

The Manager Of the B. & A.

By VAUGHAN KESTER

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(Continued from Friday.)

CHAPTER XVII.

RYDER'S murder furnished Antioch with a sensation the like of which it had not known in many a day. It was one long, breathless shudder, ramified with contingent horrors.

Dippy Ellsworth remembered that when he drove up in his cart on the night of the tragedy to light the street lamp which stood on the corner by the Herald office his horse had balked and refused to go near the curb. It was generally conceded that the sagacious brute smelled blood. Dippy himself said he would not sell that horse for \$1,000, and it was admitted on all sides that such an animal possessed a value hard to reckon in mere dollars and cents.

Three men recalled that they had passed the Herald office and noticed that the door stood open. Within twenty-four hours they were hearing groans and within a week cries for help, but they were not encouraged.

Of course the real hero was Bob Bennett, Ryder's assistant, who had discovered the body when he went back to the office at half past 8 to close the forms. His account of the finding of Ryder dead on the floor was an exceedingly grisly narrative, delightfully conducive of the shivers. He had been the quietest of youths, but two weeks after the murder he left for Chicago. He said there might be those who could stand it, but Antioch was too slow for him.

Not less remarkable was Ryder's posthumous fame. Men who had never known him in life now spoke of him with trembling voices and every outward evidence of the sincerest sorrow. It was as if he had sustained a personal loss, for his championship of the strike had given him a great popularity, and his murder, growing out of this championship, as all preferred to believe, made his death seem a species of martyrdom.

Indeed, the mere fact that he had been murdered would have been sufficient to make him popular at any time. He had supplied Antioch with a glorious sensation. It was something to talk over and discuss and shudder at, and the town was grateful and happy with the deep, calm joy of a perfect emotion.

It determined to give him a funeral which should be creditable alike to the cause for which he had died and to the manner of his death.

Meanwhile Dan had been arrested, examined and set at liberty again in the face of the prevailing sentiment that he should be held. No one doubted—he himself least of all—that Roger Oakley had killed Ryder. Bob Bennett recalled their meeting as he left the office to go home for supper on the night of the murder, and a red and yellow bandanna handkerchief was found under the table, which Dan identified as having belonged to his father.

Kenyon came to Antioch and made his re-election almost certain by the offer of a reward of \$500 for the arrest and conviction of the murderer. This stimulated a wonderful measure of activity. Parties of men and boys were soon scouring the woods and fields in quest of the old convict.

The day preceding that of the funeral a dusty countryman on a hard ridden pony dashed into town with the news that a man who answered perfectly to the description of Roger Oakley had been seen the night before twenty-six miles north of Antioch, at a place called Barrow's Sawmills, where he had stopped at a store and made a number of purchases. Then he had struck off through the woods. It was also learned that he had eaten his breakfast the morning after the murder at a farmhouse midway between Antioch and Barrow's Sawmills. The farmer's wife had at his request put up a lunch for him. Later in the day a man at work in a field had seen and spoken with him.

There was neither railroad, telegraph nor telephone at Barrow's Sawmills, and the fugitive had evidently considered it safe to venture into the place, trusting that he was ahead of the news of his crime. It was on the edge of a sparsely settled district, and to the north of it was the unbroken wilderness stretching away to the lakes and the Wisconsin line.

The morning of the funeral an extra edition of the Herald was issued, which contained a glowing account of Ryder's life and achievements. It was an open secret that it was from the gifted pen of Kenyon. This notable enterprise was one of the wonders of the day. Everybody wanted a Herald as a souvenir of the occasion, and nearly 500 copies were sold.

All that morning the country people in unbroken numbers flocked into town. As Clarence remarked to Spide, it was just like a circus day. The noon train from Buckhorn Junction arrived crowded to the doors, as did the 1 o'clock train from Harrison. Antioch had never known anything like it.

The funeral was at 2 o'clock from the little white frame Methodist church, but long before the appointed hour it

was crowded to the verge of suffocation, and the anxious, waiting throng overflowed into the yard and street with never a hope of wedding into the building, much less securing seats.

A delegation of the widows, the Men's Kenyon club, of which Kenyon was a member, and a representative body of citizens escorted the remains to the church. These were the people he had jeered at, whose simple joys he had ridiculed and whose griefs he had made light of, but they would gladly have forgiven him his sarcasms even had they known of them. He had become a hero and a martyr.

Chris Berry and Cap Roberts were in charge of the arrangements. On the night of the murder the former had beaten his rival to the Herald office by exactly three minutes and had never left Ryder until he lay in the most costly casket in his shop.

It was admitted afterward by thoughtful men who were accustomed to weigh their opinions carefully that Mr. Williamson, the minister, had never delivered so moving an address or one that contained so obvious a moral.

The drift of his remarks was that the death of his brilliant and distinguished fellow townsman should serve as a warning to all that there was no time like the present in which to prepare for the life everlasting. He assured his audience that each hour of existence should be devoted to consecration and silent testimony; otherwise, what did it avail? It was not enough that Ryder had thrown the weight of his personal influence and exceptional talents on the side of sound morality and civic usefulness. And as he soared on from point to point his hearers soared with him, and when he rounded in on each well tried climax they rounded in with him. He never faltered them once. They always knew what he was going to say before it was said and were ready for the thrill when the thrill was due. It might have seemed that Mr. Williamson was paid a salary merely to make an uncertain hereafter yet more uncomfortable and uncertain, but Antioch took its religion hot, with a shiver and a threat of blue flame.

When Mr. Williamson sat down Mr. Kenyon rose. As a layman he could be entirely eulogistic. He was sure of the faith which through life had been

the guiding star of the departed. He had seen it instanced by numerous acts of eminently Christian benevolence, and on those rare occasions when he had spoken of his hopes and fears he had, in spite of his shrinking modesty, shown that his standards of Christian duty were both lofty and consistent.

Here the Hon. Jeb Barrows, who had been dozing peacefully, awoke with a start and gazed with wide, bulging eyes at the speaker. He followed Mr. Kenyon, and, though he tried hard, he couldn't recall any expression of Ryder's, at the Red Star bar or elsewhere, which indicated that there was any spiritual uplift in his nature which he fed at secret altars; so he pictured the friend and citizen, and the dead fared well at his hands, perhaps better than he was conscious of, for he said no more than he believed.

Then came the prayer and hymn, to be succeeded by a heavy, solemn pause, and Mr. Williamson stepped to the front of the platform.

"All those who care to view the remains—and I presume there are many here who will wish to look upon the face of our dead friend before it is conveyed to its final resting place—will please form in line at the rear of the edifice and advance quietly up the right aisle, passing across the church as quickly as possible and thence down the left aisle and on out through the door. This will prevent confusion and make it much pleasanter for all."

There was a rustle of skirts and the awkward shuffling of many feet as the congregation formed in line; then it filed slowly up the aisle to where Chris Berry stood, veined and dry, with a vulture look on his face and a vulture touch to his hands that now and again picked at the flowers which were banked about the coffin.

The Emorys, partly out of regard for public sentiment, had attended the funeral, for, as the doctor said, they were the only real friends Griff had in the town. They had known and liked him when the rest of Antioch was dubiously critical of the newcomer, whose ways were not its ways.

When the congregation thronged up the aisle Constance, who had endured the long service, which to her was unspeakably grotesque and horrible, in shocked if silent rebellion slipped her hand into her mother's. "Take me away," she whispered brokenly, "or I shall cry out! Take me away!"

Mrs. Emory hesitated. It seemed a desertion of a trust to go and leave Griff to these strangers, who had been brought there by morbid curiosity. Constance guessed what was passing in her mind.

"Papa will remain if it is necessary," Mrs. Emory touched the doctor on the shoulder. "We're going home, John; Constance doesn't feel well; but you stay."

When they reached the street the last vestige of Constance's self control vanished utterly. "Wasn't it awful!" she sobbed. "And his life had only just begun! And to be snuffed out like this, when there was everything to

live for!

Mrs. Emory, surprised at the sudden show of feeling, looked into her daughter's face. Constance understood the look.

"No, no! He was only a friend! He could never have been more than that. Poor, poor Griff!"

"I am glad for your sake, dearie," said Mrs. Emory gently.

"I wasn't very kind to him at the last, but I couldn't know—I couldn't know," she moaned.

She was not much given to these confidences even with her mother. Usually she never questioned the wisdom or righteousness of her own acts, and it was not her habit to put them to the test of a less generous judgment, but she was remembering her last meeting with Ryder. It had been the day before his death. He had told her that he loved her, and she had laid her hand on his forehead and had said, "I am glad for your sake, dearie," and she had tried to convince herself afterward that it was only his vanity that was hurt.

Then she thought of Oakley. She had been thinking of him all day, wondering where he was, if he had left Antioch, and not daring to ask. They were going up the path now toward the house, and she turned to her mother again.

"What do they say of Mr. Oakley—I mean Mr. Dan Oakley? I don't know why, but I'm more sorry for him than I am for Griff. He has so much to bear!"

"I heard your father say he was still here. I suppose he has to remain. He can't choose."

"What will be done with his father if he is captured? Will they?"—She could not bring herself to finish the sentence.

"Goodness knows! I wouldn't worry about him," said Mrs. Emory in a tone of considerable asperity. "He made all the trouble, and I haven't a particle of patience with him!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

By 3 o'clock the saloons and stores, which had closed at noon, opened their doors, and Antioch emerged from the shadow of its funeral gloom.

By 4 o'clock a long procession of carriages and wagons was rumbling out of town. Those who had come from a distance were going home, but many lingered in the hope that the excitement was not all past.

An hour later a rumor reached Antioch that Roger Oakley had been captured. It spread about the streets like wildfire and penetrated to the stores and saloons. At first it was not believed.

Just who was responsible for the rumor no one knew, and no one cared, but soon the additional facts were being vouched for by a score of excited men that a search party from Barrow's Sawmills, which had been trail-

ing the fugitive for two days, had effected his capture after a desperate fight in the northern woods and were bringing him to Antioch for identification. It was generally understood that if the prisoner proved to be Roger Oakley he would be spared the uncertainty of a trial. The threat was made openly that he would be strung up to the first convenient lamp post. As Mr. Britt remarked to a customer from Harrison for whom he was mixing a cocktail:

"It'd be a pity to keep a man of his years waiting; and what's the use of spending thousands of dollars for a conviction anyhow when everybody knows he done it?"

At this juncture Jim Brown, the sheriff, and Joe Weaver, the town marshal, were seen to cross the square with an air of importance and preoccupation. It was noted casually that the right hand coat pocket of each sagged suggestively. They disappeared into McElroy's livery stable. Fifty men and boys rushed precipitately in pursuit and were just in time to see the two officers pass out at the back of the stable and jump into a light road cart that stood in the alley. A moment later they were whirling off uptown.

All previous doubt vanished instantly. It was agreed on all sides that they were probably acting on private information and had gone to bring in the prisoner. So strong was this conviction that a number of young men whose teams were hitched about the square promptly followed, and soon an anxious cavalcade emptied itself into the dusty country road.

Just beyond the corporation line the North street, as it was called, forked. Mr. Brown and his companion had taken the road which bore to the west and led straight to Barrow's Sawmills. Those who were first to reach the forks could still see the road cart a black dot in the distance.

The afternoon passed, and the dusk of evening came. Those of the townspeople who were still hanging about the square went home to supper. Unless a man could hire or borrow a horse there was not much temptation to start off on a wild goose chase, which, after all, might end only at Barrow's Sawmills.

Fortunately for him, Dan Oakley had gone to Chicago that morning, intending to see Holloway and resign. In view of what had happened it was impossible for him to remain in Antioch, nor could General Cornish expect him to.

Milton McClintock was at supper with his family when Mrs. Stapleton, who lived next door, broke in upon them without ceremony, crying excitedly.

"They've got him, and they're going to lynch him!"

Then she as suddenly disappeared. McClintock from where he sat, holding a piece of bread within an inch of his lips and his mouth wide open to receive it, could see her through the window, her gray hair disheveled and tossed about her face, running from house to house, a gaudy pinner in flapping calico skirts.

He sprang to his feet when he saw her vanish around the corner of Lou Bentlek's house across the way. "You keep the children in, Mary," he said sharply. "Don't let them into the street." And, snatching up his hat and coat, he made for the door, but his wife was there ahead of him and threw her arms about his neck.

"For God's sake, Milt, stay with the boys and me!" she ejaculated. "You don't know what may happen!"

Outside they heard the tramping of many feet coming nearer and nearer. They listened breathlessly.

"You don't know what may happen!" she repeated.

"Yes, I do, and they mustn't do it!" unclasping her hands. "Jim will be needing help." The sheriff was his wife's brother. "He's promised me he'd hang the old man himself or no one else should."

There was silence now in the street. The crowd had swept past the house. "But the town's full of strangers. You can't do anything, and Jim can't!"

"We can try. Look out for the children!"

And he was gone.

Mrs. McClintock turned to the boys, who were still at the table. "Go upstairs to your room and stay there until I tell you to come down," she commanded peremptorily. "There, don't bother me with questions!" For Joe, the youngest boy, was already whimpering. The other two, with white, scared faces, sat bolt upright in their chairs. Some danger threatened. They didn't know what this danger was, and their very ignorance added to their terror.

"Do what I say!" she cried. At this they left the table and marched toward the stairs. Joe found courage to say:

"Ain't you coming too? George's afraid." But his mother did not hear him. She was at the window closing the shutters. In the next yard she saw old Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Stapleton's mother, carrying her potted plants into the house and scolding in a shrill, querulous voice.

McClintock, pulling on his coat as he ran, hurried by the street past the little white frame Methodist church. The crowd had the start of him, and the town seemed deserted except for the women and children who were everywhere, at open doors and windows, some pallid and pitying, some ugly with the brutal excitement they had caught from brothers or husbands.

As he passed the Emorys he heard his name called. He glanced around and saw the doctor standing on the porch with Mrs. Emory and Constance, the physician cried. At the same moment the boy drove his team to the door. McClintock took the fence at a bound and ran up the drive.

"There's no time to lose," he panted. "But," with a sudden, sickening sense of helplessness, "I don't know that we can stop them."

"At least he will not be alone." It was Constance who spoke. She was thinking of Oakley as struggling single handed to save his father from the howling, cursing rabble which had rushed up the street ten minutes before.

"No, he won't be alone," said McClintock, not understanding whom it was she meant. He climbed in beside the doctor.

"You haven't seen him?" the latter asked as he took the reins from the boy.

"Seen who?"

"Dan Oakley."

"He's on his way to Chicago. Went this morning."

"Thank God for that!" And he pulled in his horses to call back to Constance that Oakley had left Antioch. A look of instant relief came into her face. He turned again to McClintock.

"This is a bad business."

"Yes, we don't want no lynching, but it's lucky Oakley isn't here. I hadn't thought of what he'd do if he was."

"What a pity he ever sent for his father! But who could have foreseen this?" said the doctor sadly. McClintock shook his head.

"I can't believe the old man killed Ryder in cold blood. Why, he's as gentle as a lamb."

As they left the town off to the right in a field they saw a bareheaded woman racing after her two runaway sons, and then the distant shouts of men, mingled with the shrill cries of boys, reached their ears. The doctor shook out his reins and plied his whip.

"What if we are too late?" he said.

For answer McClintock swore. He was fearing that himself.

Two minutes later and they were up with the rear of the mob, where it struggled along on foot, sweating and dusty and hoarsely articulate. A little farther on and it was lost to sight in a thicketed dip of the road. Out of this black shadow buggy after buggy flashed to show in the red dusk that lay on the treeless hillside beyond. On the mob's either flank, but keeping well out of the reach of their elders, slunk and skulked the village urchins.

"Looks as if all Antioch was here tonight," commented McClintock grimly.

"So much the better for us. Surely they are not all gone mad," answered the doctor.

"I wouldn't give a button for his chances."

The doctor drove recklessly into the crowd, which scattered to the right and left.

McClintock, bending low, scanned the faces which were raised toward them.

"The whole township's here. I don't know one in ten," he said, straightening up. (To be continued.)

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