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Continued

On the word he slipped out a revolver. But quick as was Planx's hand to carry out the impulse of his brain, Joe's was quicker. He knocked the revolver from Planx's grasp.

"You treacherous dog, Planx!" cried the kidnaper. "Is that how you keep faith? Well, we have a reply to that too. We offered to give up the girl for $100,000, now we make the price $150,000!"

"I'll never pay a cent of it!" shouted Planx.

"When you come to change your mind," replied the kidnaper quietly, "just hang a white handkerchief on one of the trees at the edge of this wood. Then put the money in notes in that tin on the shelf. Leave us two clear days and you'll get your girl back safe. But if you monkey it will be the worse for her."

Without more words the two masked men left the hut, and, like the explosion of a thunderstorm, Planx opened upon Joe.

November faced the storm with an entirely placid aspect until I began to wonder at his patience. But when at last he spoke the other fell dumb as if Joe had struck him.

"That's settled, Mr. Planx. You're done with me and I've done with you. Now quiet down and out!"

Planx opened his lips as if to speak, but, seeing Joe's face, he changed his mind and rushed from us into the darkness.

At once Joe put out the light. "We can't trust Planx just at the moment. He's fair mad, but we'll have him back in half an hour to show him the way back to Wilshere's," he remarked with a chuckle.

And in fact this was exactly what happened. It was a subdued but still a very resentful Planx whom we escorted through the dark woods. On our way back to our camp Joe made a detour to examine the tracks of the kidnapers by the light of the lantern which he had carried with him.

As had been the case by Mooseshank lake, so now we found the trails very clear near the waterside. Joe studied them for a long time.

"Well, you're out of it now, at any rate," said I.

"And what about my promise to Calvey?" he rejoined. "I'm deeper in it than ever. I've got to find Miss Virginny sure."

"You can't track her because of that threat in the letter to Planx?"

"That's so, but I'll be speaking to Miss Virginny before tomorrow night," said Joe quietly, nor, having made this dramatic announcement, would he say more.

The next morning Joe was early astir.

"What are you going to do today?" said I.

"I'm going to find out the name of the man that has Miss Virginny hid away. If you'll wait here, Mr. Quaritch, I'll come back as soon as I've done it. You've got your rod and there's plenty of fish in the lake."

With that I had to be content. Before starting Joe had laid a bet with me that he would come back with the name of her abductor, and I was wondering what clew he had to go upon. Hardly any that I could think of—the trail of the two men and the golden hair, very little more.

About 2 o'clock I heard November hail me.

"What about the bet?" I called on sight of him. "Who pays?"

"You pay, Mr. Quaritch," said Joe.

"Why, who is it, then?"

"A fellow called Hank Harper."

"Why, I've heard of him. He passes for a man of high character."

Joe laughed. "All the same, he's the chap who done it," said he. "I expect he's got her up at his cabin on Otter brook."

"Look here, November," I said. "You tell me Hank Harper is in the kidnaping business and I believe you, because I've never known you speak without solid facts behind you. But I think you owe me the whole yarn."

Joe pulled out his pipe. "All right, Mr. Quaritch. To begin at the beginning. There are two of them. One's this man Harper. I don't know who the other is, and it don't much matter. If we find Harper we find his partner. Well, Miss Virginny was fishing when they stole down upon her and carried her off. I've already told you what happened until they took to the canoe. They paddled across the lake and the two men got out, leaving Miss Virginny in the canoe to paddle herself round and land elsewhere."

"But surely she could have escaped!" I cried.

"She was under their rifles and had to do exactly what she was ordered. I found where she'd landed and followed her tracks to that little waterfall stream, and it was there I found the golden hair. So far, you see, everything fitted in together as good as the jaws of a trap, and the message on the bit of paper about a ransom carried it further on. So did the talk we had with Harper—it must have been him did the speaking—at Black lake. When I knocked up Planx's revolver I was wonderful sorry to have to do it, but a promise is a promise, and he'd passed his word for a safe conduct. After, when my eyes fell upon the trail left by Harper's partner, I knew I never done a better act in my life. It give me a start, I can tell you, Mr. Quaritch! You see, all the weight was in the middle of the moccasion. The heels and toes were hardly marked at all."

November looked at me as if expecting me to see the meaning of this peculiarity, but I shook my head.

"It meant that the foot inside the moccasion was a very little one, a good bit shorter than the moccasin."

"You can't mean"— I began.

"Yes," said Joe. "The second person at Black lake wasn't a man at all, but just Miss Virginny herself."

"Well, if that was so, why, she had the game in her hands then. She had only to appeal to us—to speak."

Joe interrupted me. "Hers was another sort of game. You see, I'm pretty sure that Miss Virginny has kidnaped herself, or, at any rate, consented to be kidnaped. She had just paddled round and joined the two men later, and then when I come to think over it careful I saw how I might raise the name of the man that was helping her. I lit out for Wilshere's camp and asked the woman if there was anything of Miss Virginny's missing from her room. She said there wasn't. Then I saw my way a bit. I was in the woods with Miss Virginny last year, and I know she's mighty particular about personal things. I don't believe she could live a day without a sponge and a comb and, most of all, without a toothbrush. None of them high toned gals can. Isn't that so?"

"Yes, that is so, but"—

"Well," went on November, "if she went of her own free will, as I was thinking she did—or else why did she come to Black lake?—if, as I say, I was right in my notion and she'd made out the plans and kidnaped herself, the man who was with her would be only just her servant, in a manner of speaking. And I was certain that one of the first things she'd do would be to send him to some store to buy the things she wanted most. She couldn't get her own from Planx's camp without giving herself away, so she was bound to send Hank to hike out new ones from somewhere."

"What happened then?"

"I started in on the stores roundabout this country, and with luck I stepped into the big store at Lavette and asked if any one had been buying truck of that kind. They told me Hank Harper. I asked just what. They said a hairbrush, a comb, a couple of toothbrushes and some other gear. That was enough for me. They weren't for Mrs. Hank, who's a halfbreed woman and don't always remember to clean herself o' Saturdays."

"I see," said I.

"The things were bought yesterday, so it all fits in, and there's no more left to find out but why Miss Virginny acted the way she has, and that we'll know before tomorrow."

* * * * * * *

It was well on toward 10 o'clock that night before we reached Harper's cabin on Otter brook. At first we knocked and knocked in vain, but at length a gruff voice demanded angrily what we wanted.

"Tell Miss Virginny Planx that November Joe would like a word or two with her."

"Are you drunk," shouted the man, "or only crazy?"

"I've tracked her down fair and square, and I've got to see her."

"I tell you she isn't here."

"Let me in to make sure for myself."

"If a man comes to my door with a threat I'll meet him with my rifle in my hand. So you're warned," came from the cabin.

"All right, then. I'll start back to report to Mr. Planx."

On the words the door opened and a vivid, appealing face looked out. "Come in, dear Joe," said a honeyed voice.

"Thank you, Miss Virginny, I will," said Joe.

We entered. A lamp and the fire lit up the interior of a poor trapper's cabin and lit up also the tall, slim form of Miss Virginia Planx. She wore a buckskin hunting shirt belted in to her waist, and her glorious hair hung down her back in a thick and heavy plait. She held out her hand to Joe with one of the sweetest smiles I have ever seen or dreamed of.

"You're not going to give me away, dear Joe, are you?" said she.

"You've given yourself away, haven't you, Miss Virginny?"

Virginia Planx looked him in the eyes, then she laughed. "I see that I haven't, but can I speak before this gentleman?"

Joe hastened to vouch for my discretion, while Hank Harper nursed his rifle and glowered from the background, where also one could discern the dark face of the half breed squaw. But Miss Virginia showed her complete command of the situation.

"Coffee for these two, please, Mrs. Harper," she cried, and while we were drinking it she told us her story.

"You maybe heard of old Mr. Schelperg of the combine?" she began. "My father wanted to force me to marry him. Why, he's fifty by the look of him, and I'd much rather drown myself than marry him."

"There's younger and better looking boys around, I surmise, Miss Virginny?" returned November meaningly.

Virginia flushed a lovely red. "Why, Joe, it's no use blinding you, for you remember Walter Calvey, don't you?"

"Sure! So it's him. That's good. But I heard he was out of his business," said Joe with apparent simplicity.

"I must tell you all or you won't understand what I did or why I did it. My father ruined Walter, because that would anyhow put off our marriage. Then when the Schelperg affair came on and he gave me no rest I could not stand it any longer. You see, he is so

"Come in, dear Joe," said a honeyed voice.

clever he would pay all my bills, no matter how heavy, but he never let me have more than $5 in my pocket, so that I was helpless. I could never see Walter, nor could I hear from him, and all the time Schelperg was given the run of the house."

To Be Continued.

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HOUSEHOLD TALKS

Henrietta D. Grauel

Winter Foods—Baked Beans

This is the season when we change our underwear and our diet in order to meet Old Winter on a more equal footing. He is a sturdy, hard working, old chap who puts up a good fight, and so we need to conserve all our strength and body heat and be constantly on guard, or he will best us.

What we want to select now for our diet is energy producing food. Meats in the shape of vegetable and meat stews, roasts with gravy and potatoes, and baked beans and pork with brown bread or fried mush and syrup, hominy or buckwheat cakes and honey all taste just right when the wind blows cold.

The desserts that will taste best now are not the ices, creams and gelatines we enjoyed so well a short while back but rice pudding, bread pudding and suet pudding with hard sauce. And baked apples, too, they are good at every meal and our most wholesome fruit.

Here are the directions for making the real Boston baked beans, rich and dark in color and moist and sweet tasting.

For a family of five three pounds, or three pints of Navy beans will be a good amount. Soak over night or parboil for an hour in water containing a pinch of soda. I think it better to parboil or blanch the beans as they are sweeter and better flavored than when only soaked.

Place in a stone baking crock or in a heavy well covered baking pan. The self-basting roasting pans are excellent for baking beans quickly and well. The fireless cooker is good, too, but of course the beans must be started in the oven and well on the way to cook before they enter the cooker.

After the beans are in the crock or baker, mix, in a separate bowl, one teaspoon of pepper, one tablespoon of salt, one-half cup of New Orleans molasses, one-fourth of a teaspoon of soda, and a cup of hot water. Pour this mixture over the beans.

Cut fat pork into small squares and mix in also. You may use bacon or fresh pork if you prefer. Some persons object to pork in any food and these may use veal. It gives a delicious flavor to the beans and makes a pleasant change for all families but if you do use the veal add a half a cup of butter to the mixture of molasses and seasoning as veal lacks fat.

Pour on more hot water until the beans are covered with it. See that the lid fits securely and bake, without raising the lid, from four to eight hours.

If you desire tomato sauce on the beans add it when they are almost done, pouring it over the top. A nice, mild catsup makes a good sauce for this.

I am sometimes asked if the beans can be baked on the shelf of the furnace. Sometimes they can, and it is a good place for them for the heat is steady and sure. But the heat must not be too intense or the beans will cook too fast and be dry. Another thing, all furnaces do not have the wide inner shelf that the old-fashioned coal furnace has.

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TWELVE YEARS FOR MURDER

Court Fixes Crime at Second Degree When Defendant Pleads Guilty

Wilkes-Barre, Pa., Nov. 17.—When a jury had been selected to try Angelo Gengo yesterday for killing Alex Maick, at Dupont, on June 13 last, the defense entered a plea of guilty and the Court fixed the crime at second degree murder. Gengo was sentenced to not less than ten nor more than twelve years in the Eastern penitentiary. The defense first offered to plead guilty to manslaughter, but the Court refused to accept it.

Gengo and a boy were quarreling on the street. Maick upbraided Gengo and the latter pulled a revolver and shot Maick.

Sunday Ball Fines Stand

Scranton, Pa., Nov. 17.—Judge Edwards yesterday dismissed an appeal from fines imposed on E. J. Coleman, part owner of the Scranton Baseball Club, for attempting to play a game of professional baseball here on Sunday.