# A Question of Courage

BY FRANCIS LYNDE.



Ringbrand looked surprised. "I didn't know the penalties were severe enough to warrant a man in doing that," he said.

"I'm not sure that they are," replied the girl, "though a long term in the penitentiary is hard enough after the free life of the mountain. But in Cragin's case I think there were other things; there was a long story of bloodshed and violence leading up to the tragedy, and perhaps he had reason to fear something worse than a prison. You don't know anything about the savage history of these mountains, Mr. Ringbrand," she added, turning her horse's head homeward. "Nearly every family in the neighborhood is or has been mixed up in some dreadful trouble; even our own has not escaped."

She did not offer any further explanations as they rode back to "The Laurels," and Ringbrand felt instinctively that it was a matter about which he could not ask questions. What she had said, however, made him thoughtful, and he resolved to ask Ludlow if he knew the story.

When they reached the house Hester asked Ringbrand to stay to tea, and after the meal they sat together on the veranda while the colonel and his son rode to Tregarthen. Since they were well beyond the period of acquaintanceship in which young lovers take each other seriously and talk upon abstruse subjects, the conversaton drifted aimlessly and easily from one topic to another until it finally came back to the rector and his approaching marriage. Hester spoke of it again in terms of disapproval. "It seems to me like a case of infatuation on his part," she said, "though I suppose I'm prejudiced. I

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can't see how they are ever going to be able to make peace between the sections."

"Is Miss Bradfern so very pronounced in her views?" asked Ringbrand.

"I think she is; and I fear she is much the stronger of the two."

"Is that always a misfortune?"

"Possibly not; but it seems so to me. It implies a surrender on the part of the husband, and that's a pitiable thing to contemplate."

"Do you think so? I should say that such a surrender might be very noble—under some circumstances."

"I can't imagine the circumstances. What are they?"

His frank question drew him rather deeper into the subject than he had meant to go, but he laid hold of his courage and spoke the thought that was in him. "I mean when a man has been fortunate enough to find the one woman in the world with whom he can share all things." He said it quietly, trying to keep the vibrant note of passion out of his voice.

She did not reply at once, and when she did there was no sign that she had taken his answer in any sense other than as an abstract statement of fact. "Even then I think you are wrong," she said. "It doesn't seem possible to me that any woman could accept such a sacrifice and retain her respect for the man who made it; does it to you?"

"I had never thought of it as being a sacrifice. It is more like a part of the homage which a loyal subject would give freely to the one whom he had enthroned."

She looked at him in doubt. "I can never tell when you are in earnest and when you are trying to be satirical."

"Oh, I beg you to believe I wouldn't jest upon such a serious subject," he hastened to say.

"Then I can't understand your position at all. You—you write about women, and you should understand them better than that. Isn't it true that even the strongest woman prefers to look up rather than down, if her husband be noble and brave and generally worth looking up to?"

Ringbrand winced, for had he not signed his name to a certain narrative in which the motive turned upon the theory that deep in the heart of every woman there dwells an unspoken desire to be dominated? He smiled at his unconscious mendacity and wondered why it is that a man who chances to be in love cannot apply the wisdom of other days to the solution of his own riddles.

"Perhaps you are right, after all," he said, musingly. "Now that you recall it, it seems quite possible that I may at one time have held and expressed such a view myself. Your proviso, however, helps my side of the question."

"In what way?"

"By asking for a rare combination of virtues in the man."

"How do you mean?"

"You said he should be noble and brave and generally worth looking up to."

"Are those qualities rare?"

"Rare enough, I fear. I think there are not many of us who could fill the requirements. But to return to Miss Bradfern: You think she will be on the governing hand, do you?"

"Perhaps not quite that, but I'm very sure she has some—shall we call them convictions?—that will make Mr. Raleigh very uncomfortable. One of them is the idea that it is a part of her mission to bring about the social recognition of the negroes." She said "niggers," but the provincialism bore no contemptuous accent.

The remark caught Ringbrand off his guard and he said: "There is room for reform along that line, isn't there?"

"That depends very much upon the point of view." Hester drew herself up and a shade of austerity came into her manner. "I'm not quite sure how you regard it in the north, though papa says you make no distinction—or, at least, not very much. With us the question has been definitely settled for a long time."

He was besotted enough to try to argue the point with her. "Don't you think that much of the objection to social equality on the score of the color of a person's skin is prejudice?" he asked.

"You are at liberty to call it that or anything else you please," she answered, with chilly preciseness, "and there is nothing to prevent your putting yourself upon an equality with our servants if you feel so disposed."

"I'm sure I don't wish to do that, though I'm quite as certain that the question of color or race would not prevent me. I think the negroes in the north are given all the social rights they expect or deserve; they are at least the social equals of white people in their own class."

Hester rose and stood before him with sparkling eyes and flushed cheeks, and he forgot all about the argument in his admiration of her superb loveliness. "That's just it!" she exclaimed; "you all are quite willing to let the negroes take their chances in the north, but you try to compel us to accept them as equals, without regard to class, whether we want to or not."

It was not their first difference, and Ringbrand smiled. "You are of the south, aren't you, Miss Hester? I wish you would teach me how to be enthusiastic," he said, mildly.

"It would be a hopeless task," she replied.

"I'm not so sure about that. I think it would depend upon the teacher."

"But you would be enthusiastic on the wrong side, if I did."

"Perhaps you might convert me in the process."

"I am afraid that isn't possible; and then it wouldn't be honest of you to let me," she added, with feminine inconsistency.

Ringbrand smiled complacently. "I like that," he said. "I shall try hereafter to be both enthusiastic and loyal to my section."

Thinking about this conversation when she was braiding her hair before her mirror that night, Hester blushed when she remembered how emphatic she had been. "I hope he didn't think I was inhospitable and rude," she said, speaking softly to herself; "but he doesn't know how his cool way of asserting himself irritates one. And I was almost angry, too; I'm sure I was going to say something spiteful; but there was a look in his eyes that said no, just as plainly as could be. He always looks at me that way when I'm about to say something mean, and then I can't go on. I wonder—but that would be ridiculous; he ought to marry a Vassar girl at the very least; somebody with calm gray eyes and fluffy hair, a girl with advanced ideas and all that, and with plenty of intellect, so she could help him in his work. That isn't much like you, is it?" speaking to the reflection in the mirror; "you're nothing but an enthusiastic, impulsive country girl, with coarse black hair"—she drew one of the shining braids over her shoulder to look at it—"and eyebrows that make me think of the picture of Beatrice in the big Shakespeare downstairs—only she's pretty and you're not."

Mirrors do not always tell the truth, and Hester's must have been a very Ananias of a looking-glass if it reflected any such distorted likeness of the embodiment of sweet, wholesome womanhood standing before it; there were strength and pride in every line of the beautiful face and perfect form, but it was the strength that harmonizes with grace and purity, and it was the pride that abhors mean things and scorns the ignoble arts of deceit and subterfuge.

## III.

### THE HISTORY OF A FEUD.

Places, like persons, have characters to keep or to lose. From the time beyond which fireside tradition fades into the less authentic record of legendary tales, McNabb's cove had shared with its scanty population the evil report of a bad neighborhood. Topographically, it is a mere gash in the side of Murphy mountain, with a few acres of arable land in the center shut in on three sides by steep wooded hills, whose summits are the cliffs of the mountain. Practically inaccessible on three sides, entrance by the fourth is scarcely less difficult. A narrow wagon road winds up the sharp ascent which measures the height of the cove above the level of Harmony valley; and besides this there are no means of ingress or egress for vehicles, and none for pedestrians save such as are afforded by two or three rocky trails up the sides of the mountain.

The isolation of McNabb's cove has much to do with its unsavory reputation. For many years the Bynums, whose log farmhouse of "two pens and a passage" was the only human habitation in the small valley, had acted as go-between for the illicit distillers on the mountain and their customers in Harmony valley. In consequence of this, the cove had been the scene of several encounters between the revenue officers and the moonshiners; and although the Bynums had usually maintained an outward show of neutrality there was little doubt that they had always given the secret aid to their neighbors on the mountain. It was during the life of Col. Latimer's father that the Bynums had first brought themselves within the pale of the law. A revenue officer had climbed the steep road leading to the cove one afternoon and the next morning his dead body was found at the foot of the declivity with a bullet hole in the skull. Old Squire Latimer was justice of the peace at the time, and he was especially active in pushing the inquiry which finally fixed the crime upon one of the Bynums. As the evidence was mostly circumstantial, the murderers got off with a life sentence; but for the squire's part in the prosecution the Bynums declared war upon the Latimer family, instituting a series of persecutions which culminated in the burning of the manor-house in the valley. The ex-Virginian was a law-abiding man, and, although there was little doubt as to the identity of his enemies, he refused to retaliate in kind. With each fresh depredation he redoubled his efforts to obtain proof which could be produced in court; but his persecuters were shrewd and crafty, and he was never able to get conclusive evidence against them. After the burning of the manor-house the squire built "The Laurels" on the plateau of Murphy mountain; but he did not live long to enjoy his new home. The plateau farm was reached by a road which climbs the face of the ascent from Tregarthen. Beyond the Latimer estate it skirts the brow of the mountain, following the line of the cliffs and doubling around the head of McNabb's cove. One morning when the squire was riding along this road at a point where it comes out upon the edge of an abrupt precipice commanding a view of the cove, a rifle-shot rang out, and the frightened horses galloped riderless back to "The Laurels." When the searchers found him a short time afterwards the squire was quite dead; and before noon John Bynum was in jail at Tregarthen charged with the commission of the crime. At this distance of time there appears to be at least a reasonable doubt of his guilt. He was seen in the village, and in fact was arrested there within two hours of the time when the murder was committed; and while the distance from the head of the cove to Tregarthen by the road leading past "The Laurels" is only three miles, it is six by the way he must have gone to avoid meeting the searching party. This, and other facts, might have been brought out in a trial, but the Bynums were unpopular and their feud with the Latimers was well known. The news of the squire's death spread rapidly through the valley during the day, and at night an armed mob broke into the jail and secured the hapless prisoner, who was hurried to the scene of the murder and hanged to the nearest convenient tree.

With the death of John Bynum the feud smoldered for several years. His only brother, Jed, who was absent at the time of the lynching, moved to Texas a short time afterwards, and there were left only the widow and her four children on the small farm in the cove. It is to be supposed that the woman, who was a Bynum by blood as well as by marriage, did not fail to teach her children the catechism of vengeance; but, however this may be, hostilities were renewed as soon as the boys were old enough to follow in the footsteps of their elders.

Col. Latimer, the squire's son and heir, inherited little of the peace-loving temper of his father. The first time he found his fences thrown down and the cattle in his fields, he armed himself with a heavy riding whip and went about nursing his wrath till his opportunity should arrive. Meeting Jed Bynum in the street of Tregarthen, the indignant colonel proceeded to mete

The Colonel proceeded to mete out a measure of chastisement.

out to the younger man such a measure of chastisement as he thought the case demanded, paying for his satisfaction a few days later with a broken arm, shattered by the bullet of an ambushed enemy. This incident was conducive to another interval of peace, for two reasons—it taught the colonel that unless he were willing to adopt the unscrupulous tactics of his antagonists he was likely to lose his life in an unequal contest; and the Bynums were restrained from further immediate aggressions by a fear of some such consequences as had overtaken their father. Col. Latimer was quite as popular in his way as had been the squire; and there had been ominous threats of another outburst of public indignation after the breaking of the colonel's arm—threats which were loud enough to cause the elder Bynum to disappear for a time, rumor said in Texas.

tenacious as that overlying the other veins, and that there was no apparent reason why it should require timbering; but the indubitable fact remained. While the work of development was in progress, the miners frequently found the labor of a week undone in a single night by a caving of the roof which filled the tunnel with broken rock. Ludlow had its own theory about these mysterious accidents, but he kept it to himself. It was suggested by the smell of black powder which he detected one morning when he was examining the debris that had fallen during the previous night. It struck him as being curious, because he knew that the miners were using dynamite; and it led to a series of casual inquiries among the dwellers in Harmony Valley nearest to the entrance to McNabb's Cove. The replies were not entirely convincing, because the nocturnal noises heard by the valley folk might have been nothing more than the concussion of the falling rock; but Ludlow heard enough to make him believe that when it became necessary to take coal from the McNabb vein a night-guard at the tunnel would possibly avert disaster more efficiently than the most elaborate system of timbering.

(To be Continued.)

### Atchison Globe Philosophy.

We hate to see a big man carry a little satchel.

Some people play the piano so loud that it constitutes a breach of the peace.

A woman who dresses in a hurry always puts too much powder on the end of her nose.

Every woman thinks that when she is dead, and her husband has married again, that he will begin to appreciate her.

Out in the west, the marvel is that eastern women continue to wear dresses cut low in the neck after they have passed forty.

If you have any money to give the members of the Twentieth Kansas give it to their father-in-laws, with whom their families have probably been living since they went to war.

It is easy to umpire a game of base ball from the grand stand.

Some men who can't earn their salt talk the best kind of sense.

We sometimes wish there would be less rag chewing, and more fighting.

When a man tries to conceal the amount of whisky he drinks, he knows he is drinking too much.

We have noticed that the farther a man goes on a fishing trip, the larger the fish he claims he caught.

A son never gets too old for his mother to think it is proper to put candles on his birthday cakes.

What Labor needs to make it dignified, is an eight hour law applied to the mothers who work sixteen hours a day.

We wonder that smart physicians don't try to help suffering mankind by cutting out the heart. It is the organ that makes all the trouble.

The only point in going to a picnic is to have a tough time, so that you will quit dreaming about the good times you might have at a picnic.

Although small families are growing more and more fashionable, the Lord continues to make watermelons to large. A man who buys a ten cent watermelon has to invite his neighbors to get it eaten.

It is a good plan to have a back stairway in every home. It gives the impression that a half dozen servants are retained, though the back stairway is really never used except when company comes, and the women folks tuck up it in a hurry to put on their good clothes.