

The Valley of Voices

by GEORGE MARSH
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"TOILERS OF THE TRAIL"
"THE WHELPS OF THE WOLF"
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CHAPTER VI—Continued

"Will you promise me—that you will not—" He hardly knew what he wished to ask from the girl who so tensely listened. There had been nothing between them. He had no right—but in spite of his diffidence found himself begging: "You will not destroy yourself—that beautiful talent, that—soul, because you think to save your father?"

As he finished, she was smiling at him through mist-blurred eyes, that rose and went to the window. "You have not already?" he faltered, thinking of her letter to Albany. From the window came the low answer. "I am the fiancée of Monsieur Lascelles."

"You are mad—mad," he groaned, stunned, unable to accept, now that he had heard it, what he had feared. "I had no right to ask you—what I did. But I could not help it, mademoiselle. I might have known—the heart of you—was dead. You have killed a beautiful thing."

She suddenly turned a tragic face. "Monsieur, you may wonder why I let you say these things, but you have guessed the reason, and she placed her hands on her breast, "the heart of me—is dead." And she left the room.

To remain longer under the factor's roof, to sit at dinner with this hopeless girl, who had bartered her happiness for her father's welfare, and the man who was brute enough to accept the sacrifice, was unthinkable, so Steele went to the little room which had been his since his coming, to pack his duffle bag. There he found Charlotte, waiting.

"You weesh for to marree ma'm'selle?" the Indian abruptly demanded. The question was startling, but did honor to the loyalty of the grave-faced woman who confronted him.

"She is to marry Monsieur Lascelles," said Steele gently, touched by the evident friendliness which prompted Charlotte to seek him out.

"She hate M'sieu Lascelles!" vehemently protested the Ojibway. "She cry an' cry w'en she send heem de letter. You are de good man, Michel say. Daveed tell you have been house, far away south? You tak' ma'm'selle, she t'ink you good man, she weel go wid you for your woman!"

As he hastily threw his clothes into the canvas bag, the words of Charlotte. "She weel go wid you for your woman," returned to mock him. Did the Indian really know, after all, or was she trying to force his hand? That this exquisite girl whom he had found in the northern forests, as one finds a jewel in the grass, should have come to care for a man of whom she knew so little, seemed unbelievable. And yet more than once since that day on the mountain he had surprised a look in her eyes which had strangely sent his pulses racing. And now that he knew he had been loving her all those precious days which he might have made indelible in memory—he faced the bitter conviction that Denise St. Onge, once she had given her word, would keep it.

He carried his bag to Michel's shack and announced to the surprised owner that he would eat and sleep there; then, while in search of David, he ran into St. Onge.

"Monsieur Steele," the old soldier gripped his guest's hand and vigorously shook it. "You have my extreme admiration—and gratitude. Mon Dieu! But you were magnificent. To see you my friend and guest, insulted before my eyes—and how you made him ridiculous!"

Steele's face hardened. "But your daughter—what of her?" he demanded, almost fiercely, of the man whose eyes wavered before his cold glance.

"You have seen her?" "Yes, she has told me. She's ruined herself—thrown away her happiness—her life."

"And all for me," sighed the father, "all for me!" "But you knew she would do it—to protect your future with the company; and you allowed her to." Steele continued pitilessly, in a voice, low, but carrying the bitterness of gall in its tones. "Colonel St. Onge, you have permitted a beautiful soul to destroy itself. You—"

"Stop, monsieur!" St. Onge interrupted, in a voice broken with passion. "You do not know—and you are my friend, therefore I forget what you say. I have begged her not to do this—am prepared to leave the company. I will not allow such a thing. Why," and the factor shook his clenched fists in Steele's face, "I would kill that pig Lascelles before I gave her to him."

"But she has given herself to him, of her own free will, today. And she is a thoroughbred; she will keep her word."

St. Onge glared into Steele's immobile face. "She will never marry that canaille, Monsieur Steele," he said pointedly, "the St. Onges have always known how to defend their honor."

Then approaching from the factor's house appeared the figure of Denise St. Onge.

He had seen her for a moment that morning, for his contemplated journey to the Feather lakes and the autumn camps of the Ojibways, interrupted by their discovery of the day before, might admit of no return to the post before starting south. It all depended how early the winter broke. So he had called at the factor's to say good-bye until the sled trails were hard in November. For late into the previous night he had sat with his two swart-faced companions planning many things, and the first of these was an early return to Walling River with the fastest team of dogs that money would buy in the Nepligon country. Another was a systematic running down of the mysterious marauder, on the snow, where his trail could not escape them; the last, and most vital to Brent Steele he touched upon only to the extent of assuring Michel that Lascelles should never succeed in his plan to force Denise St. Onge into a marriage to protect her father's future with the Revillon Freres, notwithstanding the fact that she had already assented to his wishes. And the lean half-breed had sprung to his feet with an oath, and wringing Steele's hand, cried: "Eef you do not come back, m'sieu, and he cum to tak' her to Albany, dey weel fin' dead man by name of Lascelles een bees bed at Wallin' Riviere."

"Never fear," Steele had answered. "David and I are coming back after Messieurs Lascelles and Windigo." Steele was keenly curious of Denise St. Onge's motive in coming to the beach when he had already bade her good-bye that morning at the house. He had said: "Mademoiselle, I am started again with David and may not return to Walling River before going south. Will you promise this one thing?"

"Monsieur Steele," she had replied, so patently fearing what the American might say that she lost control of her voice. "You forget that you have no right to ask anything of me."

But he had boldly ignored her protest. "I ask you, Denise St. Onge, not to throw away your future—your life—if you must—until spring. I am coming back on the snow, in November, to clear up this mystery and—to save you from yourself." And without waiting for her reply, for he did not dare trust himself, had left her.

And now for some reason she was hurrying toward them, on a mission seemingly urgent. Brent Steele watched the approaching girl with high hope. David and Michel exchanged curious glances. Then she reached them.

"I could not have you go, Monsieur Steele," she said in her low, throaty voice, "without wishing you bon voyage." In her haste, a vagrant lock of black hair had loosed itself and she caught it up with her left hand, as she extended her right to Steele.

To her embarrassment he held the hand overlong in his as his eyes questioned hers.

"You asked me to make you a promise, monsieur," she said in a voice barely audible, looking from him to the hills to the south. "Well, I've come to say, au revoir. You have—my promise." And she swiftly disengaged her hand and had reached the clearing before Steele sensed to the full what her words had meant.

Then to Steele's brain, dazed with surprise and joy, returned the words of Charlotte: "She t'ink you good man, she weel go wid you for your woman." And he lifted his chest high with a deep breath, for he now believed Charlotte had known.



A REASONABLE GUESS

"Hobbs Hoolie, from down there in Bogger Hoiler, has been away for quite a spell," said Gap Johnson of Rumpus Ridge. "I reckon he was dodging the revenuers, or something that-a-way."

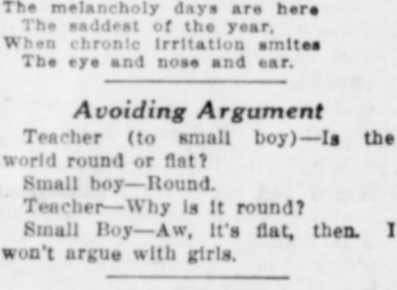
"Did he tell you so?" inquired Gabe Giggery. "No, but when I sorter asked him if he hadn't been he said it wasn't none of my business."—Kansas City Star.

Striving for the Touch

The professor had asked time and time again for the students to put more personal touch in their themes, so one of the papers which he received ended thus:

"Well, professor, how are the wife and kiddies; and, by the way, before I forget it, could you lend me five dollars?"—Penn Punch Bowl.

PAINTS, DOESN'T DRAW



"Pretty and accomplished, eh? Does she paint and draw?" "Yes, she paints, dear; but doesn't seem to attract the men at all."

Melancholy Days

The melancholy days are here The saddest of the year, When chronic irritation smites The eye and nose and ear.

Avoiding Argument

Teacher (to small boy)—Is the world round or flat? Small boy—Round. Teacher—Why is it round? Small Boy—Aw, it's flat, then. I won't argue with girls.

Hearing Not Good

"Is your herring good?" asked the woman of the fish dealer. "Mam?" "Your herring—is it good?" "No, ma'am," he replied, "I'm very deaf."

Show-Off

Wife—Why do policemen swing their "billies" round and round like a windmill, I wonder? Hubby—I suppose they want to show that they can manage a rotary club.

The Fair Coed

"For my next lesson," said the fair coed, "I have to describe a parabola." "Well?" "Where can I see a pair?"

Convenient for Them

Mrs. Kawler—It is a great thing that you have the telephone in your house. Mrs. Keen—So the neighbors tell me.

WENT DEEP

Old Salt (telling yarn)—I'm a deep-sea sailor, friend, an' ain't used to traveling in deep woods, but at last we got into the pirate cave. Gosh, the gold was all over the floor three feet deep! Auditor—Say, pardner, whatever yer git into yer git into pretty deep, don't yer?

IMPROVED UNIFORM INTERNATIONAL Sunday School Lesson

By REV. F. B. FITZWATER, D.D., Dean of the Evening School, Moody Bible Institute of Chicago. (© 1924, Western Newspaper Union.)

Lesson for January 24

JESUS AND THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

LESSON TEXT—John 4:4-42. GOLDEN TEXT—With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.—Isa. 12:3. PRIMARY TOPIC—Jesus by the Well. JUNIOR TOPIC—Jesus by Jacob's Well. INTERMEDIATE AND SENIOR TOPIC—A Sinful Woman Finds the Savior. YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULT TOPIC—How Jesus Deals With Sinners.

I. Jesus Must Needs Go Through Samaria (vv. 4-6).

The growing popularity of Jesus aroused the envious opposition of the Pharisees, which obliged Him to leave Judea and go into Samaria. There was another way to reach Galilee, one used by many Jews to avoid contact with the despised Samaritans, on the eastern side of the Jordan. He must "needs go through Samaria" in order to find this poor sinful woman and the needy citizens of Sychar. The great necessity which was upon Him was to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:20).

II. Jesus' Testimony to the Woman (vv. 7-26).

1. A Favor Asked (vv. 7-9).

Jesus tactfully made a request which appealed to the woman's sympathy. Not only did the thirst of the weary traveler appeal to her, but the fact that He being a Jew asked a favor of her, showed His sympathy for her. In introducing the conversation, He referred to that which was uppermost in her mind, namely, water. This was the teacher's point of contact. He soon passed from earthly water to the water of everlasting life which was in Himself. Every human mind has a handle. Our success as Christian workers depends upon our ability to grasp and use it.

2. Jesus' Tender Dealing With This Woman (vv. 10-15).

He first appealed to her curiosity by declaring, "If thou knewest the gift of God" (v. 10). He knew the deep unrest of the soul of the sinful woman as she went on her way. He knew if she really knew Him she would believe on Him and be saved from her sins, therefore the first thing was to get attention. When we can get one to give attention to the claims of Christ, there is good chance of winning him. He followed this appeal to her curiosity by a promise which directed her attention to her deepest needs. There is a consciousness of deep need in every soul. The deepest need of a soul Jesus only can satisfy.

3. The Woman Convicted of Her Sins (vv. 15-19).

Jesus succeeded in arousing her interest, but she did not really understand Him. Before she could understand what the Water of Life is, she must be convicted of her sin. She did not agree with Him, but became a humble inquirer. The soul must be convicted of sin before it can be converted.

4. The Problem of Worship Submitted to Christ (vv. 20-24).

This she did as soon as she perceived Him to be a prophet. Jesus knowing the inner life of this woman, told her of the glad time even then present when true worshippers could hold intercourse with God anywhere. He showed her that the place of worship is unimportant, that the all-important thing is to have the true conception of God as brought through the Jews. Since worship is spiritual, only those who have been regenerated can worship God in spirit.

5. The Woman of Samaria Witnessing for Christ (vv. 27-39).

The woman left her water pot and returning to the city said, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the Christ?" As soon as she was converted she became an enthusiastic missionary. This is as it ought to be and always will be. The soul that realizes Jesus cannot be silent (John 1:41-45). The result of her testimony was that many believed on Jesus.

III. Jesus Testifying to the Citizens of Sychar (vv. 40, 41).

The woman's testimony brought the request from the Samaritans that Jesus tarry with them. He abode with them two days. Though they heard the woman's testimony, they believed because of Christ's own word (v. 41).

IV. The Samaritans Witnessing for Christ (v. 42).

They declared, "We know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world." They confessed to the woman that their belief was not due to her testimony but to having heard Him themselves, that they were sure that He was the Messiah.

Safe From Others

He that respects himself is safe from others; he wears a coat of mail that none can pierce.—Longfellow.

God Governs the World

God governs the world, and we have only to do our duty wisely and faithfully, and leave the issue to Him.

God Gives Time

God never imposes a duty without giving the time to do it.—Ruskin.

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Did Seem Suspicious

"Your celebrated prisoner got away?" "Yes," said the rural jailer. "When he borrowed my keys and told me somebody wanted to see me in the alley on important business, confound him, I knew he wuz up to somethin'."

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