll let you use it if you tell them who you want to reach."

It was impossible to miss the forestry building for the reason that a handsome flag fluttered above it. The door being open, Norcross perceived from the threshold a young clerk at work on a typewriter, while in a corner close by the window another and older man was working intently on a map.

"Is this the office of the forest supervisor?" asked the youth.

The man at the machine looked up and pleasantly answered: "It is, but the supervisor is not in yet. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"It may be you can. I am on my way to Meeker's mill for a little outing. Perhaps you could tell me where Meeker's mill is and how I can best get there."

The man at the map meditated. "It's not far, some eighteen or twenty miles, but it's over a pretty rough trail."

"What kind of a place is it?"

"Very charming. You'll like it. Real mountain country."

This officer was a plain featured man of about thirty-five, with keen and clear eyes. His voice, though strongly nasal, possessed a note of manly sincerity. As he studied his visitor he smiled.

"You look brand new. Haven't had time to season check, have you?"

"No. I'm a stranger in a strange land."

"Out for your health?"

"Yes. My name is Norcross. I'm just getting over a severe illness, and I'm up here to lay around and fish and recuperate—if I can."

"You can—you will. You can't help it," the other assured him. "Join one of our surveying crews for a week and I'll mellow that suit of yours and make a real mountaineer of you. I see you wear a Sigma Chi pin. What was your school?"

"I am a 'Son of Eli.' Last year's class."

The other man displayed his fob. "I'm ten classes ahead of you. My name is Nash. I'm what they call an 'expert.' I'm up here doing some estimating and surveying for a big ditch they're putting in. I was rather in hopes you had come to join our ranks. We sons of Eli are holding the conservation fort these days, and we need help."

"My knowledge of your work is rather vague," admitted Norcross. "My father is in the lumber business, but his point of view isn't exactly yours."

"He slays 'em, does he?"

"He did. He helped devastate Michigan."

"After me the deluge! I know the kind. Why not make yourself a sort of vicarious atonement?"

Norcross smiled. "I had not thought of that. It would help some, wouldn't it?"

"It certainly would. There's no great money in the work, but it's about the most enlightened of all the governmental bureaus."

Norcross was strongly drawn to this forester, whose tone was that of a highly trained specialist. "I rode up on the stage yesterday with Miss Berrie McFarlane."

"The supervisor's daughter?"

"She seemed a fine western type."

"She's not a type; she's an individual. She hasn't her like anywhere I've gone. She cuts a wide swath up here. Being an only child, she's both son and daughter to McFarlane. She knows more about forestry than her father. In fact, half the time he depends on her judgment."

Norcross was interested, but did not want to take up valuable time. He said, "Will you let me use your telephone to Meeker's?"

"Very sorry, but our line is out of order. You'll have to wait a day or so, or use the mails. You're too late for today's stage, but it's only a short ride across."

As they were talking a girl came galloping up to the hitching post and slid from her horse. It was Berea McFarlane. "Good morning, Emery," she called to the surveyor. "Good morning," she nodded at Norcross. "How do you find yourself this morning?"

"Homesick," he replied smilingly.

"Why so?"

"I'm disappointed in the town."

Berrie looked round at the forlorn shops, the irregular sidewalks, the grassless yards. "It isn't very pretty, that's a fact, but you can always forget it by just looking up at the high country. When you going up to the mill?"

"I don't know. I haven't had any word from Meeker, and I can't reach him by telephone."

"I know. The line is short circuited somewhere. But they've sent a man out. He may close it any minute."

"Where's the supervisor?" asked Nash.

"He's gone over to Moore's cutting. How are you getting on with those plats?"

"Very well. I'll have 'em all in shape by Saturday."

"Come in and make yourself at home," said the girl to Norcross. "You'll find the papers two or three days old," she smiled. "We never know about anything here till other people have forgotten it."

Norcross followed her into the office, curious to know more about her. She was so changed from his previous conception of her that he was puzzled. She had the directness and the brevity

"Good morning," she nodded at Norcross. "How do you find yourself this morning?"

of a business man as she opened letters and discussed their contents with the men.

"Truly she is different," thought Norcross, and yet she lost something by reason of the display of her proficiency as a clerk. "I wish she would leave business to some one else," he inwardly grumbled as he rose to go.

She looked up from her desk. "Come in again later. We may be able to reach the mill."

He thanked her and went back to his hotel, where he overhauled his outfit and wrote some letters. His disgust of the town was lessened by the presence of that handsome girl, and the hope that he might see her at luncheon made him impatient of the clock.

She did not appear in the dining room, and when Norcross inquired of Nash whether she took her meals at the hotel or not the expert replied: "No; she goes home. The ranch is only a few miles down the valley. Occasionally we invite her, but she don't think much of the cooking."

One of the young surveyors put in a word: "I shouldn't think she would. I'd ride ten miles any time to eat one of Mrs. McFarlane's dinners."

"Yes," agreed Nash, with a reflective look in his eyes. "She's a mighty fine girl, and I join the boys in wishing her better luck than marrying Cliff Belden."

"Is it settled that way?" asked Norcross.

"Yes. The supervisor warned us all, but even he never has any good words for Belden. He's a surly cuss and violently opposed to the service. His brother is one of the proprietors of the Meeker mill, and they have all tried to bulldoze Landon, our ranger over there. By the way, you'll like Landon. He's a Harvard man and a good ranger. His shack is only a half mile from Meeker's house. It's a pretty well known fact that Alec Belden is part proprietor of a saloon over there that worries the supervisor worse than anything. Cliff swears he's not connected with it, but he's more or less sympathetic with the crowd."

Norcross, already deeply interested in the present and future of a girl whom he had met for the first time only the day before, was quite ready to give up his trip to Meeker.

Early on the second morning he went to the postoffice—which was also the telephone station—to get a letter or message from Meeker. He found neither. But as he was standing in the door undecided about taking the stage Berea came into town riding a fine bay pony and leading a blaze faced buckskin behind her.

Her face shone cordially as she called out, "Well, how do you stack up this morning?"

"Tiptop," he answered, in an attempt to match her cheery greeting.

"Do you like our town better?"

"Not a bit! But the hills are magnificent."

"Anybody turned up from the mill?"

"No, I haven't heard a word from there. The telephone is still out of commission."

"They can't locate the break. Uncle Joe sent word by the stage driver asking us to keep an eye out for you and send you over. I've come to take you over myself."

"That's mighty good of you, but it's a good deal to ask."

"I want to see Uncle Joe on business, anyhow, and you'll like the ride better than the journey by stage."

Leaving the horses standing with their bridle reins hanging on the ground, she led the way to the office.

"When father comes in tell him where I've gone and send Mr. Norcross' packs by the first wagon."

"You'd better take my bay," said Berea. "Old Paintface there is little notional."

Norcross approached his mount with a caution which indicated that he had at least been instructed in range horse psychology, and as he gathered his reins together to mount, Berrie remarked:

"I hope you're saddle wise."

"I had a few lessons in a riding school," he replied modestly.

Young Downing approached the girl with a low voiced protest. "You oughtn't to ride old Paint. He nearly pitched the supervisor the other day."

"I'm not worried," she said and swung to her saddle.

The ugly beast made off in a tearing sidewise rush, but she smilingly called back, "All set." And Norcross followed her in high admiration.

Eventually she brought her broncho to subjection, and they trotted off together along the wagon road quite comfortably. By this time the youth had forgotten his depression, his homesickness of the morning. The valley was again enchanted ground.

After shacking along between some rather sorry fields of grain for a mile or two Berea swung into a side trail. "I want you to meet my mother," she said.

The grassy road led to a long, one story, half log, half slab house which stood on the bank of a small, swift, willow bordered stream.

"This is our ranch," she explained. "All the meadow in sight belongs to us."

The young easterner looked about in astonishment. Not a tree bigger than his thumb gave shade. The gate of the cattle corral stood but a few feet from the kitchen door, and rusty beef bones, bleaching skulls and scraps of sun dried hides littered the ground or hung upon the fence. Exteriorly the low cabin made a drab, depressing picture, but as he alighted, upon Berea's invitation, and entered the house he was met by a sweet faced, brown haired little woman, in a neat gown, whose bearing was not in the least awkward or embarrassed.

"This is Mr. Norcross, the tourist I told you about," explained Berrie.

Mrs. McFarlane extended her small hand with friendly impulse. "I'm very glad to meet you, sir. Are you going to spend some time at the mill?"

"I don't know. I have a letter to Mr. Meeker from a friend of mine who hunted with him last year—a Mr. Sutler."

"Mr. Sutler! Oh, we know him very well. Won't you sit down?"

The interior of the house was not only well kept, but presented many evidences of refinement. A mechanical piano stood against the log wall, and books and magazines, dog eared with use, littered the table, and Norcross, feeling the force of Nash's half expressed criticism of his "superior," listened intently to Mrs. McFarlane's apologies for the condition of the farmyard.

"Well," said Berea sharply, "if we're to reach Uncle Joe's for dinner we'd better be scratching the hills." And to her mother she added, "I'll pull in about dark."

The mother offered no objection to her daughter's plan, and the young people rode off together directly toward the high peaks to the east.

Continued Next Week.

He Was Too Smart.

The lawyer was examining him concerning his qualifications as a juror.

"Have you ever served on a jury?" he asked.

"No, sir," answered the man. "I've

"WHAT'S THAT, SIR?"

been drawn a good many times, but I was always too smart to get caught on a jury."

"What's that, sir?" interrupted the judge sternly. "Do you boast of your smartness in escaping jury duty?"

"No, your honor," said the man. "Not at all. When I said I was too smart I meant that I was always excused because the lawyers thought I wasn't ignorant enough."—Buffalo News.

A Bit of Japanese Wit.

Hanawa Hokiichi became totally blind when he was five years of age, but studying with all his power by having himself read to he became a famous scholar and wrote many books. His house was in Bancho, in Yedo, and many students studied under him, so that people at that time used to say, "In Bancho men with perfect eyesight learn from a blind man." One evening when he was lecturing to his students a gust of wind came in and the lamp was blown out. Hokiichi, knowing nothing of the fact, continued his lecture, and the students said, "Sir, please wait a bit; the wind has blown out the light." Hokiichi smiled and said, "How inconvenient one's eyesight is!"—East and West News.

AFTER KID MULLIGAN

By ALAN HINSDALE

When I was sheriff of Marion county it was reported to me that there was a young clergyman in Hilton, a farm center, some twenty miles away, and it was suspected that he was Kid Mulligan, a half boy, half man, desperado, who was fond of masquerading in different disguises. I was anxious to secure Mulligan and concluded to go to Hilton and inspect the reverend gentleman. I had never seen the Kid, but had a description of him.

On my way to Hilton I met a farmer who had been held up by a masked man the night before. He was unarmed and handed out what little money he had about him without making a show of defense. Indeed, he was too frightened to take notice of the robber except that he spoke with a voice not at all gruff. On the contrary, it was rather musical.

This robbery was an indication that Mulligan was the robber and Mulligan and the robber were one and the same person. I went on to Hilton and made inquiries for the Rev. Joseph Wyeth, the parson's name, and was told that he was to be found at the Phoenix hotel. He was traveling under a commission of the bishop to raise funds for building churches. I went to the hotel, a small tavern, and found the curate sitting on the veranda. He wore the canonicals of an Episcopal clergyman, his hair was parted in the middle, and altogether his appearance was exceedingly clerical.

Soon after my arrival at the tavern he arose and started down the main street till he came to a church and turned in at a back door. I inferred that the rector had a study there and Wyeth was going to visit him. I waited till he came out, then went in to interview the rector. I found him an elderly man not versed in worldly ways. He had seen Mr. Wyeth's credentials from the bishop, but had not scrutinized the signature. Mr. Wyeth was arranging with him to speak to his congregation the next Sunday evening, with a view to taking up a collection for church building in the diocese.

From Mr. Wyeth's personal appearance and certain of his mannerisms I gathered suspicions of him. I did not believe him to be Kid Mulligan, but I did believe that he was not an Episcopal minister. However, I had no real knowledge concerning him and felt obliged to let him proceed with what he was doing, keeping him under surveillance. I decided to let him deliver his Sunday evening address, but did not propose to let him get out of town with the proceeds of the collection without being convinced that he was what he purported to be.

When Sunday evening came I attended the church services. At the proper time the rector spoke a few words of introduction; then Mr. Wyeth began his address. Possibly if I had not been suspicious of him I might have been fooled by his remarks like the others. One matter especially gave him away to me. In mentioning the places the bishop desired churches should be built he included the town of Bingham. I happened to know that an Episcopal church had just been finished in Bingham.

The young man spoke with a pleasantly modulated voice and talked fluently. I sat in a pew right under him where I could watch him, and I think that my fixed gaze disconcerted him, for he gave me an occasional glance, and every time he did so he seemed to lose the thread of his discourse. Doubtless others of the congregation attributed this to his youth and the fright natural to a speaker.

That he had made a very favorable impression was evident from the collection, which for so small a place was considerable. The congregation departed, and the two clergymen went into the vestry room, the one to turn over, the other to receive the contributions. I listened under an open window and heard Wyeth bid the rector goodby, saying that he must be off early the next morning.

Having seen the young man enter the tavern and go to his room, I waited for an hour, then told the landlord that I wished to speak to Mr. Wyeth and asked him to go to his room with me. I had reasons for wishing the landlord with me which will appear presently. He consented, and, taking a candle, we went to the clergyman's room and knocked on the door.

"Who's there?"

The landlord and I looked at each other. The voice sounded like that of a woman suddenly awakened.

"A gentleman wishes to speak with you, Mr. Wyeth," said the landlord.

"It's too late. I've gone to bed." This time the voice had lost something of its femininity.

My mind was made up. The door was locked. Drawing off, I gave it a kick, and it flew open. Mr. Wyeth was revealed in bed pulling the covers up to his chin. Approaching, I drew them down far enough to expose his neck.

"I thought so," I remarked to the landlord. Then, turning to the woman, I said:

"I'll trouble you for the church collection."

The secret being out, she surrendered without objection. She had forged her credentials. Though she was not Kid Mulligan, she was very near to him, being his sister. I was disappointed in getting her instead of him, for he was far more slippery and dangerous to handle.

Disproved.

The Investigator—Naw, the world ain't round! I kin see it all from here, an' it's just as flat as flat kin be!—Pittsburgh Dispatch.

When Greek Meets Greek.

"Say, Mame, did you hear the news? Our teacher's goin' to get married to the principal."

"Oh, goody! It serves both of 'em right."—Pittsburgh Press.

Hopeless Case.

Algy—Just how much do you think of me, Miss Clara?

Clara—Would you get mad and stop calling if I told you?

Algy—By no means.

Clara—Then I won't.—Boston Globe.

Torture.

Miss Bangs—I don't claim to be a virtuoso. I play the piano merely to kill time.

Mr. Knox—Can't you give time a more merciful death?—Exchange.

The Point of View.

The Donk—That man over there must be a fine, smart fellow.

The Steed—What makes you think so?

The Donk—I hear every one speak of him as a perfect donkey.—New York Globe.

He Needed Practice.

A musical man in Cologne
Was learning to play the trombogne;
Sweet strains he'd essay
To touchingly play—
Alas, all turned sour when blogne!
—New York World.