



SATAN SANDERSON



Satan Sanderson

By **HALLIE ERMINE RIVES,**
Author of
"Hearts Courageous," Etc.
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"Who's Who" In the Story.

- "SATAN" SANDERSON,** the hero, dare-devil, quixotic friend and master of the Gospel.
- HUGH STIRES,** prodigal and criminal.
- JESSICA HOLME,** the beautiful heroine, helpless in the rush of events and the principal sufferer in a case of mixed identity.
- MRS. HALLORAN,** the camp orator.
- DAVID STIRES,** stern, yet forgiving, and at the last made happy by another's unhappiness.
- THE BISHOP,** the victim of a misunderstanding.
- HALLELUJAH JONES,** the religious fanatic on whose shoulders rests the whole weight of the story.
- KEMMET PRENDERGAST,** the false friend, perjurer and thief.
- THE SHERIFF,** who is very much divided between duty and inclination.
- "BIG" DEVLIN,** who turns champion instead of prosecutor after the hero's race with death.

Chapter 4

INSIDE the study meanwhile the bishop was greeting Harry Sanderson. He had officiated at his ordination and liked him. His eyes took in the simple order of the room, lingering with a light tinge of disapproval upon the violin case in the corner and with a deeper shade of question upon the jewel on the other's finger, a pigeon blood ruby in a setting curiously twisted of the two initial letters of his name. There came to his mind for an instant a whisper of early prodigalities and wildness which he had heard.

"I looked in to tell you a bit of news," said the bishop. "I've just come from David Stires. He has a letter from Van Lennep, the great eye surgeon of Vienna. He disapproves with the rest of them. Think Jessica's case may not be hopeless."

The cloud that Hugh's call had left on Harry's countenance lifted.

"Thank God!" he said. "Will she go to him?"

The bishop looked at him curiously for the exclamation seemed to hold more than a conventional relief.

"He is to be in America next month. He will come here then to examine and perhaps to operate. Poor child! It will be a terrible thing for her if this last hope falls her, too, especially now, when she and Hugh are to make a match of it."

Harry's face was turned away, or the bishop would have seen it suddenly started. "To make a match of it!" To hide the flush he felt staining his cheek Harry bent to close the safe. A something that had darkened in some obscure depth of his being whose existence he had not guessed was throbbing now to a painful resentment. Jessica was to marry Hugh!

"A handsome fellow—Hugh!" said the bishop. "He seems to have returned with a new heart—a brand plucked from the burning. You had the same alma mater, I think you told me. Your influence has done the boy good, Sanderson!" He laid his hand kindly on the other's shoulder. "The fact that you were in college together makes him look up to you—as the whole parish does," he added.

Harry was setting the combination and did not answer. But through the turmoil in his brain a satiric voice kept repeating:

"No, they don't call me 'Satan' now!"

for David Stires, who today retired from active business, was its magnate, the owner of its finest single estate and of its most important bank. From his scapegrace boyhood Hugh Stires had made himself the subject of uncomfortable discussion. His sudden disappearance after the rumored quarrel with his father and the advent of Jessica Holme had furnished the community sufficient material for gossip. The wedding had capped this gossip with an appropriate climax. Tongues had wagged over its pros and cons, for Hugh's past had induced a wholesome skepticism of his future.

There was an additional element of romance, too, in the situation, for Jessica, who had never yet seen her lover, would see her husband. The great surgeon on whose prostration she had built so much had arrived and had operated. The experiment had been completely successful, and Jessica's hope of vision had become a sure and certain promise.

The operation over, there had remained many days before the bandages could be removed—before Jessica could be given her first glimpse of the world for nearly three years. Hugh had urged against delay. If he had stringent reasons of his own he was silent concerning them. And Jessica, steeped in the delicious wonder of new and fantastic sensations, had yielded.

So it had come about that the wedding was to be on this hot August afternoon, although it would be yet some time before the eye bandages might be laid aside save in a darkened room. In her girlish, passionate idealism Jessica had offered a sacrifice for her sentiment. She had promised herself that the first form her new sight should behold should be not her lover, but her husband. The idea pleased her sense of romance.

It was a sweltering afternoon, and in the wide east parlor limp handkerchiefs and energetic fans fought vainly against the intolerable heat. There, as the clock struck 6, a hundred pairs of eyes gazed between two centers of interest—the door at which the bride would enter and the raised platform at the other end of the room where, prayer book in hand, in his wide robes and glowing sleeves, Harry Sanderson had just taken his stand. Perhaps more looked at Harry than at the door.

He seemed his usual magnetic self as he stood there, backed by the flowers, his waving brown hair unsmoothed, the ruby ring glowing dull red against the dark leather of the book he held. But Harry Sanderson was far from feeling the grave, alien figure he appeared. In the past weeks he had waged a silent warfare with himself, bitter because repressed. The strangest new thing that had sprung up in him he had trampled mercilessly under. From the thought that he loved the promised wife of another a quick, fastidious sense in him recoiled aghast. This painful struggle had been sharpened by his sense of Hugh's utter worthlessness. To that rustling assemblage the man who was to make those solemn promises was David Stires' son, who had had his fling, turned over his new leaf becomingly and was now offering substantial hostages to good repute. To him, Harry Sanderson, he was a flaneur, a marginless gambler in the futures of his father's favor and a woman's heart.

Only a moment Harry stood waiting; then the palm screened musicians began the march, and Hugh took his place, animated and assured, looking the flushed and expectant bridegroom. At the same instant the chattering and hubbub ceased. Jessica, on the arm of the old man, erect, but walking feebly with his cane, was advancing down the roped lane.

Harry's eyes dropped to the opened book, though he knew the office by heart. He spoke the time-worn adjuration with clear enunciation, with almost perfunctory distinctness. He did not look at Hugh.

"If any man can show just cause why they may not lawfully be joined together, let him speak or else hereafter forever hold his peace." In the pause—the slightest pause—that turned the page he felt an insane prompting to tear off his robes, to proclaim to this roomful of heaved, gaping, fan fluttering humanity that he himself, a minister of the gospel, the celebrant of the rite, knew "just cause."

The choking impulse passed. The periods rolled on. The long white glove was slipped from the hand, the ring put on the finger, and the pair whom God and Harry Sanderson had joined together were kneeling on the white satin predile with bowed heads under the final invocation. As they knelt their voices rose.

Then, while the music lingered, the hush of the room broke in a confused murmur, the white ribbon wound ropes were let down, and a voluble wove of congratulators swept over the spot. In a moment more Harry found himself laying off his robes in the next room.



The celebrant of the rite knew "just cause."

With a sigh of relief he stepped through the wide French window into the garden. The strain over, he loosed the solitude of his study. But David Stires had asked him to remain for a final word, since bride and groom were to leave on an early evening train; the old man was to accompany them a part of the journey, and "the Stires place" was to be closed for an indefinite period.

It was not long before the sound of gay voices and of carriage wheels came around the corner of the house, for the reception was to be curtailed. One by one he heard the carriages roll down the gravelled driveway. A last chime of voices talking together—Harry could distinguish Hugh's voice now—and at length quiet told him the last of the guests were gone.

The east room was empty save for servants who were gathering some of the cut flowers for themselves. He stood aimlessly for a few moments looking about him. A white carnation lay at the foot of the dais, fallen from Jessica's shower bouquet. He picked this up, abstractedly sniffed its perfume and drew the stem through his buttonhole. He heard voices in the library, and, opening the door, he entered.

In the room sat old David Stires in his wheel chair opposite his son. He was deadly pale, and his fierce eyes blazed like fire in tinder. And what a Hugh! Not the indolently gay prodigal Harry had known in the past nor the flushed bridegroom of a half hour ago! It was a cringing, a hanging Hugh, with a slinking dread in the face, a trembling of the hands, a tense expectation in the posture. The thin line across his brow was a livid pallor. His eyes lifted to Harry's for an instant, then returned in a "kind of fascination to a slip of paper on the desk, on which his father's forefinger rested, like a nail transfixing an animate infamy.

"Sanderson," said the old man in a low, hoarse, unnatural voice, "come in and shut the door. God forgive us! We have married Jessica to a common thief!" Hugh, my son, my only child, whom I have forgiven beyond all reckoning, has forged my name to a draft for \$5,000!"

Then, while his hand closed the door behind him, a thing unexpected, anomalous, happened—a thing that took him as utterly by surprise as if the solid floor had yawned before him. Slim fingers tore away the broad encircling bandage. She started forward. Her arms were hung about his neck.

"Hugh, Hugh!" she cried. "My husband!"

The paleness was stricken suddenly from Harry's face. An odd, dazed color, a flush of mortification, of self reproach, flooded it from chin to brow. Despite himself he had felt his lips molding to an answering kiss beneath her own. He drew a gasping breath, his hand nervously caught the bandage, replaced it over the eyes and tied it tightly, putting down her protesting hands.

"Oh, Hugh," she pleaded, "not for a moment—not when I am so happy! Your face is what I dreamed it must be! Why did you make me wait so long? And I can see, Hugh! I can really see! Let it stay off, just for one little moment more!"

He held her hands by force. "Jessica, wait," he said in a broken whisper. "You must not take it off again—not now!" An incredible confusion enveloped

frick for him to round on me like this. I'll pay him off for it some time. I don't see that it's anybody else's business but ours anyway," he continued, with a sour glance at Harry.

Harry had been staring at him, but with a vision turned curiously backward—a vision that seemed to see Hugh standing at a cithered dais in a flower hung room, while his own voice said out of a lurid shadow, "Wilt thou have this man to be thy wedded husband?"

"Stay, Sanderson," said the old man; then turning to Hugh, "Who advanced you money on this and promised to 'hold it'?"

"Dr. Moreau."
"He profited by it?"
"He got his marriage," said Hugh sullenly.
"How much margin did he get?"
"A thousand."

"Where is the rest?" David Stires' voice was like a whip of steel.
Hugh hesitated a moment. He had still a few hundreds in pocket, but he did not mention them.
"I used most of it. I—had a few debts."

"Debts of honor, I presume?"
Hugh's sensibility quivered at the fierce, grating irony of the inquiry.
"If you'd been more decent with spending money," he said with a flare of the old offronty, "I'd have been all right! Ever since I came home you've kept me strapped. I was ashamed to stick up any more of my friends. And of course I couldn't borrow from J—sics?"

"Ashamed!" exclaimed the old man with harsh sternness. "You are without the decency of shame! If you were capable of feeling it you would not mention her name now!"
Hugh thought he saw a glimmer through the storm cloud. Jessica was his anchor to windward. What hurt him would hurt her. He would pull through!

"Well," he said, "it's done, and there's no good making such a row about it. She's my wife and she'll stand by me. If nobody else does!"
No one had ever seen such a look on David Stires' face as came to it now—a sudden blaze of fury and righteous scorn that burned it like a brand.

"You impudent blackguard! You drag my name in the gutter and then try to trade on my self respect and Jessica's affection. You thought you would take it up yourself and I would be none the wiser! And if I did find it out you counted on my love for the poor, deluded girl you have married to make me condone your criminality, to perjure myself, to admit the significance and shield you from the consequences. You imagine because you are my son that you can do this thing and all still go on as before. Do you suppose I don't consider Jessica? Do you think because you have fooled and cheated her and me and married her that I will give her now to a caught thief, a common jailbird?"

In the thoughts that were darting through Hugh's mind there was none now of regret or of pity for Jessica. His fear was the fear of the trapped speller who discerns capture and its consequent penalties in the patrolling bulldog's flash upon him. He studied his father with hunted, calculating eyes as the old man turned to Harry Sanderson.

"Sanderson," said David Stires once more in his even, deadly voice, "Jessica is waiting in the room above this. She will not understand the delay. Will you go to her? Make some excuse—any you can think of till I come."

Harry nodded and left the room, shutting the door carefully behind him, carrying with him the covering, helpless look with which Hugh saw himself left alone with his implacable judge. What to say to her? How to justify it? He mounted the stair as if a pack swung from his shoulders. He paused a moment at the door, then knocked, turned the knob and entered.

There in the middle of the blue bung room in her wedding dress, with her bandaged eyes, and her bridal bouquet on the table, stood Jessica. Twilight was near, but even so all the shutters were drawn save one, through which a last glow of refracted sunlight sifted to fall upon "his face. Her hands were clasped before her. He could hear her breathing—the full, hurried respiration of expectancy.

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him. His tongue cleaved to the roof of his mouth. Not only had the painful contretemps nonplused and dismayed him; not only had it heightened and horrified the realization of what she must presently be told—it had laid a careless hand upon his own secret, touching it with an almost vulgar mockery. It had overturned in an instant the barricades he had been piling. The pressure of those lips on his had sent coursing to the furthest recesses of his nature a great wave which dikes nor locks might ever again forbid.

"What a dear goose you are!" she said. "The light didn't hurt them—indeed, indeed! Only to think, Hugh! Your wife will have her sight! Do go and tell your father. He will be waiting to know!"

Harry made some incoherent reply. He was desperately anxious to get away. His thought was a snarl of tatters threaded by one lucid purpose—to spare her coming self abasement this sardonic humiliation.

He almost ran from the room and down the stair.

Chapter 6

AT the foot of the stair Harry paused, drawing a deep breath as if to lift a weight of air. He needed to get his bearings, to win back a measure of calmness.

As he stood there Hugh came from the library. His head was down, and he went furtively and slinkingly, as though dreading even a casual regard. He snatched his hat from the rack, passed out of the house and was swallowed up in the dusk. David Stires had followed his son into the hall. He answered the gloomy question in Harry's eyes.

"He is gone," he said, "and I hope to heaven I may never see his face again!" Then slowly and feebly he ascended the stairs.

Ten, fifteen minutes passed, and old David Stires re-entered the room, went feebly to his wheel chair and sat down. "I have told her," he said presently in a broken voice, "you are kind, Sanderson, very kind. God help us!"

"What has God to do with it?" fell a voice behind them. Harry faced about. It was Jessica as she had first seen her in the upper room with the bandage across her eyes.

"That has God to do with it?" she repeated in a hard tone. "Perhaps Mr. Sanderson can tell us. It is in his line."

"Please"—said Harry. He could not have told what he would have asked, though the accent was almost one of entreaty. The harsh satire touched his sacred calling. Coming from her lips it affronted at once his religious instinct and his awakened love. It was all he said, for he stopped suddenly at sight of her face, pale, frosted, white as the folded cloth.

"Oh," she said, turning toward the voice, "I remember what you said that night right here in this very room—that you sowed your wild oats at college with Hugh—that they were 'a tidy crop'! You were strong and he was weak. You led, and he followed. You were 'Satan Sanderson,' abbot of the Saints, the set in which he learned gambling. Why it was in your rooms that he played his first game of poker. He told me so himself! And now he has gone to be an outcast, and you stand in the pulpit in a cassock, you, the Rev. Henry Sanderson! You helped to make him what he has become! Can you undo it?"

Harry was looking at her with a stricken countenance. He had no answer ready. The wave of confusion that had submerged him when he had restored the bandage to her eyes had again welled over him.

of that kiss from my lips—the kiss of a forget, of my husband!"

The old man groaned. "I didn't know he had seen her!" he said helplessly. "Jessica, Hugh's sin is not Sanderson's fault!"

In her bitter words was an injustice as passionate as her pain, but for her life she could not help it. She was a woman wrrenched and torn, tortured beyond control, numb with anguish.

To Harry Sanderson her words fell with a wholly disproportionate violence. It had never occurred to him that he himself had been individually and actively the cause of Hugh's downfall. The accusation pierced through the armor of self esteem that he had linked and riveted with habit. The same pain of mind that had spurred him on that long ago night to the admission she had heard had started to new life a barred, a scathing, a rekindling sin.

"It is all true," he said. It was the inveterate voice of conviction that spoke. "I have been deceiving myself. I was my brother's keeper! Showed blow upon blow on the hard clay."

She did not catch the deep compunction in the judicial utterance. She stood an instant quivering, then turned and, feeling blindly for the door, swept from her sight.

White and breathless, Jessica climbed the stair. In her room she took a key from a drawer and ran swiftly to the attic studio. She unlocked the door with hurried fingers, tore the wrappings from the tall white figure of the prodigal son and found a heavy mallet. She lifted this with all her strength and showed blow upon blow on the hard clay, her face and hair and shimmering train powdered with the white dust, till the statue lay on the floor, a heap of tumbled fragments.

Fateful and passionate as the scene in the library had been, her going left a pall of silence in the room. Harry Sanderson looked at David Stires with pale attentiveness.

"Yet I would have given my life," he said in a low voice, "to save her this!"

Something in the tone caught the old man. He glanced up.

"I never . . . sed," he said slowly. "I never guessed that you loved her, too."

But Harry had not heard. He did not even know that he had spoken aloud.

David Stires turned his wheel chair to the Korean desk, touching the bell as he did so. He took up the draft and put it into his pocket. He pressed a spring; a panel dropped and disclosed a hidden drawer, from which he took a crackling parchment. It was the will against whose signing Harry had pleaded months before in that same room. The butler entered.

"Witness my signature, Blake," he said and wrote his name on the last page. "Mr. Sanderson will sign with you."

An hour later the fast express that bore Jessica and David Stires was shrieking across the long skeleton railroad bridge, a dotted trail of fire against the deepening night.

Chapter 7

HARRY SANDERSON as he walked slowly back from a long ramble in knickerbockers and Norfolk jacket over the hills was not thinking of the sights and sounds of the pleasant evening. He had tramped miles since sundown and had returned as he set out, gloomy, unrequited, a follower of barred field quest.

still her husband, Hugh's wife! What could she be to him? And this favored conflict shot through with yet another pang, for the waking smart of compunction which had risen at Jessica's bitter cry, "You helped to make him what he has become!" would not down. That cry had shown him in one clarifying instant the follies and delinquencies of his early career reduplicated as through the facets of a crystal, and in the polarized light of conscience Hugh—loner, gambler and thief—stood as the type and sign of an enduring accusation.

But if the recollection of that wedding day and its aftermath stalked always with him—if that kiss had seemed to cling again and again to his lips as he sat in the quiet of his study—no one guessed. He seldom played his violin now, but he had shown no outward sign. As time went on he had become no less brilliant, though more inscrutable; no less popular, save perhaps to the parish berry hunter, for whom he had never cared a straw. But beneath the surface a great change had come to Harry Sanderson.

Tonight as he wended his way past the house in the aspens, through the clutter and commotion of the evening, there was a kind of glaze over his whole face—a shell of melancholy.

Tomorrow began Harry's summer vacation, and he had planned a month's pedestrian outing through the wide ranch valleys and the farther ranges, and this should set him up again.

Now, however, as he walked alone he was bitterly absorbed in thoughts other than his own needs. He passed more than one acquaintance with a stare of nonrecognition. One of these was the bishop, who turned an instant to look after him. The bishop had seen that look frequently of late and had wondered if it betokened physical illness or mental anguish, with a slight, the old whisper of Harry Sanderson's early wildness. But he knew youth and its lapses, and he liked and respected him. Only two days before, on the second anniversary of Harry's ordination, he had given him for his sliver watch guard a little gold cross engraved with his name and containing the date.

At a crossing the sight of a knot of people on the opposite side of the street awoke Harry from his abstraction. They had gathered around a peripatetic street preacher, who was holding forth in a shrill voice. Beside him on a short pole hung a dripping gasoline flare, and the hissing flame lit his bare head, his thin features, his long hair and his bony hands moving in vehement gestures. A small melleodeon on four wheels stood beside him, and on its front was painted in glaring white letters:

HALLELUJAH JONES.
Suffer me that I may speak, and after that I have spoken knock on.—Job xli, 2.

From over the way Harry gazed at the tall, stooping figure pitilessly betrayed by the thin alpaca coat, at the ascetic face burned a brick red from



"Woe to them that are at ease in Zion."

exposure to wind and sun, at the flashing eyes, the impassioned earnestness. He paused at the curb and listened curiously, for Hallelujah Jones with his evangelism mingled a sly-sly of the zeal of the socialist. In his thinking the rich and the wicked were mingled inextricably in the great chastisement. He was preaching now from his favorite text: "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion."

Harry smiled grimly. He had always been "at ease in Zion." He wore sumptuous clothes. The ruby in his ring would bring what this plodding exhorter would call a fortune. At this moment Hede, his dapper Finn chauffeur, was polishing the motor car for him to take his cool evening spin. That very afternoon he had put into the little safe in the chapel study \$2,000 in gold which he had drawn, a part for his charities and quarterly payments and a part to take with him for the expenses of his trip. The street evangelist over there preaching paradise and perdition to the grinning yokels often needed a square meal and was lucky if he always knew where he would sleep.

The thread of his thought broke. The bareheaded figure had ended his harangue. The eternal fires were banked for a time, while, seated on a camp stool at his melleodeon, he proceeded to transport his audience to the heavenly meads of the New Jerusalem.

Two, three verses of an old-fashioned hymn he sang, and after each verse more of the bystanders, some in real earnestness, some in impious hilarity, shouted in the chorus:

"Palms of victory!
Crowns of glory!
Palms of victory I shall wear!"

Harry walked on in a brown study, the refrain ringing through his brain. At the chapel gate lounged his chauffeur awaiting orders.

"Bring the car round, Hede," said Harry, "and I shan't need you after that tonight. I'll drive her myself. You can meet me at the garage."

The study was pitch dark, and Harry halted on the threshold with a low, ominous growl as Harry fumbled for the electric switch. As he found and pressed it and the place flooded with light, he saw a figure there, the figure of a man who had been sitting alone, beside the empty hearth, who rose, shrinking back from the sudden brilliancy.

It was Hugh Stires.

(To Be Continued.)

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