

CAPTAIN JIM'S COURTSHIP

By A. E. RICE, Portland.

(Continued from last week)

Annie anticipated the effect of Jim and Smith meeting in the woodshed and made no effort to prevent it. In fact she preferred it there to anywhere else and the manner it came about well suited her fun-loving disposition. The incident caused her to momentarily forget the rapping on the front door, yet, while immoderately laughing, she turned. The front door opened and a villainous looking man entered.

Her laughter died on her lips. She became speechless with fright. The villainous looking stranger quietly closed the door behind him; Captain Jim quickly disentangled himself from Smith, and scrambling to his feet, rushed back into the kitchen, followed by Smith, who was fighting mad.

Jim saw the villainous stranger near the front door and for a moment thought he was being assailed in front and rear. His limbs trembled some, for while no coward blood ran through his veins, age admonished him not rashly to provoke physical encounters. Smith angrily said to Jim, "phwat he yees doin', yees miserable thairf?" At that moment he too discovered the stranger and became appalled. "Oh mother of Moses!" he exclaimed in a whisper.

The disfigured and unrecognizable villain, appearing more terrible in the dim light, stood near the front door, a huge pistol in his right hand and a carving knife in his left.

"Whoop! S'blood!" said he, as he flourished the weapons. He wore a soft hat pulled down over a blackened eye. A strip of sticking plaster was fastened on his cheek, and his coat appeared very much crumpled.

The identity of the stranger was, however, cleared up the opportune arrival of Nan and Kitty.

Kitty at once recognized him. "Oh, Frank," she exclaimed, "who did it?" "MacDonald, the red villain," he answered hoarsely. That expression explained Frank's appearance, for Annie then remembered Kitty having told her, while in the wood shed, that Frank was coming with a black eye and scarred face.

"What did he do it for?" asked Kitty of Frank. "For calling him a muf," answered Frank, "and he said he was going to do Captain Jim Smeets worse than me."

Annie appeared horrified and said, "I am the cause of it all." She sank on the lounge and covered her face with her hands to conceal her laughter which she was unable to restrain longer.

"He's on the war path tonight, and will call here sure," Frank continued. "But you will not meet MacDonald again. You will hide from him, won't you, Frank?" said Kitty, appearing concerned.

"Hide from him. Never," roared Frank in reply, and flourishing his knife and pistol in a most determined manner, added, "As I am a savage, I'll suck blood!" He then deliberately, and in the most suggestive way, drew the back of the carving knife across his throat.

Captain Jim was so amazed at this and so anxious to clear himself, that he at once loftily replied, "me! I reckon you be a mistake-ken." He indiscreetly and ungardedly added, "why I was in the bed room, I shud a-think so."

The words were scarcely uttered, when Annie gave a little scream and exclaimed, "oh, good lands!"

There followed full ten seconds of dead silence, in which the tick of the small clock on the shelf seemed to sound like the clang of a cathedral bell. At length the silence was broken by Kitty, who, looking straight at Captain Jim exclaimed in a surprised tone, "bed room?" Nan looked puzzled and followed with the query, "Annie's bed room?"

Captain Jim realized his awkward position, became confused and blurted out, "I was a druv thar."

Kitty smiled and softly asked, "who drove you in the bed room, Cap?" The question was answered by Frank, in a deep, tragic voice, "MacDonald, the villain."

Annie and Kitty looked at each other and smiled, Nan looked severe, while Smith looked meaningfully from Jim to Annie.

Another silence ensued, the answer evidently, not being satisfactory.

At length Annie said, "I told Captain Jim to go in there and keep quiet, as he was afraid of MacDonald."

The explanation dissolved the gathering cloud. Captain Jim breathed easier, feeling that he was exonerated, and Smith settled the matter by abruptly exclaiming, "begorra, it must have been that same rogue that stood up ferinst me in the shid, bad luck to him."

"I shud a-think so," remarked Captain Jim, in a lofty, self satisfying manner.

"Wor is the blackguard?" cried Smith. "Shure, I'm the wan as will take some o' the divil out of yees. Plagueing the darlint of me best frint, God rest his soul."

"Boys," said Captain Jim, knitting his eyebrows and assuming a most determined look, "thet Red MacDonald be a worritin' Annie most tew death."

"He do, do e," said Smith, interrupting Captain Jim and taking off his mackintosh suggestively.

"Yes, and he may be heré any minute," said Frank.

"Boys," continued Captain Jim, "I'll give any man one hundred dollars, who'll lam him nigh onto death."

Frank spat on his hands, flourished his knife and roared, "that's my contract, s-blood, satisfaction, whoop."

These words were scarcely uttered when several knocks on the front door sounded with startling effect.

Frank struck a tragic attitude and exclaimed with a wild laugh, "ha, ha, he comes, he comes."

About the same time, Captain Tom, having recovered from his fright and finding himself not pursued, made bold to again peep in the woodshed. After listening, he cautiously entered, leaving the door wide open for a hasty retreat, if necessary. He poked the air with his club, as he advanced, step by step, toward the kitchen door, now listening to indistinct words uttered in the kitchen, and again advancing.

"I jest want one look at him unbeknownst, an' then I'll fetch him." On reaching the door, he squinted through the keyhole, and saw a man standing a few feet distant, "that's him, the damned rascal." Captain Tom straightened up and seized the door-knob with his left hand, then looked behind. The door was open. The way appeared clear for swift retreat. "Now is my chance to get even." He raised his club aloft with his right hand, then suddenly pulled open the door.

In the meantime, Smith having grasped a chair, exclaimed, "the dirty spalpeen, come on," stationed himself near the front door.

Frank flourished his pistol, and shouted, "hurrah, whoop."

Captain Jim was also infected with excitement, and seizing a chair, said, "this is my opportunity tew, boys," and stood beside Smith.

"Let us put the shrokes on 'im outside, an' not disgrace the house with his groans," whispered Smith.

"Let 'er go Gallagher, whoop!" replied Frank, and he laughed a low demoniacal laugh.

Smith exclaimed "come on," unlocked and opened the front door and rushed out with a yell, followed by Captain Jim.

Frank, however, did not follow them. He slammed the door shut and commenced to laugh. He laughed immoderately, and without any intention on his part, and while reeling about and holding his sides, arrived close to the kitchen door, leading to the shed. In fact, he undesignedly stood facing it and looking straight at it, the very moment Captain Tom opened it.

The sudden and most unexpected appearance of Captain Tom, menacingly holding aloft a club, was as startling to Frank, as Frank's villainous appearance was to Captain Tom.

Frank fell back astonished, all the laugh taken out of him, and Captain Tom was so terrified at Frank's appearance and armament that he ejaculated, "hell fire," and back through the open shed door he bolted again.

In order to explain those particular knocks on the front door, and which caused the war-like "sortie" by Smith and Captain Jim, it will be necessary to go back a little.

Barbara proceeded on her mission for the brandy, stopping now and then to look at the display in some of the store windows. She felt more than usually light-hearted and gay, for she had four bits, the gift of Captain Jim, which she could call her own. Many things she would like to buy for herself, but her two little sisters must have something, too, and Annie also, for the child, with all her tom-boy manners, neglected education and severely practical disposition, loved her mother and little sisters with an intense love.

She passed the drug store, intending to call for the brandy on her return, and had looked in different windows along First street, for something she was thinking about, meanwhile softly humming a few notes of some familiar ditty. She was possessed of that faculty, common to her sex, the faculty of observing and remembering everything coming within the range of her vision. While standing in front of one of the best display windows of a notion store, between Alder and Washington streets, and thoughtlessly humming a few notes of that quaint and delightful old melody, "Comin' Thro' the Rye," she noticed a man slowly pass, and she noted, too, that he was looking at her, and that he at one moment almost halted, turned, and halted again. He was a man fully six feet in height, well built and clad as a typical miner. His hair was a dark brown, full beard, bushy eyebrows and glittering blue eyes.

He smiled and softly exclaimed, "Barbara."

"How did he know my name? Who is he?" She looked hard at him, as these thoughts swept through her brain.

She was surprised, puzzled, dumfounded. At length, recovering herself, she turned full upon him and indignantly asked, "who air you, a-calling Bar-ba-ra? You've a good deal o' cheek my old friend," and then added, "I don't know yer."

"Yes you do," replied he.

"Oh, do I," she quickly rejoined, "perhaps if I do, Tim, you'll lend me a couple o'bits, jest tew prove it."

"I'll give you a couple of bits and more," said the stranger smiling. "But my name is not Tim, it is Jack." He laid particular stress on the last word.

"It may be Jonas fer all I know," she replied, "so yer kin jest hike it," and she turned to leave him.

"Barbara!" he called, a tinge of authority in his tone, "you must draw it a little milder with me, I want to talk with you."

She flashed a defiant glance at him and saucily said, "you've plenty o'

nerve, you have."

"And so have you, Barbara," he replied as he kept pace beside her, "but I have my share."

"Your share," she exclaimed, "oh, it's the hull cheese, it is, or full half and two quarters, an' no flies on it nuther."

"You're a little gay tonight," he then muttered to himself, "it shows she is not a fool anyway."

"Jest you be off, an' don't bother me," said the child, as she turned short up Washington street. "You show thet you air a fool a follerin' a bit o' a gal like me."

"I am following you for a good reason. I have seen you before," he said, with a smile.

"Seen me before," she exclaimed, then turning to him, asked "where?"

"Where! Why my-er—" checked his utterance, "why here in this town."

Barbara coolly surveyed him from head to foot. "Wot," she exclaimed, "ere in this town? Walker," and turned on her heel to retrace her steps.

"Barbara," he caught her by the sleeve and turned her face to him. "I want to speak with you about your mother and little sisters."

"Then you jest won't," she replied, drawing away from him, "you ain't after no good, I'm sure."

"Don't be a fool, child," said he, a little annoyed.

"I don't mean tew, so yer kin jest hike it, or the fust cop I comes tew 'll hang on tew yer collar."

"Now don't be angry, Barbara," he said coaxingly, for he saw the child must be led, not driven. "Just take a good look at me." He turned her face to him and smiled.

"I sees yer," replied the unromantic and undaunted little maid "yer long-shanked, fiddle headed Jackie."

He looked at her in pained astonishment, and then, standing well under the light of a street lamp, a pace or two from her, reproachfully said, "Barbara, cannot you remember me?"

"No," she replied with asperity, "no, I minds nothin'. I doesn't want ter."

She yet failed to recognize him, though he was indeed her father, Jack Walker.

His mining prospects had carried him northward into the Coeur d'Alene country, at that time a wild, unsettled region of Northern Idaho.

He had written several letters to his wife, but not one of them had reached her, and of course, no word from her had reached him, and when about to abandon his mining schemes, in order to turn his anxious footsteps homeward, he struck it rich. It delayed him until he sold his claim, then hurried south and arrived in Portland Christmas Eve.

He had made some reasonable purchases for his family, and had arranged with Smith to deliver them secretly, at his house, in advance of his arrival. And then he met Barbara, in the manner we have related.

Her saucy, defiant attitude caused him to realize the importance of prompt, yet kindly action. He thereupon, took from his pocket a small package, deliberately unwrapped it, and lifting the lid of a little square box, revealed a ladies' small gold watch and chain.

She became interested.

Holding it to her view, he at length said slowly, "what did father promise his little Barbara four years ago?"

The child looked up at him. A new light dawned in her eyes. She then remembered his last words, the promised watch, and gradually recalled his voice and features, made somewhat strange now by his heavy beard.

Her voice trembled, "God forgive me, I didn't know you." Then she seemed to suddenly become excited, for she almost shouted, "oh, dad!" and flung herself in his arms. "Ha, ha, I knows yer now. God love yer old heart. I do, I do." Then the strain of her excitement gave way, her pent up feelings loosened, and she sobbed as if her heart would break.

Clasping her little form close to him, he gently kissed her forehead, and as the tears welled up in his eyes said, "close to my heart, my poor child, I knew Barbara would be glad to see her old dad home again."

She looked up. He saw the tears streaming down her cheeks, he felt the convulsive throb of her heart; he saw the glad expression of countenance; he saw the lips move, and again stooping down, received a kiss that came from the child's soul. "And you still love your old dad?" said he.

"Lor bless yer, dad," replied she, between her sobs, "I do, an' allus will, an' says I tew many, I, sometime we shall see a party wots been afar off, a hangin' 'bout our house agin, 'deed we shall."

It was arranged that Barbara should enter the house first, in order to give her time in her own way, to break the news of her father's return, and to hand back to Captain Jim the money he gave her. Walker was to appear some ten minutes later.

Upon arriving home, the child turned the knob of the front door, and finding it locked, vigorously knocked. It was these loud knocks which Captain Jim and Smith believed were given by MacDonald. So when the warriors sallied forth, and Frank immediately closed the door upon them, they were in total darkness, and coming suddenly from light into darkness, it appeared all the more dense to them.

Barbara was surprised, but being accustomed to the darkness, easily dodged the assailants. Watching her opportunity, she picked up a bar of one of the broken chairs, and struck Smith on the leg. It produced a yell. It was followed by more blows and more yells. Captain Jim got a hard one on the leg, too, and then Joe appeared on the scene.

Smith rushed back into the house, followed closely by Barbara. "Enough, enough!" Smith exclaimed, "shure, an' it's the divil, for yees can't see it at all. Oh, my leg, bad luck to ye," said he as he limped about, in his effort to escape those painful blows.

"Thet's four," exclaimed Barbara.

"git a club Annie, git er club, lam him with a poker," and she struck Smith again. At this time Captain Jim, with a wild look, bounded into the room. He was followed by Joe, who shut the door and proceeded to take off his coat. Captain Jim gripped the back of a broken chair with his left hand, producing his pistol, determined to defend himself. He stood erect as he confronted Joe. "Drat my skin, you caint worrit me no more," he excitedly exclaimed.

At that moment the front door opened and Jack Walker entered. He closed the door behind him and stood quietly gazing on the scene.

A hush fell over the party, broken by Barbara, who exclaimed, "Dad, I forgot all er'bout it."

Annie recognized him at once, and her laughter ceased instantly. A deathly pallor o'erspread her face. What thoughts flew through her brain at that instant may only be conjectured. What we do know is, that she was a woman of wonderfully quick perception, and it is possible the thought of her surroundings may have caused a fear to come over her, the like of which she had never before experienced. And it flashed through her mind that it was Jack, and not Captain Jim, who sent Smith with the Christmas box. She loved Jack, loved him as a wife who is devoted to her husband, and that love never faltered through all the years of his absence. Twice he was reported dead, and once that he had abandoned his wife and family for another woman; but she would not believe it, and though comparatively young, had been true to him, faithful to her vow made at the altar of her wedlock. For four years she had struggled on alone to provide for herself and three helpless children. True, her brother Joe was a source of protection, but little help she derived from him. She was never without hope, always cheerful, though oftentimes with aching sides and smarting eyes, and still never a word did she receive from him. Her belief, that he would some day return to her and his children had never been for one moment shaken. And now he had come. Now that he stood within the portal of their home, without warning, for as we have seen, Barbara had entirely forgotten to carry out her part of the program, at a moment, when the scene presented, must necessarily convey a bad impression, an impression of unfaithfulness, of deilement; the thought of that impression dazed her. It was therefore, with blanched face she at length, gasped his name, "Jack," and staggered toward him.

He stopped her with a slow, but meaning gesture of his right hand, while his other pressed tightly against his left breast, as though something hurt him there. His stern, dignified appearance awed even that wayward child, Barbara, into silence.

It was at this dramatic juncture, that Captain Tom thrust his head in the still open kitchen door, menacingly flourished his club, and shouted out in the profound stillness of the room, "I'm a live corpus, yet, yer bloodthirsty villain, shore I am. Come out." No answer to his challenge being made, he was about to act on the offensive, when his eye rested on Walker. He was surprised at seeing a stranger there and all silent before him, but his surprise quickly gave way to amazement on recognizing his old friend, and he impulsively ejaculated, "snags a-boomin', it's Jack, ez shore ez I'm a kikker." He had known Walker intimately for a number of years and when Jack left to try his luck at mining, Tom would not believe he ever intended to desert his family, and so stoutly did he entertain that belief that for the space of three years of Jack's absence any one hinting "desertion," met with the lie direct, and an invitation to fight unless immediately retracting the calumny. But the fourth year shook Captain Tom's faith in Jack's return.

The situation had begun to take on a serious form by the sudden appearance of Walker, who was a man of prompt action. Fortunately, however, Captain Tom's exclamation of amazement had the effect of starting a thaw in the frigidity of Walker's demeanor.

Jack had confided his desire that they, the Webbs, keep an eye on Annie and the children during his absence. His misgivings were allayed some by seeing Nan there, and his eyes rested on Smith, and upon Joe, his wife's brother, surely all of a reassuring nature.

Yet, there stood that villainous looking stranger (Frank) armed with deadly weapons, and the half frightened old man, a stranger too. What could it all mean? His face began to take on a troubled look, and then Annie appealed to him, in a low and tender voice, full of pathos, "Jack, Jack, don't think evil of me. Don't deny me, after all these years, or my heart will break." Words wrung from a young, high spirited and handsome woman.

In that appeal, uttered in tones that went straight to his heart, he saw portrayed, her life, unblemished and devoted to him. He stretched forth his arm and exclaimed, "Annie, my darling." In another instant they were folded in each other's embrace. Barbara suddenly commenced to execute a "hoe-down," at which she was quite an adept, and gleefully sang, "Rum-a-tum tiddy, O, Jack's got the widdy, O," then rushed into the bedroom to tell her two little sisters, the good news.

While the handshaking and congratulations were going on, Captain Jim quietly stole away, unperceived, through the wood shed. He and the Webbs never speak now, he firmly believing it was their purpose to victimize him out of a considerable sum of money. He never inquired after Red MacDonald either.

"Jest drap the hul blisness, an' believe myself lucky in gettin' out'n the breakers without much hurt. I shud a-think so."

THE END.



She-Jack wants a quiet wedding. Her Chum-Well, let him have it. It's the last quiet day he'll ever have.—New York Journal.

Mrs. Stubbs—They have captured the cleverest hotel robber in the country, my dear, Mr. Stubbs—Indeed! Which hotel did he keep?

Anxious Mother—Tell me, doctor, is it a dangerous case? Physician—I fear it is. He has breakfasted with it in an advanced stage.—Judge.

Miss Stayler—Everybody says I don't look my age. Miss Pertleigh—Of course you don't, dear. It would be impossible.—Boston Transcript.

"And so Professor Gustavus has at last discovered the missing link! Where did he find it?" "Under the bureau, I understand."—Baltimore News.

Father—Are you and this Mr. Simpson congenial, daughter? Daughter—Oh, yes, pa; he likes to hear me talk about myself, and I like to hear him talk about himself.

Miss Whyley—I wonder if that Jones woman is married or single. Miss Notise—Oh, she is married; for two Easters she has had the same hat.—Woman's Home Companion.

Employer—Yes, I advertised for a strong boy. Think you will fill the bill? Applicant—Well, I just finished lickin' nineteen other applicants out in de hall.—St. Louis Star.

Point of View—"See here, young man," said the minister, "you never paid me that fee for marrying you." "You're mighty lucky I haven't sued you for damages."—Tit-Bits.

Miss Flynt—Oh, yes, I've had nine proposals since I saw you last. Miss Newitt—Indeed! And did you finally reward his perseverance by accepting him?—Philadelphia Catholic Standard.

Quite Unlike: "Why, George, what an enormous pile of letters!" exclaimed the bride of a week; billets doux, I suppose. "No, my dear," replied the other half of the sketch; "they are billes overdue."—Chicago News.

A Query: He—Here's a puzzle for you. She—Let's have it. He—Give a woman a bunch of photographs to examine, including one of her own, which one will she look at the longest, and why?—Philadelphia Ledger.

Kitty—You didn't look a bit pleased when Fred told you you were the best girl in all the world. Esther—Had I shown how pleased I was, it would have so tickled his vanity that he'd be saying the same thing to every girl he met.

Tenant (angrily)—The cellar of our house is full of rats. What are you going to do about it? Landlord (calmly)—Nothing. What do you expect for seventeen dollars a month, anyway—a cellar full of white mice?—Chicago Daily News.

His Misceue: "I would be happy if I might just sit and look at you all day," he said. "That's nothing," she replied; "I know people who would be glad if they might just sit around and stare at nothing all day."—Chicago Record-Herald.

Positively Brutal: She—Just see how much your little wife loves you. She made this cake for you all by herself. He—Yes, darling, and now if you will eat it all by yourself I shall possess indisputable proof of your devotion.—Chicago News.

Young Lady Customer—I don't know just what I want. Can't you suggest something? Clerk—Here's a book I think it might please you. It starts out with the scene laid in England and— Customer—Oh, I don't care how it starts. How does it end?—Kansas City Journal.

"Yes," said the man from Georgia, reminiscently, "I remember the time when slaves were worth three thousand dollars a head." "Oh, that's nothing," sneered the New York sexton; "what do you suppose the slaves of fashion in my church were worth per head on Easter?"—Judge.

Appreciated: There was a very small audience present, and it was rapidly dwindling away. On the stage, the hero and heroine are holding a rendezvous. Hero (to heroine)—Are we alone? Heroine (thinking of the audience)—Not yet. There are two fellows near the door who look as if they might be able to sit through another act.—Illustrated Bits.

Some one tells us of a dude in a horse car, who, seeing a young lady whom he thought to be impressed with his personal charms, crossed over and took a seat beside her, and said: "Haven't I met you somewhere before?" To which she replied, in a voice heard by the other passengers: "I'm not quite sure, but I think you are the man that stole our spoons." The passengers laughed and the dude left the car.