THE CONQUEST of CANAAN

By BOOTH TARKINGTON,

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Synopsis of Previous Chapters.

CHAPTER I—Eugene Bantry, a Canaan (Ind.) young man, who has been east to college, returned home and astounds the natives by the gorgeousness of his raiment. His stepbrother, Joe aged male gossip who daily assemble at the National House for argument as the good for nothing associate of doubtful characters. II—Eugene's appearance has a pronounced effect upon Mamie Pike, whose father, Judge Pike, is the wealthiest and most prominent citizen of Canaan. Joe worships Mamie from afar. Eugene interferes in a snow fight between Joe and his boldenish and very poor girl friend, Ariel Tabor, who is worsted. Ariel hotly resents the interference and slaps Eugene, who sends her home. III—Ariel, unbecomingly attired, attends Mamie Pike's ball. IV—Joe, concealed behind some plants on the Pike varanda, watches hungrily for a glimpse of Mamie. Ariel is ignored by most of the guests. Ariel discovers Joe, but shortly afterwards, learning that her uncle, Jonas Tabor, has died suddenly, leaves. V—The Daily Tocsin of the next day tells of Joe's discovery on the Pike veranda and of his pursuit and escape therefrom. It also refers to wounds in the head of himself and of Norbert Flitcroft, who detected him. Joe retires to the "Beach," a low resort kept by his friend, Mike Sheehan, who dresses his wound. VI—Joe leaves Mike's place. He visits Ariel Tabor, who by the death of her Uncle Jonas has become rich. She wishes Joe to accompany her and her grandfather to Paris. Joe refuses and leaves Canaan to avoid arrest for the trouble at Judge Pike's. VII—Joe is heard from two years later as a ticket seller for a side show. Eugene Bantry also meets him seven years later in a low resort in New York, but wisely refrains from advertising it. VIII—Joe returns to Canaan a full fledged lawyer. Even his father ignores him, and he is refused accommodations at the National House. IX—Joe is welcomed at the "Beach," and "Happy Fear," one of Joe's admirers, seriously assaults Nashville Corey, a detractor. At the end of Happy's term in prison he visits Joe, who now has a law office on the square, with a living room adjoining. Joe has a large practice, principally among the lower classes, and is frequently attacked by the Tocsin. Joe begins, in his loneliness, to yield to the seduction of the bottle. Bantry's engagement to Mamie Pike is announced. Bantry is now associate editor of the Tocsin, owned by Judge Pike. X—Joe awakens after a "bad night" with the words, "Remember, across the Main-street bridge at noon," ringing in his ears. He goes there and is presently joined by the most beautiful and most beautifully girl he has ever seen. XI—She turns out to be Ariel Tabor, arrived in Canaan the night before from her long sojourn in Paris. She has seen Joe as she alighted from the train and, realizing his condition, had escorted him home after exacting from him a promise to meet her the next day (Sunday) across the Main-street bridge at noon. Joe learns that Ariel is stopping at Judge Pike's home, the judge having entire charge of her money, etc. XII—Eugene Bantry, although engaged to Mamie, is much smitten with Ariel's charms. Judge Pike tries his usual blustering tactics with Ariel, but subsides when she tells him that he shall ask him to turn over the care of her estate to Joe Louden. XIII—Ariel holds a sort of informal reception at Judge Pike's and learns that the "tough element" is talking of running Joe for mayor. XIV Happy Fear and Nashville Cory have more trouble. Joe corners Happy and sends Claudine (Mrs. Fear) to meet him. XV—Ariel visits Joe's affairs in his hands. While there Happy Fear rushes in and announces that he has killed Nashville Cory in self defense. Joe makes Happy give himself up. XVI—Mamie Pike admits to Ariel that she, too has begun to believe in Joe Louden. XVII—The Tocsin makes virulent attacks on Joe Louden and Happy Fear. Mike Sheehan hints that he may shortly have some interesting secrets to divulge in connection with Judge Pike's affairs. XVIII—The Tocsin continues its attacks. Judge Pike informs Ariel that her supposed fortune consits of valueless securities.

CHAPTER XXIV.

An hour later Martin Pike, looking forth from the mansion, saw a man open the gate and, passing between the unemotional deer, rapidly approach the house. He was a thin young fellow, very well dressed in dark gray, his hair prematurely somewhat silvered, his face prematurely somewhat lined and his hat covered a scar such as might have been caused by a blow from a blunt instrument in the nature of a poker.

He did not reach the door, nor was there necessity for him to ring, for before he had set foot on the lowest step the judge had hastened to meet him, not, however, with any fulsomely hospitable intent; his hand and arm were raised to execute one of his Olympian gestures of the kind which had obliterated the young man upon a certain bygone morning.

Louden looked up calmly at the big figure towering above him.

"It won't do, judge," he said, that was all, but there was a significance in his manner and a certainty in his voice which caused the uplifted hand to drop limply, while the look of apprehension which of late had grown more and more to be Martin Pike's habitual expression deepened into something close upon mortal anxiety.

"Have you any business to set foot upon my property?" he demanded.

"Yes," answered Joe. "That's why I came."

"What business have you got with me?"

"Enough to satisfy you, I think. But there's one thing I don't want to do"—Joe glanced at the open door—"and

"Have you any business to set foot upon my property?" he demanded.

that is to talk about it here—for your own sake and because I think Miss Tabor should be present. I called to ask you to come to her house at 8 o'clock tonight."

"You did!" Martin Pike spoke angrily, but not in the bull bass of yore, and he kept his voice down, glancing about him nervously as though he feared that his wife or Mamie might hear. "My accounts with her estate are closed," he said harshly. "If she wants anything, let her come here."

Joe shook his head. "No; you must be there at 8 o'clock."

The judge's choler got the better of his uneasiness. "You're a pretty one to come ordering me around," he broke out. "You slanderer! Do you suppose I haven't heard how you're going about traducing me, undermining my character in this community, spreading scandals that I am the real owner of Beaver Beach"—

"It can easily be proved, judge," Joe interrupted quietly, "though you're wrong; I haven't been telling people. I haven't needed to—even if I'd wished. Once a thing like that gets out, you can't stop it—ever. That isn't all. To my knowledge you own other property worse than the Beach. I know that you own half of the worst dens in the town—profitable investments too. You bought them very gradually and craftily, only showing the deeds to those in charge—as you did to Mike Sheehan—and not recording them. Sheehan's betrayal of you gave me the key. I know most of the poor creatures who are your tenants, too, you see, and that gave me an advantage because they have some confidence in me. My investigations have been almost as quiet and careful as your purchases."

"You blackmailer!" The judge beat upon him a fierce, inquiring scrutiny, in which, oddly enough, there was a kind of haggard hopefulness. "And out of such stories," he sneered, "you are going to try to make political capital against the Tocsin, are you?"

"No," said Joe. "It was necessary in the interests of my client for me to know pretty thoroughly just what property you own, and I think I do. These pieces I've mentioned are about all you have not mortgaged. You couldn't do that without exposure, and you've kept a controlling interest in the Tocsin clear, too—for the sake of its influence, I suppose. Now, do you want to hear any more, or will you agree to meet me at Miss Tabor's this evening?"

Whatever the look of hopefulness had signified, it fled from Pike's face during this speech, but he asked with some show of contempt, "Do you think it likely?"

"Very well," said Joe, "if you want me to speak here." And he came a little closer to him. "You bought a big block of Granger Gas for Roger Tabor," he began in a low voice. "Before his death you sold everything he had except the old house, put it all into cash for him and bought that stock. You signed the check as his attorney in fact, and it came back to you through the Washington National, where Norbert Flitcroft handled it. He has a good memory, and when he told me what he knew I had him to do some tracing. Did a little myself also. Judge Pike, I must tell you that you stand in danger of the law. You were the custodian of that stock for Roger Tabor. It was transferred in blank, though I think you meant to be 'legal' at that time, and that was merely for convenience in case Roger had wished you to sell it for him. But just after his death you found yourself saddled with distillery stock, which was going bad on your hands. Other speculations of yours were failing at the same time. You had to have money. You filed your report as administrator, crediting Miss Tabor with your own stock which you knew was going to the wall, and transferred hers to yourself. Then you sold it because you needed ready money. You used her fortune to save yourself, but you were horribly afraid! No matter how rotten your transactions had been, you had always kept inside the law, and now that you had gone outside of it you were frightened. You didn't dare come flat out to Miss Tabor with the statement that her fortune had gone. It had been in your charge all the time, and things might look ugly. So you put it off, perhaps from day to day. You didn't dare tell her until you were forced to, and to avoid the confession you sent her the income which was rightfully hers. That was your great weakness."

Joe had spoken with great rapidity, though keeping his voice low, and he lowered it again as he continued: "Judge Pike, what chance have you to be believed in court when you swear that you sent her $20,000 out of the goodness of your heart? Do you think she believed you? It was the very proof to her that you had robbed her, for she knew you! Do you want to hear more now? Do you think this is a good place for it? Do you wish me to go over the details of each step I have taken against you to land you at the bar where this poor fellow your paper is hounding stands today?"

The judge essayed to answer and could not. He lifted his hand uncertainly and dropped it, while a thick dew gathered on his temples. Inarticulate sounds came from between his teeth.

"You will come?" said Joe.

Martin Pike bent his head dazedly, and at that the other turned quickly from him and went away without looking back.

Ariel was in the studio half an hour later, when Joe was announced by the smiling Mr. Warden. Ladew was with her, though upon the point of taking his leave, and Joe marked, with a sinking heart, that the young minister's cheeks were flushed and his eyes very bright.

"It was a magnificent thing you did, Mr. Louden," he said, offering his hand heartily. "I saw it, and it was even finer in one way than it was plucky. It somehow straightened things out with such perfect good nature. It made those people feel that what they were doing was ridiculous."

"So it was," said Joe.

"Few under the circumstances could have acted as if they thought so. And I hope you'll let me call upon you, Mr. Louden."

"I hope you will," he answered and then, when the minister had departed, stood looking after him with sad eyes, in which there dwelt obscure meditations. Ladew's word of farewell had covered a deep look at Ariel, which was not to be mistaken by Joseph Louden for anything other than what it was. The clergyman's secret was an open one, and Joe saw that he was as frank and manly in love as in all other things. "He's a good fellow," he said at last, sighing—"a good man."

Ariel agreed. "And he said more to me than he did to you."

"Yes; I think it probable." Joe smiled sorrowfully.

"About you, I mean." He had time to fear that her look admitted confusion before she proceeded: "He said he had never seen anything so fine as your coming down those steps. Ah, he was right! But it was harder for me to watch you, I think, than for you to do it, Joe. I was so horribly afraid—and the crowd between us—if we could have got near you—but we couldn't—we"—

She faltered and pressed her hand close upon her eyes.

"We?" asked Joe slowly. "You mean you and Mr. Ladew?"

"Yes; he was there, but I mean"—her voice ran into a little laugh with a beatific quaver in it—"I mean Colonel Flitcroft and Mr. Bradbury and Mr. Buckalew, too—we were hemmed in together when Mr. Ladew found us. And, oh, Joe, when that cowardly rush started toward you those three— I've heard wonderful things in Paris and Naples, cabmen quarreling and disappointed beggars, but never anything like them today"—

"You mean they were profane?"

"Oh, magnificently, and with such inventiveness! All three begged my pardon afterward. I didn't grant it—I blessed them."

"Did they beg Mr. Ladew's pardon?"

"Ah, Joe!" she reproached him. "He isn't a prig. And he's had to fight some things that you of all men ought to understand. He's only been here a few months, but he told me that Judge Pike has been against him from the start. It seems that Mr. Ladew is too liberal in his views. And he told me that if it were not for Judge Pike's losing influence in the church on account of the Beaver Beach story the judge would probably have been able to force him to resign, but now he will stay."

"He wishes to stay, doesn't he?"

"Very much, I think. And, Joe," she continued thoughtfully, "I want you to do something for me. I want you to go to church with me next Sunday."

"To hear Mr. Ladew?"

"Yes. I wouldn't ask except for that."

"Very well," he consented, with averted eyes. "I'll go."

Her face was radiant with the smile she gave him. "It will make me very happy," she said.

He bent his head and fumbled over some papers he had taken from his pocket. "Will you listen to these memoranda? We have a great deal to go over before 8 o'clock."

Judge Pike stood for a long while where Joe had left him, staring out at the street apparently. Really he saw nothing. Undoubtedly an image of blurring foliage, cast iron, cement and turf, with sunshine smeared over all, flickered upon the retinas of his eyes, but the brain did not accept the picture from the optic nerve. Martin Pike was busy with other visions. Joe Louden had followed him back to his hidden deeds and had read them aloud to him as Gabriel would read them on judgment day. Perhaps this was the judgment day.

Martin Pike had always been prompt. It was one of the things of which he had been proud. In all his life he had never failed to keep a business engagement precisely upon the appointed time, and the courthouse bell clanged eight when Sam Warden opened the door for his old employer tonight.

The two young people looked up gravely from the script laden table before them as Martin Pike came into

"Well," he said brokenly, "what are you going to do?"

the strong lamplight out of the dimness of the hall, where only a taper burned. He shambled a few limp steps into the room and came to a halt. Big as he was, his clothes hung upon him loosely, like coverlets upon a collapsed bed, and he seemed but a distorted image of himself, as if, save for the dull and reddened eyes, he had been made of yellowish wax and had been left too long in the sun. Abject, hopeless, his attitude a confession of ruin and shame, he stood before his judges in such wretchedness that in comparison the figure of Happy Fear, facing the courtroom through his darkest hour, was one to be envied.

"Well," he said brokenly, "what are you going to do?"

Joe Louden looked at him with great intentness for several moments, then he rose and came forward. "Sit down, judge," he said. "It's all right. Don't worry."

(Continued from Last Week.)

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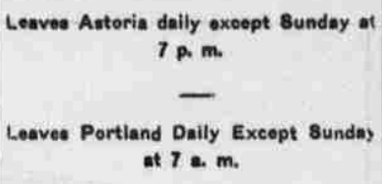

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