HESPER

...BY...

HAMLIN GARLAND

COPYRIGHT, 1905, BY HAMLIN GARLAND

CHAPTER VII CONTINUED

Mrs. Barnett went on: "I like to do him, he's so grateful and so one-. He says just the right thing al-. There must be good breeding of the man, although he never tions his family. There's some love to account for his being here. too handsome not to have had en-ements. Don't you think so?"

"He insisted not," replied Ann. "He me to consider that his life had quite commonplace."

"I don't believe it. He couldn't be monplace. He said to me just now, sometimes a man must hear the wash the river of death to realize how fu-he has allowed his life to become.' gratitude toward you is pathetic."

Ann frowned. "It's worse; it's op-ive. I did so little, and that little not done with a gracious spirit. I enjoy it then nor in retrospect."

"You mustn't let him know that. His ship of you positively irradiates his and he's very handsome. He in-that you were heroic."

Ann grew a little petulant. "I wish wouldn't try to make mountains of molehills. It was a most un-ant experience, and I wish to for-not to have it dinned in my ears er. My going was folly, and my in that ghastly place was a tor-. Please allow me to put it out of memory."

Ann had a moment of bitter home-ness, a feeling she had never known ore. This mad trip into the west a reckless and supersensitive boy each moment more disastrous. At moment she fairly hated her cous-and all the guests at their table and ed, with unspeakable hunger, for roll of carriages on Fifth avenue the glitter and tumult of Broad-. The stony, uninterested stare of mother was better than this pry-this overstrained interest on the of Jeannette.

As for Raymond, he had been mo-arily interesting as a cowboy, and he was lying at the brink of the he had assumed tragic value, but that he was on the way to recov-ceased to interest. "He is mere-of the thousands of other com-place young eastern men who have their fortunes in the west and d," she said. "Why should I be with any further care of

dinner Don told again for the for-the story of Raymond's and in spite of Ann's protests in as the heroine, which reinfu-her almost to the point of leav-the table. The "Ah's!" and "Dear" and "By Jové's!" volleying from listeners were quite insupportable. dy said, "Poor fellow!"

"Not at all," said Dr. Braide. "He a lucky dog. I'd be shot any day such a nurse."

Jeannette saw the angry flush on face and hastily turned the con-tion into less personal channels.

Thus every influence swept her to-a dislike of the wounded man's name, and thereafter she ignored presence in the house, his being in world, as though he did not exist. neither asked after his health nor ed to any report or question made her brother concerning him.

Louis brought to Raymond one day all limp book in red leather, which proffered with the air of giving a

"What's this?" asked Raymond. diary?"

"No; my father's. He was out here I was born, when the Indians here."

Raymond opened the volume with interest, but soon realized that was looking into the past through es of a poet. Part of it was writ-in ink very legibly, but in a fine hand, while other of the pages hastily scribbled in pencil and be easily deciphered. Plainly the had been made under great dis-ages and in the field. The inks of various colors, some watery some dusty black.

He opened the book at the front, the picture of a slender, smil-handsome young fellow in som-and hunting clothes had been

"He enjoyed his new hat, didn't he?" Raymond, to whom the essential grity of the refined face and bor-ruffian toggery first appealed. re the image of your father?" he looking keenly at the boy. "He look much older in this picture, at Sylvanite. Well, Sylvanite was town in those days. Is there about it in the book?"

pages. He wrote a page of script every day, but I don't care much for that—these stage rides, the big canyons, and crossing the and the Indians—he saw lots of ns—the Utes—these are what in-me."

Raymond became profoundly inter-in this book. There was an ap-in the closing entry which touched profoundly. The entry was head-"The Last View" and closed with words: "I love my home and my s in the east, but this primeval has laid its spell upon me. I come again next year."

"And he come again?" asked Ray-

"No," answered Louis sadly. And it was soon evident to Raymond that the lad knew very little of his father beyond the message in the worn little book.

"Leave this with me, Louis. I want to read it all," he said. And the boy was glad of this interest.

Mrs. Barnett came in later and asked, "What are you reading?"

"It is a journal kept by Louis' father. Did you know him?"

"Oh, very well! He was my favorite uncle."

"Tell me of him. Who was he—how did he come to make this trip?"

Mrs. Barnett took a comfortable seat. "I don't know where Uncle Phil got his streak of sentiment. He was one of six brothers, all successful business men; keen, practical—you know the kind. But Phil—well, he was the odd sheep—he always seemed a boy to me. He worked in the bank, but his mind was on other things. I don't remember how they came to send him out here, but I can recall perfectly the effect he had on me when talking of his trip. He glorified this country. He saw the mountains as the old time landscapists pictured them. When I first came I wept with disappointment, the range seemed so prosaic by contrast. He talked of nothing else for a year. Then he married and gradually ceased referring to his experiences."

"He never came again, Louis tells me."

"No. His wife was not the kind of girl to go west. I don't want to say anything severe about Alicia, but she made Phil very unhappy. When Ann was born Phil wanted to call her Hesper, in memory of his trip to the west, but Alicia cried out against it. It was an odd name, but it was pretty, and there was no reason why the father shouldn't have had his wish, but that was her way. She was cold and selfish even in her honeymoon. I never saw such a girl. Phil went with her to every fashionable resort in Europe, but she not merely refused to make a trip into his Hesperian mountains, but she wouldn't let him go. He used to get up into the Adirondacks now and then, I remember, but only for a day or two. Oh, how exacting she was! After Louis was born she grew worse. She became

"You say the father called her Hesper?"

morbid. I never could see that she had a particle of maternal affection. If Ann isn't like her it is because Phil's blood is in her veins. Louis is exactly as Phil was, as I recall him when I saw him first."

"You say the father called her Hesper?" pursued Raymond, acutely interested in all that concerned Ann.

"It was his pet name for her. Few people knew it. I don't think Louis knows it, for Ann considered the name absurd as she grew older and never refers to it. I think it is a pretty name, don't you?"

"Yes. It is beautiful." His eyes took on a musing look.

Hesper! Somehow the name expressed the poetry of the father's conception, and with little else to do the wounded man gave long hours to recalling and relieving his experiences with her as his nurse.

He longed with a great longing to see her again, but to his curious shyness had been added the humility of one who feels himself unworthy to ask any favor, and the troubled look which came now and again into the lines of his face made Louis sad. The boy idealized him, made of him a wonderful being, better worth serving than any monarch, and in this strain he talked to Ann till she impatiently begged him to stop.

But in her secret heart Ann admitted that she, too, had been touched by the indefinable charm of Raymond's voice and manner, but the question of how best to check his growing power over her brother's life had become a very serious problem, for as the days wore on he put her aside as completely as she ignored his hero.

Together Raymond and the boy read the little red book, mapping the points described as best they could—a task of some difficulty, for the traveler had purposely given mythical names to the towns, rivers and peaks. It had all been a wonderland to Philip Rupert, and he took care to have no stupid or vulgar name mar the perfect effect.

There was something in all this which refined and softened the young rancher. Joined with his love for "Hesper" (as he loved to call Ann in secret), this boyish father's enthusiasms transmuted every reckless, bitter impulse into stern resolutions to enter upon a new life—a life with purpose and devotion in its course.

CHAPTER VIII.

At last there came a day when the doctor permitted his patient to be clothed and seated in an easy chair, and, calling Mrs. Barnett to him, Raymond asked, "Do you think Miss Rupert will see me now?"

"I will ask her," replied Jeannette, with due appreciation of the romantic situation.

Ann rose to comply, with a little thrill of unpleasant excitement. She did not want to see him, and yet she could not decently refuse.

At the door of the sitting room Mrs. Barnett stopped, and the girl walked in alone, her face set in lines of cold disdain.

Raymond sat in a big, padded chair, with his back to the window and the sunlight streaming over his head. He wore a handsome gray dressing gown, and the linen at his neck and wrists was spotlessly clean. His hands were refined—almost delicate in effect—and his clean shaven face and his well brushed, abundant brown hair gave evidence of a most careful toilet. Something mystically solemn and sweet was in his eyes, and his lips trembled as he greeted her. "This is very good of you. Pardon me, won't you? I am forbidden to stand."

"I beg you, do not think of it."

"Dare I ask you to be seated? I want to thank you more suitably than I have been able to do for what you did for me."

"Please don't, Mr. Raymond. I assure you I deserve no credit. I went out there under compulsion, and what I did was determined by pressure of circumstances. I'm not a bit of a heroine, and I do not like praise."

He was chilled by her tone and for a moment hesitated. "A sick man may be forgiven some things," he began to say at last. "I may as well confess that I have been longing to see you. I have been trying for many days to rise and dress in order that I might have you come in. You must let me ask your forgiveness for the rude way in which I received you that day. All that I did seems incredible to me now, like the action of another man."

A gleam of amusement crossed Ann's face. "I didn't blame you. I'm willing to admit that your position was trying."

He was too exalted of mood to respond to her quizzical tone. "I had lived for years quite apart from any—from association with cultivated people, and besides I had begun to feel that I was wasting my life and had become irritable. I went to the ranch to pay off a debt, and I—well, I had fallen into a groove. You recalled me to better things."

"I and the bullet," she said rather flippantly, for she was becoming apprehensive of the trend of his confidences.

He ignored her interruption, or, rather, he plowed across it with something like his old time resolution. "It is due to you to know—or at any rate I desire you to know—that I am not a fugitive from justice. Baker thought he was being funny."

"I am not so dull as you think, Mr. Raymond. I understood him perfectly."

"I am glad you did. It is true I am estranged from my family, but it is not due— My faults have never been criminal."

"Please do not feel it necessary to explain," interrupted Ann. "It is painful to you, and—and it is wholly unnecessary. I beg you to desist. I hope you will understand that I am in no sense doubting you."

A shadow of pain crossed his face. Somehow the reality of their meeting was not as he had imagined it.

She, on her part, was angry and displeased with herself and resentful of his implied social equality, and yet he looked the gentleman, and his face was very handsome, very moving in its clear pallor. Suffering had infinitely refined its lines, but she could not forget his services as cook and cowboy, and, besides, she hated being perturbed. She resolutely changed the subject.

"Dr. Braide says you are getting on splendidly and that you will soon be returning to the ranch."

Checked and chilled by her manner, he plainly abandoned all further thought of confiding in her and answered, wearily and sadly: "It will be a long time before I return to the life on the ranch. I have other plans now."

Ann half regretted her action and as she rose said, with a smiling assumption of easy, friendly interest which hurt him worse than anything she had hitherto spoken: "I think it wonderful the way you are coming on. We will see you at dinner in a few days."

"Thank you. I shall be down at the earliest moment," he quietly replied and leaned back in his chair, white and suffering, his eyes closed, his lips quivering.

Ann was well aware that she had not lived up to her higher self in this interview and that she had been cruelly unsympathetic and cheap with him. "And yet I don't see how I could have acted differently," she argued with her better self. "He must not go on thinking me more deeply interested in his life than I really am."

Mrs. Barnett was impatiently waiting for her return.

"What did he say?" she breathlessly asked. "I'm dying to know."

Ann answered with evasive indifference. "He thanked me again for my heroic action and begged pardon for his rudeness, all of which he might have spared himself the trouble of repeating."

Mrs. Barnett was on the scent for romance. "What else?"

"Nothing else."

"Poor fellow! He has been struggling toward this event for days. Only the doctor's express orders kept him from getting up ten days ago. He has been all the morning dressing for it, and now you tell me in that supercilious tone that nothing happened."

Ann fired into anger. "What could happen? You needn't speak in riddles, Jeannette. What do you think should have happened? Come, now, you silly, romantic thing!"

Some note in her voice touched Mrs. Barnett, and she slowly replied: "Ann Rupert, you are the coldest, cruelest creature I ever knew. I know what you did to that poor fellow. You unmercifully snubbed him; you froze his gratitude on his lips. Of course you are infinitely his superior"—she became weakly sarcastic at this point—"but you are not justified in stabbing a sick man to the heart."

"You're quite mistaken. I was very nice to him."

"Nice! I've seen you nice to young men before. Oh, I'd like to see some man crush you! I'd enjoy seeing you crawl!"

Mrs. Barnett went immediately to Raymond's door and knocked. At his word she entered. He sat where Ann had left him, but Louis was beside him, showing him a new drawing.

"Isn't that wonderful!" said Raymond, holding the sketch in the air, his eyes aglow with pride in the boy. "If I could do that I would never be lonesome or restless. I wish I knew my use in the world as certainly as Louis does."

The young artist flushed with the pleasure. "It's just as wonderful to ride the way you do and throw a rope and all that. I'll teach you to draw if you want me to."

Raymond turned to Mrs. Barnett with a look in which amusement and a certain sorrow met. "I'm long past such instruction, lad. I haven't sense enough to keep out of mischief. You draw, and I'll do the posing. I'm a good poser. Don't you think so, Mrs. Barnett?"

"I don't know what you mean," said she, feeling vaguely his pain and discouragement—his disillusionment.

"I posed as a farmer and deceived good Don Barnett. I made up for a cowboy and fooled Baker and the rest of the squad. And now I'm posing as an invalid when I ought to be out on the ranch again. It's time I rode away to a new range."

Mrs. Barnett was alarmed at the undertone of bitterness in his words. "You must not think of even walking downstairs for a week."

"But I can't sit here and sink deeper and deeper into obligation to you," he answered. "What rights have I in this room? I'm only a poor, wandering ne'er-do-well, and your beautiful home makes me ashamed—more than ashamed—it fills me with a sense of guilt. I can walk now and I ought not to stay another day."

Mrs. Barnett knew very well that his mood was due to Ann's icy disdain, and she realized, too, how difficult the task of diverting his mind from this foolish purpose would be. She said gently: "You were injured in our service, Robert, and it is our duty to look after you. You must not utter another word of this sort of talk to me or I will call Don, and then you will hear a voice that will make you quake. I tell you frankly I will not listen to your walking out of this room for a week."

Louis, who had been sitting in some wonder, trying to catch the undercurrent of this talk, put his hand on Raymond's knee and said: "When you go, I go too. Remember that."

It was interesting to Jeannette to observe that evening dress changed Ann's estimate of Raymond's character. The girl had to admit that he looked surprisingly well as he came slowly into the library just before the little Chinese chime sounded for dinner. Every trace of the cowboy, the man of sun smit, wind swept plain, was gone. He was pale, languid, but self contained and wore his dinner suit with easy grace.

His manner toward Ann was that of a polite acquaintance merely, and her fear of something—she hardly knew what—instantly vanished. His bearing during dinner and throughout the evening made her forget the kind of person he had hitherto seemed to her, and she began to study him in his true character. He dropped all his ranch life phrases and, putting aside his reserve, talked with entire intellectual freedom, showing a knowledge of books and of communities remarkable in any man. Once or twice as she encountered his glance a mysterious movement ran about her heart and her breath quickened.

As they rose from dinner and while he stood to allow her to pass he said: "You are very beautiful tonight. Mountain air has done wonders for you."

"You are very courteous," she responded, and her eyes fell exasperatingly, and she walked away with a sense of having revealed a weakness.

He came into the drawing room half an hour later to say good night to his hostess, looking very tired and pale, and when he took Ann's hand his eyes were burning with deep inner passion. "Good night," he said, "and forgive me for any impertinence." She answered [illegible] remained. She began to fear him [illegible]

for Mrs. Barnett ordered him instantly to bed.

No voice responded to Louis' knock at Raymond's door next morning, and, hurrying to Barnett's room, Louis called excitedly, "Cousin Don, have you seen Rob?"

Barnett, splashing in his tub, shouted: "No. Can't you find him?"

"He isn't in his room."

"He's gone down to breakfast, then. Hurry along and keep him company. Don't let him go out."

Louis rushed into the breakfast room, but found it empty. The maid said: "Are you looking for Mr. Raymond? He came down very early and said he was going out for a walk."

The boy hurried outdoors, filled with dismay. "He shouldn't be out alone. He might get dizzy and fall." He ran round the block, eagerly seeking Raymond, who was nowhere in sight. When Barnett entered Rob's room he found two letters lying on the little desk. One was addressed to Don and one to Ann.

Barnett broke the seal and read his note almost at a glance:

Dear Barnett—I'm sorry to pull out in this way, but I am afraid it's my only way. I have been very uncomfortable because of my growing indebtedness to you and Mrs. Barnett, and so I have cut loose. Please don't think me ungrateful. It is because I feel so deeply your kindness that I go. Don't look for me. I'm going to hole up for a few days till I get strong. If you happen to get any clew to where I've gone, don't tell the boy. I can see that his sister does not approve of his fondness for me, and she is quite right. I'm not a proper companion for a boy of his sort. I inclose a check, which squares us so far as money can, but your kindness in other ways, and especially Mrs. Barnett's care and assistance, I am in despair of ever paying. I slide out because it would be difficult and painful to say goodby, and, besides, I feel that I must cut loose from the boy.

Raymond's note to Ann was short, almost curt:

Since my thanks are a burden to you, the least I can do is to take myself out of your life and beg pardon for having entered it. Had I attended to my duties that night of the fire, you would not have been troubled by me. I stayed because you were beautiful, and that is the whole truth. It is not the first time a man has neglected his duties for a woman, and the pain I now suffer in giving up all hope of meeting you again is a just punishment for my presumption. I am sorry to go without saying goodby to Louis, but it is best. I know you do not like his growing regard for me, and you are quite right.

Louis came to her door and cried out dolefully, "Ann, Rob has gone away!"

"I know it. Come in."

He entered with troubled, tearful face and in deeply aggrieved tone said: "He went without saying goodby. I want to go hunt him and bring him back, but Uncle Don says that we must respect his wish. All the same, I like him, and I want him back. No, I don't—I want to go with him."

"And leave me?"

His resentment, long smoldering, burst forth: "Yes, I would! Don't you suppose I have seen how you treated him? You think because you're from New York you can snub a man like Rob, but you're not up to him. You're not half as good as he is."

Ann listened in astonishment to this outburst from her brother and then cutingly remarked:

"One would think I had taken away some plaything of yours. Go out of my room and stay out till you can treat me with respect."

"I'm going, and you'll never see me again. I'm going to follow Rob. I don't care what you say." With this defiant cry he rushed from the room.

A keen ache of jealousy ran through the proud girl's heart. The one soul of vital interest in her life, her sweet little brother, seemed about to pass from her hands to that of an adventurer. Her resentment of his influence blazed hot within her. "I will defeat him with his own weapons," she said. "I will win him back to me. I will go wherever he wishes to go."

But Louis did not return to lunch, and she was greatly troubled. He did not appear at dinner, and at last, openly alarmed, Ann told Mrs. Barnett of Louis' bitter accusation and of his threat that he would never return.

"Don't worry. Don will find him. He'll get tired of it and come back. These boyish tantrums don't last."

"It scares me to think of that poor, innocent lad spending the night alone in a big, wicked western city. I wish Don would hurry home. Can't I go down to his office?"

"Oh, no; there's no need of your going. I'll telephone him at once."

When Barnett returned, Ann, white with anxiety, poured out her story. He comforted her by saying: "You take it too seriously. I will notify the police at Cinnabar and Mogalyon. They'll locate him in an hour."

They did not find him, and Ann passed a miserable night, imagining all sorts of ill adventures into which Louis might be led, and would have accompanied Barnett on his quest next day but for his firm command: "Don't be absurd. I can find him alone much quicker."

"Bring him back if you have to use force!" she cried. And then, with a knowledge of Raymond's power, she added: "If you find Mr. Raymond please tell him to send laddie home. Say I wish it."

With these words in his ear Barnett took his way to his office. At lunch he was more concerned. "He's not in Cinnabar nor any of the surrounding towns. He may have gone back to the ranch. I will wire out there this afternoon. Did he have any money?"

"Yes. I had just given him his allowance. He must have had nearly $200."

Don whistled. "A smart boy can hide out a good while on that. However, he'll come back when his pet wears off."

Even though Raymond had taken himself bodily out of her life, his power to disturb and thwart Ann's [illegible] remained. She began to fear him a little. He was bigger, more powerful, than she had thought him. Could she have found him in the days which followed—days of increasing unrest and anxiety—she would have humbly

"You're not half as good as he is."

asked him to find the runaway and bring him back to her, but he had disappeared as utterly as if he had never been.

CHAPTER IX.

Meanwhile, during Raymond's days on the ranch, while the cattle were withering away on the plains and the long trail from the south was filling with grass, a most notable settlement had been forming like some new kind of parasitic growth on the westward shoulder of old Mogalyon, the mighty peak to the west.

In the midst of the mountains, in the lap of two smooth, grassy domes, old Philip Le Beau established a cow camp in the early seventies and called it Belle Marie, after his wife. This, however, proved to be too fanciful for his cowboy neighbors, who promptly called it "Le Beau's Hole," and in the end it was known among cattlemen as Bozle Creek.

Just west of Le Beau's camp, and sentinel to the valley of the Loup, stood a symmetrical peak which some missionary to the red people had called Mount Horeb. About the year 1870 some persons not missionaries planted gold in the soil in convenient places at the base of this hill and raised a mighty shout over the discovery of a new El Dorado. A rush took place, and to the outside world the region became known as "the Mount Horeb mining district" and was alluded to with deep seated resentment, with curses.

But there were miners whom neither the dogmatic opinions of geologists nor the tricks of schemers could turn aside from a faith that somewhere on the mighty slopes of Mogalyon lay veins of gold, and these continued to chip and to dig and to hammer.

Valley Springs was becoming known as a pleasant health resort, and the waters of its springs were being bottled and shipped to the eastern cities. Each year a larger number of stricken ones came to find respite, if not recovery, in its gloriously bright sunlight and pure air. For years it remained a village and its business men merely shopkeepers and resident ranch owners, but as its fame spread families of wealth and social position in the east began to settle along the bank of the Bear and to build homes into which the sunlight streamed with healing magic, and the men of these families began to look about for business and for investment, and not a few of them were in the mood to listen when rough bearded men began to plod down the trail from Bozle Creek bringing sacks of promising ore.

Returns from these samples, sent away to be assayed, started a flight of golden eagles east and west. Again the adventurous youth, the skilled prospector, the gambler and all the uneasy and shifting elements that follow such lures poured into the valley and toiled over the trail to the grassy hills of Bozle.

At first, though short of breath by reason of the altitude, two full miles above the sea, some of these incomers laughed and some were angry. "Gold! In these grassy hills? Impossible!" And they went away again with bitter words. It was Mount Horeb repeated on a large scale.

Continued Next Week

School and Children Under Six.

That home is the best school for children under six is the conclusion arrived at by an English committee of trained educators that has been investigating the results of schooling on babies of this tender age. The committee reports unanimously against sending these tots to school. They find that not only do many derive no intellectual benefit from it, but, on the other hand, they seem to fall into a state of apathy with regard to books and their powers of observation. More play, more sleep, more story telling, more free conversation—these are recommended by the English report as a substitute for schooling until the child is six.

"Besides labeling my medicine bottles conspicuously," says one woman, "I stick a large headed pin in the corks of all bottles containing poison. Thus they can at no time be mistaken."