



TURNING POINT

By Mary Imlay Taylor

W. N. U. RELEASE



THE STORY THUS FAR: Jane returned from the cabin, and Jim told her he had phoned the sheriff to come and get Sherwin. Jane turned white. She mounted again and rode off, Jim after her. Soon they could see Stenhart and the sheriff racing ahead. Jim finally stopped. Jane's horse, Sherwin, was standing on a cliff. Stenhart was crawling along a ledge. Sherwin waited, suddenly he confronted his cousin. Then Stenhart crumpled, reeled backward and fell over the ledge. He was caught by a dwarfed tree, limp but not dead. Sherwin looked down and in that moment came the turning point. He uncoiled a rope, tied it, and began to descend the cliff.

CHAPTER X

He sought a foothold, a crevice, and found one where the tree had rooted, a wide fissure in the wall of rock. He swung toward it, got his foot into it, and, holding thus to the rope and the cliff, reached down and laid his hand on Stenhart's body. He thought he was still conscious, for his heavy eyelids quivered, but he lay there, a dead weight. Swiftly, cautiously, Sherwin wound the rope around his body and made it secure under the armpits, balancing himself on a foothold so narrow that a touch might hurl him down. Then, grasping the slack of the rope, he began to climb. The ledge seemed a thousand feet above him, but, at last, he lay on its brink, gasping.

He heard sounds now other than the cataract, the crashing of boughs, voices! He took no heed of them, for, as he rose to his feet, he saw the tree that supported Stenhart go down and the motionless body swing out on the end of the rope. Sherwin braced himself and began to haul him up by main strength. Slowly, surely, he drew his enemy out of the abyss, steadied him at the edge of the rock, brought him safe over and laid him down. His own muscles ached and his head swam, but Stenhart still breathed. He opened his eyes and looked up in Sherwin's face. Sheer terror leaped into his eyes, but he was spent, helpless; his white lips moved, but only one word came in a whisper.

"Water!"

A mountain spring was trickling close at hand, and Sherwin cupped the water in his hands and wet his face and lips, and again Stenhart tried to speak; but, as his rescuer bent to listen, heavy hands fell upon him and there was a shout of triumph.

"Get him, sheriff!"

Sherwin, on his knees beside the injured man, looked up to find the posse closing in. He shook off the man who had grasped him and rose to his feet just as Jim Keller panted up the trail.

"Hold on, Cutler!" Jim cried, "that man saved Stenhart—I saw him—at the risk of his own life!"

"Ain't taking no chances, Mr. Keller. Here you, Adams, you handcuff him; he's the man we're after!"

Sherwin offered no resistance; he submitted with an iron composure. He had thrown away his dear-bought liberty to save Stenhart.

"I reckon he can walk, after all," said the sheriff. "How you feeling now, Mr. Stenhart?"

Stenhart tried to stand upright, but his eyes had met Sherwin's and his mouth went dry. He wet his lips, shaking all over.

"We'd better carry him," said Jim. "Cheer up, old chap, you're sound, no bones broken!"

"I can walk," said Stenhart thickly, leaning heavily on Jim.

"The ledge is mighty narrow; can you manage without help, Mr. Keller?" The sheriff was solicitous for the man who had helped him make his capture.

"Oh, we'll do!" Jim threw a supporting arm around Stenhart. It was on the tip of his tongue to tell the men to go ahead with the prisoner and bring help from the ranch and a car for the injured man, but he remembered Jane; he must go first himself. The thought impelled Jim to look back at Sherwin, and something in his white face made him recoil at the sight of his bound hands. He beckoned Cutler to him.

"Is it necessary—I mean, those handcuffs? By Jove, I saw what he did; he's a brave man!"

The sheriff nodded grimly. "Can't take chances, Mr. Keller, he's a jail-breaker; swore he was going to kill Stenhart. I ain't so all-fired clear in my mind what he meant to do with him anyways—he had him all trussed up with that rope!"

They began the descent slowly. Jim, supporting Stenhart, went ahead; behind came the sheriff, then the men bringing Sherwin. A heavy cloud had risen in the west; its purple edges were sweeping upward. The sunlight went out and, as they entered the steep trail, thunder rolled deeply across the hills. The way, narrow and difficult, grew dim with the darkness of the approaching storm. Stenhart, weak and stunned from his fall, stumbled and set the stones rolling and tumbling ahead of them.

"Steady, old chap," said Jim, and his supporting arm tightened. It seemed to him that Stenhart suffered with some trouble of the mind as deep as the stiffness of his body; not once had he lifted his dark eyes to look ahead of him, and he was ghastly pale. Jim, glancing back at the steep path, saw the feet of the men following them before he saw

their bodies. The sheriff came next; Sherwin, he knew, was last—with his guards. Overhead the trees locked their branches now, and a dense thicket surrounded them. They could hear the cataract less distinctly, but the rush of wind in the tree-tops made a tumult. Jim, steadying Stenhart, spoke slowly in his ear.

"I saw you—you and Sherwin," he said quietly. "I was out in the road; there's an opening in the trees—one glimpses the ravine. How did you come to fall in that way, Max?"

Stenhart roused himself; he lifted his head and tried to meet Jim's questioning eyes, but he wavered and gasped.

"I—he was going to kill me!" he said weakly; "that was it. I remember now, Sherwin was going to kill me."

Stenhart passed his hand over his eyes with a groping gesture.

"I can't understand it," he muttered; "he was going to kill me—he hates me!"

"Then, by heaven, he did a great thing—he risked his life for his worst

Jane caught the look on his face and saw beyond him the death-like face of Stenhart, leaning against two deputies, only partly conscious.

"He's all in!" cried Jim. "Can't you see? Beat it!"

The girl, half crying, ran out into the road. The storm had nearly spent itself and she loosed Tex from the sapling where she had tied him, and springing into the saddle, turned his head homeward.

Her heart reproached her for the relief she felt. When she heard the shots she had thought only of Sherwin and her brother; Jordan had slipped out of her mind. She imagined Sherwin still bent on revenge, though the miracle of that rescue seemed to lift him above such a thought. They were both safe! Poor Max—well, she could pity him, yet, if he knew he had sworn to a lie about his cousin, wasn't it a judgment of God? In a strange tumult of feeling she galloped home, but, all the while, she seemed to vision Sherwin going down into the abyss to save the life of his foe!

"My heart, you are dripping!" Teresa cried, seizing her as she dropped from the saddle; but Jane scarcely heard her.

"Call Mac!" she said sharply, panting, her hands clasped tightly against her breast. "And you, Fanny, you've got to go in the car—Jordan tried to shoot Jim and wounded Stenhart; they're afraid he's dying—"

"Fanny, suddenly white, gasped. 'Jim's safe?'"

Jane nodded, at last aware of old Teresa. The little brown woman dropped on her knees, crossing herself.

"Sangre de Cristo!" she whispered, awed, "it is a judgment—his dreams, his terrible dreams!"

Jane looked down at her, white-lipped; it was her own thought voiced again. She shivered. Fanny had sped upon her errand, and she was alone with the little old peon woman. The wind swept over them and she looked up; storm clouds, black and threatening, were rolling around them and the shining peaks were swathed in a mantle of purple. Now and then a red flash tore the black mist asunder, as though some hidden furnace was belching fire in the midst of the canyons. Jane, who knew that Sherwin had given up his hope of freedom to save a life, felt suddenly a thrill of utter pride and thankfulness; nothing mattered so much as that he had cleansed his soul!

They brought Stenhart back to Las Palomas through the driving storm. The wind was snapping branches off the great trees and whipping the rain across the long slope in mighty gusts. The big car came swiftly, followed by the dripping horses and men of the posse. Jane, watching from the veranda, saw Stenhart's white face and closed eyes as they bore him in, but her own gaze was following the drenched figures going down to the men's quarters. She made out Sherwin's tall head, and then the others closed up about him. She drew a quick breath of relief; he was here—Jim had not let them hurry him away. Then she was aware of other things. She, herself, had telephoned for a doctor, but it would be two hours or more before he could reach them; meanwhile Jim and Cutler had carried the wounded man in and laid him on his bed. Fanny, quiet, competent, greatly concerned, was doing all she could; Stenhart had lost consciousness, but now, under her ministrations, he was slowly coming back to himself. Mechanically, Jane obeyed the young nurse's behests, helping as best she could.

Fanny, quietly and deftly at work, suddenly saw the girl's face, and she went over to Jim. He was standing by the door helplessly, staring at Stenhart.

"Take Jane away," Fanny whispered to him, her kind eyes grave and admonishing. "She's borne a good deal today. I can do it all now—until the doctor comes, if he comes in time."

Jim's face fell. "You think—?"

She nodded. "He's going to die, Jim, slowly—perhaps it will be bad;—take her away."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

or—" her voice trailed; she knew that it was not Sherwin, for she had seen him standing grimly between his guards.

Jim pointed to Jordan. "It's done with, Jane; I'm going to have the poor devil decently buried. Jane, ride back to Las Palomas, get Mac to send the big car and—if she can come through this, send Fanny. I'm afraid poor Max got it bad, he's collapsed—be quick!"

"Jim!" she clung to him, whispering, "you know what he did—Sherwin, I mean—don't let them take him away! Do something, say something! Oh, Jim, you—you must!"

Jim loosed her arms from his neck. "Look here, girlie, I'll promise to do all I can, but, for heaven's sake, get out of this quick—get a car. Stenhart may be dying—it may mean a lot to all of us. Quick!"

"Jim, I must speak to him—"

Her brother caught her sternly by the arm and dragged her to the end of the thicket. "Now—go!" he said, "or—I swear I'll have him sent off now!"

Jane caught the look on his face and saw beyond him the death-like face of Stenhart, leaning against two deputies, only partly conscious.

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NEWS BEHIND THE NEWS

By PAUL MALLON

Released by Western Newspaper Union

FEEDING STARVING WORLD TOO BIG A JOB FOR US

WASHINGTON. — The food campaign is running into ever-deepening difficulties.

The sweeping publicity campaign to induce Americans to save for the hungry in the rest of the world ceased the moment the coal strike became serious, but only temporarily. There was no use considering food saving when a fuel tie-up and transportation curtailment threatened spoilage of indefinite proportions. But the tenor of the campaign had made everyone believe that the problem of alleviating world hunger was simply dependent upon a resolution by the American people to eat less.

Any objective investigation will prove the following greater facts to the contrary:

(A) No matter what our savings, we will not be able to give the world the bulk of foods we have promised.

(B) We have moved so late that we are not simply taking food from our tables, but have become involved in promises which will cause a fast and sharp decline in our own food production.

(C) For this year, and possibly two or three, we will get less meat, butter and cheese than in the war years of rationing. Our diets will be changed to cereals, vegetables and fruits which should be available in sufficient quantities to stave off hunger here.

The need of many sections of the world for food has now been established beyond question, although the earlier whooping-up campaign contained much hokum about non-existent needs. An army news resume currently quotes Brigadier General Fisher of our occupation forces as saying the German farms are the most prosperous in the world today. Another similar report of equal authority says there are no starving Bavarians. The British ministry has announced sufficient stores of food in that nation to meet rationing quotas in all lines, even butter and cheese which are practically non-existent in "white" markets here.

WHERE SHORTAGES ARE

The European shortages are largely in the Russian occupied areas, plus Italy, Greece and some parts of France. The two ships diverted from England by headman La Guardia of UNRRA, went to Russian occupied zones. Yet the need in actual hunger areas is real. So is it also on the other side of the world, in India, China and the Philippines.

To meet these needs we have entered upon a complete upsetting of our economy to the point of promoting further reduced production, particularly of livestock, all forms of animal foods, poultry, hogs, sheep, dairy and beef cattle. Our beef cattle population, which last year numbered 83 million, has run below 80 million and is going down fast. On a prewar ratio to population, we should have over 100 million beef cattle. The pig crop has been limited to 31 million, which is about three-fourths of what could be considered normal.

These curtailments were forced because wheat and corn feed stocks have been cut in order to send them to the rest of the world. In short, by sending feed abroad we can do no more than produce three-fourths our usual number of pigs. A government order denies chicken feed to any poultry raiser having more than 80 per cent of the number of chickens he had last year. This will force a 20 per cent reduction in poultry population. While there are no particular restrictions on beef cattle feed, it cannot be purchased, and unless the farmer has corn, oats and hay, he must sell his cattle. Similarly, the government is promoting the sale of hogs, at lighter weights than usual—which will decrease production further.

FUTUR. FULL OF 'IFS'

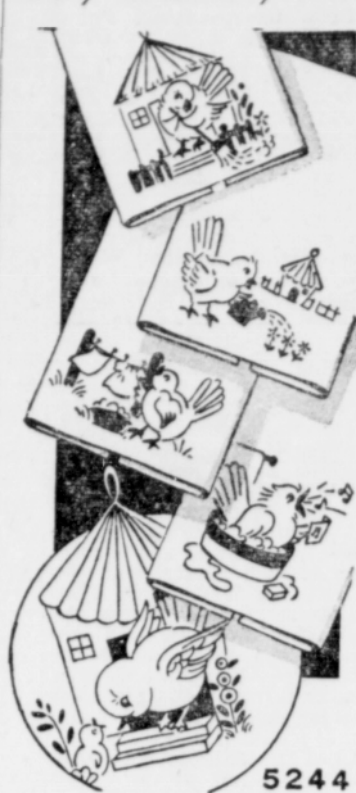
Where we go from here is a problem of many "ifs." If we do not undertake a world food export program another year, we may restore normal livestock supplies in two or three years. Only poultry and pigs can be restored in less time, and pigs require about nine months. If we have a good crop, our own food situation will be no worse than related above, but the optimistic government expectations on the wheat crop are already running into doubt.

Officially they talk of more than a billion bushels, but the local moisture situation has indicated the winter wheat crop will not justify any such guess on the year as a whole.

You might ask why the government does not promote expansion of production. It got aroused about food a little too late for that. To feed the hungry abroad there is nothing to be done now except to curtail domestic consumption, and enter the country largely upon a fruit and vegetable diet for an indefinite period.

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