



Copyright, 1915, by the H.K. Fly Company

SYNOPSIS

Caleb Hunter and his sister Sarah welcome to their home Stephen O'Mara, a homeless and friendless boy, starting from the wilderness to see the city.

Stephen O'Mara catches a glimpse of Barbara Allison. The girl is rich. The O'Mara boy falls in love with her. She is ten, he fourteen.

The boy and girl are in a party that go to town. The old people watch with concern the youth's growing attachment for the city.

Caleb is much impressed with the boy's ideas on the moving of timber. He predicts a great future for the lad.

(CONTINUED FROM LAST WEEK)

It was Caleb's turn to stand agape. "Miss Sarah!" he faltered, astonished, and then he remembered. He laughed unsteadily with relief. For an instant he had been inexplicably afraid that the boy was going to refuse his offer.

"Why, you mustn't mind what Sarah said yesterday," he rushed on. "She—she—well, she's a Baptist, Steve, and you know what that means."

He leaned forward a little, his voice quite stealthily confidential. "But I can fix that all right," he promised. "I can surely fix that. For I'll tell her—I'll tell her you're a Baptist too. Will you—will you stay?"

And after a time solemnly Steve nodded. Later, when alone, Caleb chuckled merrily over his reply.

"That's—that's what I callate I be," he said.

CHAPTER V.

Then I'll Come Back to You.

ON the drive home Wednesday Caleb rehearsed a half score of speeches with which he might apprise his sister Sarah of the step he had taken, but when the time came for him to employ one of them he forgot the entire lot and had to resort to a bald and stammered statement of the facts, which sounded more like a confession of guilt than anything else. It had grown colder with the storm, and directly after a hastily swallowed supper, with many indignant glances for her brother, Sarah had bundled the boy off upstairs to bed, for he had come in out of the rain as sleekly wet as a water rat and blue fingered and blue lippled from the cold. So it happened that they were all alone before the fire place when Caleb made known his decision.

"I've never done much of anything for anybody but myself, you know, Sarah," Caleb hesitatingly tried to account for his conduct. "And this seems to me to be as big an opportunity as I'll ever have. You—you like the boy don't you, so far as you have become acquainted with him?"

"Yes, I like him," she assented, after a while.

"Of course it—it comes as a surprise to you," he murmured. "It is pretty sudden, but I don't think that either of us will ever regret it."

And then Sarah faced round toward her brother. Her eyes were unaccountably wet, but there was laughter on her lips.

"A surprise—a—a somewhat sudden," she faltered. "Why, I knew you were going to do it that first day when you came sidling up to the veranda behind him. I was certain of it even then. And if you hadn't decided to—why, I made up my mind that I'd do it myself if you ever came back from that endless fishing trip!"

"I've been rummaging through some of the old chests upstairs," she added. "Today I explored for hours and found some of the things you used to wear which look as though they hadn't been worn at all. I laid some of them out for him to put on when he gets up in the morning. And, Cal, who'd ever believe now that a plump behemoth like you ever could have worn such—such dainty and cunning things!"

The inferred description should have prepared Caleb, but at the moment he failed to remember that it was some forty years since the garb she mentioned had been in vogue. Instead, he blushed uncomfortably at the gurgle in her throat. And so the next morning, when a little figure in velvet jacket and pantaloons—velvet of the same jet hue in which Barbara Allison had first appeared to the boy a day or two before—stopped at the head of the long stairway the moment was robbed of not one whit of its sensationalism.

There was something in Sarah's fluttering delight over the boy's changed appearance that morning which awoke an almost hysterical impulse in her brother.

When Caleb came back an hour later, with Allison at his heels, he searched the house through without finding the boy. In his perplexity he appealed to Sarah, who followed him to the front door.

"Where's Stephen?" he asked.

Sarah nodded to Allison.

"Why, I waited a half hour, Cal," she said, "and then, when I thought you wouldn't be back for awhile, I sent him downtown—I sent him to the village."

Allison himself passed Steve in the hedge gap and, with a word of greeting, stopped to shake hands with him gravely. So it came about that they were sitting together, Dexter and Caleb, smoking in silence, when Barbara Allison's first scream came shrilling to their ears. They waited, staring at each other until the riotous clamor which rose set them to running across the lawn. But the scene which met Caleb's eyes when he burst through the shrubbery froze him into immobility.

There was a seething pack of children around two writing figures upon the ground; they were all shrieking in soprano panic—all save Garry Devereau.



O'Mara mauled the Honorable Archibald Wickersham.

can. He, standing a little to one side, was smiling his queer, crooked, hand some smile, while Stephen O'Mara mauled the Honorable Archibald Wickersham with true riverman thoroughness, which meant the infliction of the greatest possible damage in the least possible time.

It grew very quiet when Caleb whirled the boy around and stood peering sternly down into his battle streaked features. Allison strode quietly up in that moment.

"Well," Caleb didn't know just how to begin, but his voice was cold. "Well, young man, can you explain just what this means?"

"Nuthin'—nuthin' much," Steve replied, "only we was goin' to play King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. He wanted to be her knight—an uncomplimentary thumb indicated the Hon. Archie—and—so did I. This time his eyes went to Barbara, who was listening, her teeth sunk in her lip. "He wanted to be her knight, an'—an' he ain't got no call to be, because in case of trouble or anything he couldn't protect her. He couldn't fight good enough to take good keer o' her, because I kin fight better. I—I just licked him to prove it."

"But in the days when knight hood was in flower, Steve," Caleb explained ponderously, "the—the fair ladies always chose their own knights, didn't they?"

And just then the little girl, her eyes twin shafts of searing scorn, curled her lips at him and fairly spat out the words in her shaking rage.

"You—you—my knight?" she half whispered. "You!" And she turned her back and went, solicitously, toward Archie and his rumpled clothes.

Even Allison stopped smiling, even Devereau forgot his curious amusement at the vivid change which came over Steve's face with that answer which she flung at him. The boy fell away a step before her fierce little visage; he crooked one arm over the cheek where her fists had beaten the skin pink a moment before. And then her meaning struck him like a blow between the eyes.

"I ain't good enough to be your knight, am I?" he accused her in a hushed and vibrant voice. "I—I don't know enough, ner I can't talk good enough to be your knight. I ain't good enough fer you. But I'm a-goin' to be—do you hear? I'm a-goin' to be. Am when I am—when I am—then I'll come back to you!"

This time, rigid as a lance, he disappeared from the ground. Caleb stood staring at the horizon.

Steve did not come downstairs for supper that night, and when he failed to appear at the breakfast hour both Caleb and Sarah mounted to his room, fear in their hearts. The bed had not been slept in. The sheets were not even disarranged, but there was a scrap of paper pinned to one pillow slip. It wasn't written in "book language," that short message, for it was not his grain, but his heart which had phrased it:

I'm a-comin' back—I'm comin' back to you some day when they won't be no need fer you to be ashamed fer me. I'm takin' my new clothes with me because I knowed you would a-wanted me to—and the shoes too. I'm askin' you to take keer of ole Samantha til I come fer her—and Miss Sarah ain't got no call to worry, fer I could always take keer o' myself.

It was signed "Stephen O'Mara." Sarah's face went white when she had read it through. Her knees weakened under her, and she had to sit down.

"Why, Cal—why, Cal, he's—he's gone!" she quavered.

And Caleb nodded down into her stricken face.

"Yes, he—he's gone!" he breathed.

Sarah swallowed hard. Then two bright tears crept out from under her eyelids and went coursing down her cheeks. She rose and groped her way to her own room.

Caleb found Barbara Allison waiting in the living room when he, still numb from the shock, went back downstairs. She came up to him and stood a moment, twining the fingers of one hand within those of the other.

"I want to see Stephen, please, Uncle Cal," she faltered.

Caleb drew a deep and unsteady breath.

"There was the picture, a miniature of a girl, eager of face and wavy of hair. Her relationship to the boy was unmistakable. Sarah found that and wept over it silently, and while she wept Caleb sifted out the remaining loose sheets.

"It's not hard to understand now, is it?" he said. "It's pretty plain now why he had to go. And we, Sarah—we who were going to 'make something of him'—why, we should have known absolutely without this evidence. They laughed at him, they made fun of him and there isn't any better blood than flows in that boy's veins! He was Stephen O'Mara's son, and no more brilliant barrister than O'Mara ever addressed a jury of a prisoner's peers and—and broke their very hearts with the simplicity of his pleading."

Sarah folded her thin hands over the woman's picture.

"I like his mother's face," she murmured faintly. "And I'm jealous of her, Cal! You don't have to remind me of the rest of it, either, for I recall it all. She died and he—he went all to pieces. They said at his death that he was destitute. And when he did follow her—across—they hunted everywhere, didn't they, and never found the boy? Didn't some of the newspapers argue that a servant—a gardener—had stolen him?"

Caleb nodded his head.

"Most of them ridiculed the suggestion, but it was true, just the same. That servant was Old Tom. And the only defense he makes is just one line or so in—in this." Caleb dropped a hand upon the half legible pages. "He says that he wasn't going to let civilization make of the boy's life the wreck which he, poor, queer, honest soul, thought it had made of his father's. And do you know, Sarah, do you know I can't help but believe that this over zealous thing which the law would have prosecuted was the best thing he could have done? I'll take these things now and lock them in the safe for the boy until he comes back home!"

But Sarah Hunter kept the picture of Stephen O'Mara's mother separate from the rest; she took it upstairs with her when she went, white and tired faced to bed. And it was Sarah's faith which outlasted the years which followed. She never weakened in her belief that some day the boy would come back—she and one other whose faith in his last boyish promise, paraded in bitterness, also endured. For during the next five years there was not a summer which brought Allison into the hills but what the first question of his daughter Barbara, motherless now herself, was of Steve.

"Has—has Stephen come back?" she asked invariably.

At first the query was marked by nothing more than a child's naive eagerness, and later, when it was brought up in a casual, by the way fashion, it was, nevertheless, tinged with hope. Five years lengthened into ten, and still Steve did not come. But when ever Barbara asked that question Caleb remembered, as though it had happened only yesterday, that morning when she first appeared to the boy.

Then came a morning when Stephen O'Mara did return. All winter and throughout the summer, too, the Hunter place had been closed until that day in late October. It had been a warm week—a week of such unseasonable humidity for the hills that Caleb, rising somewhat before his usual hour, had blamed his sleeplessness, as usual, upon the weather. He was glad to be home again that morning. Caleb was wondering if Barbara would be with her father on this trip. Barbara had, he knew, been two years on the continent, "finishing." Allison called it, all ways with a wry face and a gesture toward his wallet pocket. He was wondering as he came down the stairs if she would ask him again if—if—and then at the sight of a seated figure outside on the top step of the veranda he pulled up sharp in the doorway.

Caleb didn't have to wonder any longer.

The attitude of that figure before him was so like the picture which time had been unable to erase, so absolutely identical in everything save garb and size alone, that the man, recollecting a little, dragged one hand across his forehead as though he doubted his own eyes. But when he looked again it was still there, sitting chin in palm, small head under a rather weather beaten felt hat thrust slightly forward, gazing fixedly toward the stucco house beyond the shrubbery. And before Caleb could move, before he was more than half aware of the painful pulse in his throat, it all happened again just as it had happened years and years before.

Caleb heard voices in the adjoining grounds, and as he half turned in that direction Allison's bulky form, vivid in a far more vivid plaid, appeared in the hedge gap. While Caleb stared another figure flashed through ahead of him, laughter upon her lips, and paused a tip-toe to wave a hand in greeting. And instantly, as they had ten years before, Barbara Allison's eyes swung in instant scrutiny of the one who was seated at Caleb's feet. She hesitated and recovered herself. But when with quite dignified deliberation she finally came forward to pass that motionless figure upon the steps every pulse in her body was beating consciousness of his nearness. And yet at that when she paused at Caleb's side and bobbed her head with a characteristic impetuosity which she had never lost she seemed completely oblivious to the presence of any one save Caleb and herself.

"Good morning, Uncle Cal," she murmured very demurely.

(To be continued next week)

EVERYTHING about a rainy day seems to say to keep dry, to work in comfort, wear the FISH BRAND REFLEX SLICKER \$3.



everything about a rainy day seems to say to keep dry, to work in comfort, wear the FISH BRAND REFLEX SLICKER \$3. A.J. Tower Co.-Boston

RALPH B. LECOQ
LAWYER
LYNDEN, WASHINGTON
Drawing of Wills and All Probate Matters a Specialty.
Mondays Reserved For Attending Probate Court in Bellingham.

DAIRY RECORDS at Tribune office, 5 cents each, 50 cents dozen.

If you want to sell it, try a Tribune Want Ad.

DR. R. A. REEVE
Veterinarian
Day and Night Service Phone 52
Office and Hospital at Cyr's Livery
EVERSON WASHINGTON

DR. B. V. MOUNTER
PHYSICIAN and SURGEON
Office Over Lynden State Bank
LYNDEN, WASHINGTON

F. L. WOOD, M. D.
Physician and Surgeon
ACCOUCHEUR
Obstetrics a Specialty
Lynden, Wash.

Plenty of Money
to loan on improved farm land at lowest rate. If you need money, write, telephone or call on
MILLER & WATTAM
J. A. Miller L. E. Wattam
1323 Dock St., Bellingham

We Treat Your Laundry Right.
New Method-Cascade Laundry
HENRY & POWERS,
AGENTS

OLD NEW
BIFOCAL LENSES

Let Us Make A Pair

of Invisible Bifocal Glasses for you today. They'll give you perfect vision for NEAR and DISTANT sight—save you carrying TWO PAIRS of glasses!

While many people require but one pair of glasses—Invisible Bifocals are indispensable for people requiring double vision lenses.

WILBER GIBBS
Optician.
New Bank Building.
Bellingham, Wash.

World's Work and The Tribune—Regular price \$4.50. Our special price \$3.50.

TRIBUNE FOR JOB PRINTING