

The Everlasting Whisper, By Jackson Gregory

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FROM THE BEGINNING

In the California sierra Mark King, prospector, sees Andy Parker killed by Sven Brodie, Parker's outlaw companion. King is on his way to the home of his friend, Ben Gaynor. King and Gaynor share with Brodie knowledge of a vast store of hidden gold. King meets Mrs. Gaynor and is impressed by her daughter Gloria's youthful beauty. He dislikes a house visitor named Gratton. With Gloria, King rides to Coloma, intending to "sound" Honeycutt. He finds Brodie with the old prospector, and animosity flares. Their companionship for a day draws King closer to Gloria. Gloria and her mother return to San Francisco. In a spirit of adventure Gloria accompanies Gratton on a "business" trip. At Coloma she finds her father badly hurt. He gives her a message and a package for King, urging her to get them to him at once. Gloria realizes how she has compromised herself by her journey with Gratton. He proposes marriage, and Gloria apparently accepts him. Gratton arranges for the marriage by a "judge." King comes to the house, unseen by Gloria. Informed of the coming ceremony, he watches it from a window. At the last moment Gloria refuses to utter the requisite "yes." In the resultant confusion King enters the room and Gloria appeals to him for protection. Gratton, dismissed, reveals his knowledge of the hidden gold and makes threats.

CHAPTER V—Continued

"He will do whatever I ask him to do," something sang within her. "Won't you sit down with me, Mark?" she smiled at him.

"I have eaten," he said a trifle harshly, she thought.

"You are so good to me," she stirred her coffee and he saw only the lashes and their black shadows on her cheeks.

The human comedy had begun, or the comedy begun long ago was resumed smoothly in its third act. After that it was neither Gloria nor King who played the part of stage director; that time-honored responsibility was back in the hands of the oldest of all stage managers.

King saw lying on the table the package done up in an old cloth which she had brought. Further, he knew that he had seen it before and where he had seen it. He knew that at last he had old Loony Honeycutt's secret where he could put out his hand to it, with none to gainsay him. He knew that with it was a message from his old friend Ben; that Ben, himself, lay at this moment in Coloma hurt. And yet his eyes clung to the eyes of Gloria and all of these things were swept aside in his mind. There are urges which must be obeyed, the urge of spinning worlds to circling suns, the urge of man to maid.

"Gloria!" he said huskily. "Gloria!" "Yes, Mark?" she said quietly, trying to speak very calmly and as though she did not know, oh, so well, all that tumult that lay behind his calling her name.

She knew what was in his heart! His soul exulted as the certainty rushed upon him. And the color merely deepened in her cheeks while she hid her eyes from him.

He came to her swiftly. She rose as swiftly to her feet. Like magnet and steel they were swept together. He felt her body tense but unresisting in his arms; suddenly she relaxed, her head was against his breast. Gloria in his arms—Gloria's sweet face hidden from him against his rough shirt—

"Gloria!" he cried again. "Gloria!" She freed herself, and while he let her go he stood watching her with the new look in his eyes. Scarlet-faced she flashed her look at him from across the table.

"Please, Mark," as he moved toward her. "You haven't read papa's letter yet. And—am I dying to know what is in that funny package. Aren't you?"

"If I'm dying at all," he told her gravely, though he found a smile to answer her own—and two very serious smiles they were—"it is of quite another complaint. And this time—"

"But please, Mark! I am here all alone—with you—and—"

"I know. I haven't forgotten. But, Gloria—Some time you are going to give yourself to me, aren't you, dear? While Summerling is still here, won't you let him marry us? It will give me the right to shut that fool Gratton's mouth for him and—Oh, Gloria, my dear, my dear—Will you, Gloria?"

And then from lips which did not smile he heard the very faint but no longer elusive "Yes."

"Now, Gloria?"

"Yes, Mark. If you are sure that you want me." She spoke humbly; at the instant she was humble. "But," she added hastily, "still you haven't—"

anxious. Let me go a minute, Mark. I am going upstairs. I—I want to phone to mamma first. And while I am gone you can read papa's letter, and—"

Her face was hot with blushes.

"And arrange with the judge," he said, his own voice uncertain. "Yes, Gloria."

She ran by him then. He heard her going upstairs, he heard a door closing after her. Then like a man who treads on air he went to the window and threw it up and called:

"Jim! Tell the judge not to go. I have business with him. I want him and you here in ten minutes."

And then when Jim's voice had answered him he thought to take up the parcel on the table. A hurried letter from Ben and the parcel from Honeycutt's. Something here for which he had been seeking, working, for years, remembered now only because Gloria had made the request that they be not forgotten.

But Ben's words caught him when he had read the first line. He had opened the packet, ripping off the old encasement of cloth. There was a book, a Bible that looked to be centuries old, battered, the covers gone; Gaynor's letter was slipped into it:

DEAR MARK: Honeycutt's dead. I've got his secret. But Brodie came near doing me in. Honeycutt, dying, sent for me. I got there just in time. He gave me the Bible; it was the "parson's" and then Gus Ingle's. As I was going out of the cabin Brodie and two of his gang swooped down on me. In the dark I pitched the Bible clear and they did not see it; it was just that near! They came close to killing me; when I came to I found they'd been through my pockets. I don't know how much Brodie knows. I do know he is working with Gratton, the dirty crook. I think you can beat them to it, hands down. And, for God's sake, Mark, and for my sake if not for your own, don't let the grass grow! I am on the edge of absolute bankruptcy; laid up this way I don't see a chance unless you find what we've been after so long and find it quick. Will you start without any delay? As soon as you get this phone to Charlie Marsh at Coloma. Leave word for me. And let that word be that nothing on earth will stop you! Then I won't go crazy here with worry. BEN.

A bit of the old interest swept back over King as he read: the old excitement raced through his blood. He dropped Ben's note into the stove and eagerly took up the old Bible. There was the "secret" at last—Gus Ingle's message came to him across the dead years:

Good god I never see such gold nor no man neither and when he come into camp you could see in his look he had found it because no man could have looked at that Mother load and not look like Jimmy. And big Brodie grabbed him by the throat and shook him and nearly killed him until Jimmy told us. We went down the gorge to the narrow place over on the big seeder that had broke off and that was how we come to the First Calve, and then we come to Calve number three and two. And for two weeks maybe we lost track of time until this grate big pile of gold was dug that I am setting right on top of right now how can a man eat gold when he is dying of hunger and burn it when he is freezing. And it was big Brodie killed pore Manny I seen him and the next day or maybe it was two days Dago was gone and never come back was it Manny's goat got him and drug him down the cliffs screaming horrible and in the gorge—anyway that was two, and I am all that is left and I am going—I tride to get out and the Big storm drove me back and all I can see is Jimmy Kelp and the parson if I had not of killed them they would killed me sure and big Brodie's gone he is crazy and cant never make it back across the mountains in this storm. And Baldy Winch he took a big nugget and went off, and he stole what handful of grub there was. If I write all this in the Bible that was preacher Elsons and tis it up safe in oilcloth and canvas and make a bote out of a chunk of wood and throw it in the river maybe it will get to one of the camps down there and a good man will find it and He give him half. You come up the old trail past where

Majority of Headaches Traced to Eye Strain

Seven out of ten headaches are caused by eye strain due to neglect of ordinary eye care, pointed out M. J. Julian of the Better Vision Institute, in a speech in Boston before a group of eyesight specialists. Other ills, such as insomnia and indigestion, are also traceable to this cause, he pointed out, and yet 40 per cent of the people of this country need glasses and are trying to do without them.

"The eyes are such faithful servants that we are inclined to forget the burdens we put upon them," said Mr. Julian. "Particularly in this age where men are pushing their investi-

gations farther and farther into the realms of stars and atoms and where most manufacturing processes depend upon fine precision, the tax upon the eyes has become far greater than we realize. The nervous energy possessed by the body is limited, and the eyes, if they perform this additional labor unaided, steal some of the energy required for other functions. Lenses especially adapted to the work in hand are necessary to relieve the strain on the eyes and release the stolen energy through the intended channels. Proper eye care is more needed in this age than in any other."

To any man who knew the Sierra hereabouts less intimately than did Mark King, Gus Ingle's message would have brought only stupefaction. But to King now, as to Ben Gaynor before him, the "secret" lay bare. Old names held on; the three Italians had given a name to what was now known as Italy Gulch. The caves were on a certain fork of the American river then, and King had approximately the distances and direction.

He thrust the old Bible into his shirt. There were steps on the porch. Jim and the "judge" were coming—

CHAPTER VI

"It strikes me," said Summerling sarcastically, "that there's mighty funny goings-on here tonight. I show up to marry one man to a girl and next thing I know—"

"Never mind that," cut in King hastily. "You are going to marry her after all. Only to another man."

"Meanin' you, Mark?" demanded Jim. For the life of him he couldn't



"He Will Do Whatever I Ask Him to Do," Something Sang Within Her.

decide whether he or every one else had gone crazy.

King flushed under the look, but nodded and managed a calm, "Yes, Jim."

He led Summerling and Jim into the living room, closing the door.

"Now if you folks are ready," said Summerling. "I've got a long ride ahead of me."

This time Gloria did not keep them waiting. She came down the staircase to Mark King standing at the bottom. In her pink dress, like a thistle-down, floating down to him. He was thinking—she, too, remembered—how for the first time they had met thus. She smiled at him; she put out her two hands to him as she had done that other time. And right there they were married—on Gus Ingle's old Bible.

"It's done!" whispered Mark, bending over her. "You are mine now; mine for all time, Gloria. And, girl of mine," he added reverently "may God deal with me as I deal with you."

"It's done!" In an awed little voice came Gloria's response, like an echo. Mark King had seen her across the quicksands.

Jim and the "judge" had gone. They two were alone in the still house. Gloria was nervous; King could see

that and thought that he understood. So he went for wood, made a cheery blaze in the fireplace, and drew two chairs up to it.

"Tell me about papa's letter," said Gloria hastily. Had there not been that obvious topic she would have caught at another, any other.

King put out his hand for hers, and while Gloria looked into the fire and he looked into her face, he told her. At the end he brought out Gus Ingle's Bible and read to her what was written in it.

"And you know where it is?"

"I can go to it as straight as a string. Two days to get to it and to stake a claim; two days to come out with a couple of horses loaded to the guards. And that itself means a fortune, if it's clean, raw gold, as would seem to be the case. We need not fear the poorhouse, you and I, Mrs. King!"

"But Brodie? And Mr. Gratton?"

"They don't know where it is! They can't know, since we've got the Bible, and Honeycutt was dead before they got to him! If they knew they would have been on their way already. And I'll be striking out before dawn, leaving no such trail that they can follow it in a hurry, even if they should seek to."

"You are going so soon? Papa wanted that?"

"He wanted me to telephone as soon as I got this." He rose, lingering over her. "We mustn't forget him, even for our own happiness."

"I—I am going upstairs, Mark," called Gloria after him.

"All right, Queen of the World," he answered her. "I'm just to phone in a message for her. It won't take me five minutes to get it done; just to say: 'Tell Ben that I start at dawn and that he's got my word for it that nothing's going to stop me! And—that I've just married Gloria!'"

He got his message through, and Gloria was still upstairs. When time passed and she did not come, he went up softly and to her door. It was closed and he knocked lightly, then dropped his hand to the knob, awaiting her voice.

His knuckles had hardly brushed the door, this door which he approached in reverence; Gloria had not even heard him. He called softly, his voice little above a whisper:

"Gloria!"

He heard her move; for a moment she did not answer. He could not know how she stood, scarcely breathing, her hands at her breast; nor how, now that the great step was taken, she was again half frightened, half regretful, altogether bewildered and uncertain. Of herself, of him, of everything—

"Is it you, Mark?"

"Yes. May I come in, Gloria?" "Please, Mark. It's all so new, so strange . . . I intended to come right back downstairs but I'm so tired. Mark. I want to be alone a little; to think. You don't mind, do you, Mark?"

He answered promptly and heartily, refusing to allow himself to harbor a shadow of disappointment.

"No. No, of course not. You will go right to bed? I know you must be half-dead for sleep."

"Yes. . . . Good night Mark." "Aren't you going to kiss me good night?" he asked, hesitating a little between the words.

"Please, Mark! I am terribly tired out, and—and I'm afraid I've mislaid the key, and—"

That hurt him; his eyes darkened with a quick pain that came to him from her words. He had hoped that Gloria had known him better than that.

"You need never lock your door against me, my dear," he told her gently. "I don't want you to be afraid of me. I am going to sit by the fire and think. Just to soak myself in the realization," he added with a happy laugh, "that you are mine."

"Before you go in the morning you will come to my door?"

"If you want me to. . . ."

"Of course, Mark."

"Then—good night, dear."

"Good night, Mark."

King was astir long before dawn. While water heated and bacon sizzled, he rummaged through the storeroom at the rear of the house, gathering what he meant to put into his pack for the four or five days' trip. As he returned from the last journey to the storeroom he confronted Gloria, fully dressed. He dropped his arm-load and filled his eyes with her. Gloria had come down.

"Gloria!" he cried.

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J. H. Hulet Business Manager

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 1932

The Durham Club, Liberty Party, meets every Wednesday evening in the Durham schoolhouse.

The Sherwood Liberty Club will meet in Weckert's Hall, Sherwood, Oregon, Friday evening, Sept. 30. The purpose of these clubs is the

study of economics. All voters are invited to attend. There is no charge.

Dena Merlo left Tuesday for Maryhurst College, where she will attend school.

Miss Merza Halsten is attending Normal at Monmouth where she is taking advanced work.

Guy Carr, and Francis Livermore went deer hunting near Carlton over the week end.

Paul Shellbarger left for Corvallis Sunday morning where he will resume his studies at the O. S. C.

Mr. and Mrs. James Welsh, Supt. of the Masonic home at Forest Grove, were dinner guests of Mr. and Mrs. A. M. Janssen Monday evening.

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