

The SKY PILOT

By RALPH CONNOR

Author of "The Man From Glengarry" "Glengarry School Days" and "Black Rock"

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CHAPTER X.

GWEN'S FIRST PRAYERS.

It was with hesitation, almost with fear, that I began with Gwen. But even had I been able to foresee the endless series of exasperations through which she was destined to conduct me, still would I have undertaken my task. For the child, with all her willfulness, her tempers and her pride, made me, as she did all others, her willing slave. Her lessons went on, brilliantly or not at all, according to her sweet will. She learned to read with extraordinary rapidity, for she was eager to know more of that great world of which the Duke had told her such thrilling tales. Writing she abhorred. She had no one to write to. Why should she cramp her fingers over these crooked little marks? But she mastered with hardly a struggle the mysteries of figures, for she would have to sell her cattle, and "dad doesn't know when they are cheating." Her ideas of education were purely utilitarian, and what did not appear immediately useful she refused to trifle with. And so all through the following long winter she vexed my righteous soul with her willfulness and pride. An appeal to her father was idle. She would wind her long, thin arms about his neck and let her wavy red hair float over him until the old man was quite helpless to exert authority. The Duke could do most with her. To please him she would struggle with her crooked letters for an hour at a time, but even his influence and authority had its limits.

"Must I?" she said one day in answer to a demand of his for more faithful study; "must I?" And, throwing up her proud little head and shaking back with a trick she had her streaming red hair, she looked straight at him from her blue gray eyes and asked the monosyllabic question, "Why?" And the Duke looked back at her with his slight smile for a few moments and then said in cold, even tones:

"I really don't know why," and turned his back on her. Immediately she sprang at him, shook him by the arm and, quivering with passion, cried: "You are not to speak to me like that, and you are not to turn your back that way!"

"What a little princess it is," he said admiringly, "and what a time she will give herself some day!" Then he added, smiling sadly: "Was I rude, Gwen? Then I am sorry." Her rage was gone, and she looked as if she could have held him by the feet. As it was, too proud to show her feelings, she just looked at him with softening eyes, and then sat down to the work she had refused. This was after the advent of the Pilot at Swan Creek, and as the Duke rode home with me that night, after long musing he said with hesitation: "She ought to have some religion, poor child; she will grow up a perfect little devil. The Pilot might be of service if you could bring him up. Women need that sort of thing. It refines you know."

"Would she have him?" I asked.

"Question," he replied doubtfully. "You might suggest it."

Which I did, introducing somewhat clumsily, I fear, the Duke's name.

"The Duke says he is to make me good!" she cried. "I won't have him. I hate him, and you too!" And for that day she declined all lessons, and when the Duke next appeared she greeted him with the exclamation, "I

replied the Duke, repressing a smile. "Besides," she went on, "he's just a kid. Bill said so."

"Well, he might be more ancient," acknowledged the Duke, "but in that he is steadily improving."

"Anyway," with an air of finality, "he is not to come here."

But he did come, and under her own escort, one threatening August evening.

"I found him in the creek," she announced with defiant shamefacedness, marching in the Pilot half drowned.

"I think I could have crossed," he said apologetically. "For Louis was getting on his feet again."

"No, you wouldn't," she protested. "You won't have been down into the canyon by now, and you ought to be thankful."

"So I am," he hastened to say, "very."

But, he added, unwilling to give up his contention, "I have crossed the Swan before."

"Not when it was in flood," she protested.

"Yes; when it was in flood, higher than now."

"Not where the banks are rocky."

"No—o!" he hesitated.

"There, then; you would have been drowned but for my lariat!" she cried triumphantly.

To this he doubtfully assented.

They were much alike, in high temper, in enthusiasm, vivid imagination and in sensitive feeling. When the Old Timer came in Gwen triumphantly introduced the Pilot as having been rescued from a watery grave by her lariat, and again they fought out the possibilities of drowning and of escape till Gwen almost lost her temper and was appeased only by the most profuse expressions of gratitude on the part of the Pilot for her timely assistance. The Old Timer was perplexed. He was afraid to offend Gwen and yet unwilling to be cordial to her guest. The Pilot was quick to feel this, and, soon after tea, rose to go. Gwen's disappointment showed in her face.

"Ask him to stay, dad," she said in a whisper. But the half hearted invitation acted like a spur and the Pilot was determined to set off.

"There's a bad storm coming," she said, "and, besides," she added triumphantly, "you can't cross the Swan."

This settled it, and the most earnest prayers of the Old Timer could not have held him back.

We all went down to see him cross, Gwen leading her pony.

The Swan was far over its banks and in the middle running swift and strong. Louis snorted, refused and finally plunged. Bravely he swam till the swift running water struck him, and over he went on his side, throwing his rider into the water. But the Pilot kept his head and, holding by the stirrups, paddled along by Louis' side. When they were half way across Louis saw that he had no chance of making the landing, so, like a sensible horse, he turned and made for the shore. Here, too, the banks were high, and the pony began to grow discouraged.

"Let him float down farther!" shrieked Gwen in anxious excitement, and, urging her pinto down the bank, she coaxed the struggling pony down the stream till opposite a shelf of rock level with the high water. Then she threw her lariat, and, catching Louis about the neck and the horn of his saddle, she held taut, till half drowned, he scrambled up the bank, dragging the Pilot with him.

"Oh, I am so glad!" she said, almost tearfully. "You see, you couldn't get across."

The Pilot staggered to his feet, took a step toward her and gasped out:

"I can!" and pitched headlong. With a little cry she flew to him and turned him over on his back. In a few moments he revived, sat up and looked about stupidly.

"Where's Louis?" he said, with his face toward the swollen stream.

"Safe enough," she answered. "But you must come in; the rain is just going to pour."

But the Pilot seemed possessed.

"No; I'm going to cross," he said, rising.

Gwen was greatly distressed.

"But your poor horse," she said, cleverly changing her ground. "He is quite tired out."

The Old Timer now joined earnestly in urging him to stay till the storm was past. So, with a final look at the stream, the Pilot turned toward the house.

Of course I knew what would happen. Before the evening was over he had captured the household. The moment he appeared with dry things on he ran to the organ, that had stood for ten years closed and silent, opened it and began to play. As he played and sang songs after song the Old Timer's eyes began to glisten under his shaggy brows. But when he dropped into the exquisite Irish melody, "Oft in the Stilly Night," the old man drew a hard breath and groaned out to me:

"It was her mother's song," and from that time the Pilot had him fast. It was easy to pass to the old hymn, "Nearer, My God, to Thee," and then the Pilot said simply, "May we have

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prayers?" He looked at Gwen, but she gazed blankly at him and then at her father.

"What does he say, dad?"

It was pitiful to see the old man's face grow slowly red under the deep tan as he said:

"You may, sir. There's been none here for many years, and the worse for us." He rose slowly, went into the inner room and returned with a Bible.

"It's her mother's," he said in a voice deep with emotion. "I put it in her trunk the day I laid her out yonder under the pines." The Pilot, without looking at him, rose and reverently took the book in both his hands and said gently:

"It was a sad day for you, but for her!" He paused. "You did not grudge it to her?"

"Not now, but then, yes! I wanted her, we needed her." The Old Timer's tears were flowing.

The Pilot put his hand caressingly upon the old man's shoulder as if he had been his father and said in his clear, sweet voice, "Some day you will go to her."

Upon this scene poor Gwen gazed with eyes wide open with amazement and a kind of fear. She had never seen her father weep since the awful day that she could never forget, when he had knelt in dumb agony beside the bed on which her mother lay white and still; nor would he heed her till climbing up, she tried to make her mother waken and hear her cries. Then he had caught her up in his arms, pressing her with tears and great sobs to his heart. Tonight she seemed to feel that something was wrong. She went and stood by her father, and, stroking his gray hair fondly, she said:

"What is he saying, daddy? Is he making you cry?" She looked at the Pilot defiantly.

"No, no, child," said the old man hastily, "sit here and listen."

And while the storm raved outside we three sat listening to that ancient story of love ineffable. And, as the words fell like sweet music upon our ears, the old man sat with eyes that looked far away, while the child listened with devouring eagerness.

"Is it a fairy tale, daddy?" she asked as the Pilot paused. "It isn't true, is it?" and her voice had a pleading note hard for the old man to bear.

"Yes, yes, my child," said he brokenly. "God forgive me!"

"Of course it's true," said the Pilot quickly. "I'll read it all to you to-morrow. It's a beautiful story!"

"No," she said imperiously. "Tonight. Read it now! Go on!" she said, stamping her foot. "Don't you hear me?"

The Pilot gazed in surprise at her and then, turning to the old man, said:

"Shall I?"

The Old Timer simply nodded and the reading went on. Those were not my best days, and the faith of my childhood was not as it had been; but



Helplessly looking on.

as the Pilot carried us through those matchless scenes of self forgetting love and service the rapt wonder in the child's face as she listened, the appeal, her voice as, now to her father and now to me, she cried, "Is that true, too? Is it all true?" made it impossible for me to hesitate in my answer. And I was glad to find it easy to give my firm adherence to the truth of all that tale of wonder. And as more and more it grew upon the Pilot that the story he was reading, so old to him and to all he had ever met, was new to one in that listening group, his face began to glow and his eyes to blaze, and he saw and showed me things that night I had never seen before, nor have I seen them since. The great figure of the gospels lived, moved before our eyes. We saw him bend to touch the blind, we heard him speak his marvelous teaching, we felt the throbbing excitement of the crowds that pressed against him.

Suddenly the Pilot stopped, turned over the leaves and began again: "And he led them out as far as to Bethany. And he lifted up his hands and blessed them. And it came to pass as he blessed them he was parted from them and a cloud received him out of their sight." There was silence for some minutes, then Gwen said:

"Where did he go?"

"Up into heaven," answered the Pilot simply.

"That's where mother is," she said to her father, who nodded in reply.

"Does he know?" she asked. The old man looked distressed.

"Of course he does," said the Pilot. "and she sees him all the time."

"Oh, daddy!" she cried. "Isn't that good?"

But the old man only hid his face in his hands and groaned.

"Yes," went on the Pilot, "and he sees us, too, and hears us speak and knows our thoughts."

Again the look of wonder and fear came into her eyes, but she said no word. The experiences of the evening had made the world new to her. It could never be the same to her again. It gave me a queer feeling to see her, when we three knelt to pray, stand helplessly looking on, not knowing what to do, then sink beside her father, and, winding her arms about his neck, cling to him as the words of prayer were spoken into the ear of him whom no man can see, but who we believe is near to all that call upon him.

To be continued.

Read the Republican.

get a whole half page of puffs and blows for \$2.50, it is worse than cutting eye teeth.—Arrow Rock Statesman.

The DeWitt ferry boat is tied up and report says that it will be sold and taken to some other point on the river. —Elmer Leisure, of Orearville, and John Leisure, of Oklahoma, cousins, were visiting A. W. Hutton's the first of the week. They were shaking hands with acquaintances in town Tuesday. John has just completed his medical course at Marion Simms St. Louis, and will engage in the practice of medicine in Oklahoma.—Miami News.

A Dangerous Accident

happened the other day to a prominent citizen's wife, whose horse ran away with her and flung her against a telegraph pole.

Such accidents, though of daily occurrence in all parts of the world, add but little to the sum total of woman's suffering, as compared with the terrible results of the diseases peculiar to women, which drive so many women to premature graves.

The question is, what is to be done, if this coming race is to be protected, and the answer may well be told in the words of Mrs. Blanche E. Stephano, of 1225 S. 42nd Ave., Chicago, Ill., wife of a prominent Greek lawyer of that city.

In a recent letter, she says: "For five years after the birth of my baby, I suffered constantly with backache, and could not wear a corset. I also had sideache and bearing down pains, which nothing would relieve. My husband spent hundreds of dollars on the best doctors here, but to no avail. The last one suggested an operation, but to this I would not consent. At last, on the advice of a dear friend, I took Wine of Cardui, and can truthfully say that from the very first bottle I began to improve. I now look and feel like a different woman, eat well, and suffer no more pains."

Cardui is a pure, harmless, vegetable medicine, for all the diseases peculiar to women. It relieves pain and regulates the functions. Sold at all druggists in \$1.00 bottles.

Declared Fraudulent

The National Bond Company, which has a branch office at Boonville, was declared fraudulent by the postoffice department, which reports:

"The investigations of the inspectors have developed that in the actual operations of the business of this company, deliberate fraud has been committed by the misappropriation of the funds of investors. The inspectors find that practically all of the money received from the public from the sale of bonds during its business existence has been improperly used by the officers of the company, so that the assets consist almost solely of a deposit with the treasury of the state of Missouri."

Business was commenced only a little over a year ago, or on April 3, 1905, with the following officers and directors: Lon V. Stephens, financial agent, former governor of Missouri; Walker V. Powell, president; Robert H. Kern, Chas. F. Martin and Geo. W. Strodman, vice presidents; William H. Savage, secretary, and John B. O'Meara treasurer.

Like the Home Annuity Association and other like concerns the public has been victimized and misled by the names of prominent men. Ex-Gov. Stone's name was used in one case and Ex-Gov. Stephens in the latter. The shortage is estimated at \$135,000.

Two New Citizens

F. W. Weber and Louis Cook have purchased S. T. Hunter's farm near Mt. Leonard for \$16000. We welcome the gentlemen to Marion.



"I found him in the creek."

won't have your old Pilot, and I don't want to be good, and—and you think he's no good yourself," at which the Duke opened his eyes.

"How do you know? I never said so!"

"You laughed at him to dad one day."

"Did I?" said the Duke gravely. "Then I hasten to assure you that I have changed my mind. He is a good, brave man."

"He falls off his horse," she said, with contempt.

"I rather think he sticks on my

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