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that Ashton was really his home. He had already adopted her in his heart as his sister, and he could not perceive that she rebelled against the relationship, though she gave absolutely no sign of her own feelings.

#### CHAPTER XVI. HE GOES TO THE MOUNTAINS FOR THE CATTLE.

Miss Dora Thistle did not call at the store the next day, and the day after a bright young man from the city arrived and quite absorbed her attention for the rest of the time she spent at Ashton. Aleo was evidently a great puzzle to her, and she felt that it was best to let him alone. Besides, he had grown very stupid, and Mr. Melton, with his white flannel suit, brown shoes and very broad brimmed hat with a red band, was always interesting. Mr. Melton did not know Aleo, and once or twice was rather rude to him, until Miss Thistle whispered in his ear; then he only stared hard at Aleo and shook his head.

But before the summer was past the young men of the village made shy advances to Aleo, and he got on to very friendly terms with those he met every Sunday in his Sabbath school class.

One day Aleo decided to confide his personal doubts and difficulties to George Marston, the blacksmith. He was quietly looking about to see if he could find any remunerative employment or occupation, and thought that George might suggest some idea. Mr. Higgins still gave him only his board and lodging, though he had freely allowed Aleo to take things from the store on credit.

"Ask him for \$5 a week," said George when Aleo mentioned this. "You deserve it, and he will never give it to you unless you ask him."

Aleo asked Mr. Higgins for the addition of \$5 a week, and the request was promptly acceded.

"I thought you was a queer chap to work all summer on nothing a week," said Joe, "but if you wanted to do it I wasn't saying nothing."

The sharp October frosts had turned all the maple leaves scarlet and all the elm and chestnut leaves yellow, and the ivy leaves yellow and scarlet together. It was time to bring home the young cattle from the mountains, and George Marston and Aleo were deputed to go for them for the neighborhood. George Marston was considered the best hand at coaxing cattle in the village, and he in turn asked Aleo to go with him. Joe Higgins readily let the young man off, for he had cattle of his own to be brought. They were to take George Marston's Concord wagon and buy mare, a first rate roadster. In the wagon were plenty of blankets, so that they might sleep a night on the bottom of it if need be, and oats for the mare and a big lunch basket that Lisbeth prepared. It contained, Aleo knew, a lot of her good things—ginger cookies and cranberry jelly and huckleberry jam, besides more solid nutriment, and there was a big jug of sweet cider.

They would be gone no doubt for three days, if not four or five, for it was 30 miles to the mountains and bringing cattle and driving them home are very slow work. They would start early on Monday morning and reach the pasturage by evening. The next day would come the hunt for the stray ones, and there was no telling how long that would take. Then it would require not less than two days to drive the cattle home, even if they traveled more or less steadily during the intervening night.

Aleo liked the idea of taking such a trip with George Marston, for a fondness had grown up between the man and the lad which was clearly recognized by both, though never spoken of. Perhaps Lisbeth was the mutual bond, for she had become like a very sister to Aleo, and he had done all he could to forward the ends of Marston, to whom also he looked for a sort of protecting, brotherly interest which is consoling to think of, even if it does not mean very much practically.

Lisbeth took great pains in getting the two off comfortably. Many a little thing was added for their welfare which they would never have thought of. At 5 o'clock in the morning the old, dirty, rattling wagon, with its rough floor, that had wide cracks in it, stood before the veranda of the store, and on this special occasion the store door was standing open. But though rather ill looking, the wagon had good springs and good wheels, and the bay mare was fresh and sleek in her substantial though scarcely elegant harness. Everything had been put into the wagon the night before except the lunch basket, and Lisbeth had been up for an hour past preparing that. Aleo now appeared at the door bringing it, and George and Lisbeth were close behind him. He put the basket in behind, and George got in to the seat and took up the reins. When all was ready, Aleo jumped up on the low veranda, and taking Lisbeth's hand, said a hearty goodby and kissed her on the cheek. He blushed slightly, but affected an unconcerned ease of manner and unconsciousness as he swung round the wagon and proceeded to climb on the opposite side. Lisbeth looked after him in blank amazement. She was neither offended nor pained, apparently, but simply astonished, and it took her some seconds to grasp the situation. Then she smiled and blushed prettily, and with a knowing look stepped down beside the wagon as if she thought herself very clever to send such

BY SHERWIN CODY.

a hint from Aleo, and shyly lifted up her lips to George, who bent and kissed her shyly, and Lisbeth slipped her hand up into his for just a moment. Then they were gone. It was still early, the very gray twilight of the morning, the air was cool and bracing, and the mare trotted briskly away. But after awhile they fell to talking about various topics of philosophy and life. Love always suggests the philosophy of life, for is not love the great mystery? But neither of them was sentimental, and some other things distracted them.

There was among farmers great activity near at home just at this season. They were doing up the fall work. Now and then the travelers got wide views over the fields and forests, which seemed clothed in gorgeous, royal robes of flaming red and yellow mingled with the dark green of the pines and hemlocks. Indeed, it was a glorious sight, so strange and different from the soft greens of the spring. Moreover, the air was cool and dry; only white fleecy clouds floated in the sky, and the yellowing leaves came rustling briskly down. Most of the apples had been picked, but open barn doors showed long lines of unheaped barrels row with the red fruit, and here and there in the fields were huge heaps, suggesting the harvest of the year. Besides, all the men seemed to work with a relaxing yet buoyant energy, as if thankful that the heavy work of the year was over. Why is it that we love the autumn when the winter will come so soon, with its dull, cloudy November days and its December snows and its January ice? And why is the spring so sad, even when it is the glad herald of a new year and new life? Perhaps it is that we who are ripening rejoice in the ripeness and mellow bounty of autumn, while the spring saddens us because it suggests a new life and budding hopes to others, but not to us. At any rate autumn is filled with joy, is very joy itself in fullness, and when it puts on such regal robes as it does in New England, when the leaves of all the trees and shrubs and vines turn to such brilliant hues, it becomes indeed triumphant.

When at night they reached the pasturage they found half a dozen steers and heifers that George greeted familiarly and which came to greet the salt in his hand. He was disappointed to find so few. But these were secured, and then they prepared themselves for the night. A campfire was built, over which George made tea and cooked some eggs. The treasures of Lisbeth's basket were fully explored, the mare was unharnessed and tied out to graze, for there was a little dried grass outside the pasture bars, though very little inside. Then the boys got their blankets and sat about the fire talking vaguely as the twilight deepened and the stars came out. Both seemed happy, but Aleo was almost ecstatic. When, a little later, they made their rude beds on the wagon bottom, he lay awake a long time looking up into the clear, still sky. Never before had he slept under the open stars, and now with regret he wished fortune had not always provided him with a bed in those first struggling days.

The next day they were scouring the woods, each searching in a different direction for the missing cattle. It was one of those warm October days when the sunshine seems yellowest of all the year. A few rustling dead leaves fluttered underfoot, and dry branches broke, while partridges slipped up on every side, winging low along the ground or running with lowered heads. Here and there one might catch glimpses up the gorges of the mountains, revealing a splendor and a grandeur that must remain in memory all the days of one's life. The mountains seemed as if they were made of gold, and the valleys as if they were made of silver. The air was so clear and so fresh, and the sun was so warm, that Aleo felt as if he had never before known the world.

They prepared their lunch together. A campfire was built, over which George made tea and cooked some eggs. The treasures of Lisbeth's basket were fully explored, the mare was unharnessed and tied out to graze, for there was a little dried grass outside the pasture bars, though very little inside. Then the boys got their blankets and sat about the fire talking vaguely as the twilight deepened and the stars came out. Both seemed happy, but Aleo was almost ecstatic. When, a little later, they made their rude beds on the wagon bottom, he lay awake a long time looking up into the clear, still sky. Never before had he slept under the open stars, and now with regret he wished fortune had not always provided him with a bed in those first struggling days.

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Suddenly, on a little lake, half a mile from the great ledge, a small boat was flitting on its edge, right on falling twice or insects or an unobtrusive frog ran playfully and lightly over its smooth surface, and it looked so cool and calm and clear! And there, yonder, standing in the middle of the water, were five of the cattle. The sight of them called Aleo to his senses, and immediately he was rising after them as well as he could for the unevenness of the ground

and the tripping branches underfoot. He had not much difficulty in driving them toward the bars, for they seemed inclined of themselves to go in that direction. But it was near a mile and a half, so the sun stood at full noon when Aleo and George met once more, and having rounded in the cattle they had found they prepared their lunch together. Only three of the herd were looking, and these they hoped to find in a part of the pasture yet unvisited.

But George seemed very sober indeed, and scarcely spoke. Aleo talked his free, frank, cordial tone, and was vaguely distressed, though he could make out no reason.

As soon as luncheon was finished they started out again. Aleo wandered all the afternoon, finding nothing of the cattle, but plenty else to enjoy. But as the sun sank out of sight away across the valley behind the Green mountains, he heard a long shrill whistle from George, and hurried toward it as rapidly as he could. It was half an hour before he reached the bars, but here he found George and the missing cattle. So at daylight the next morning they would be ready to start for home.

George was taciturn as ever. Aleo was oppressed, but rallied him on being in love, telling him that after that parting kiss he ought to be a happy man. The other's face lightened somewhat at this, but still he did not resume his natural cheerfulness. They ate supper quietly, and as both were tired they soon lay down in their blankets to sleep.

But neither slept. It was clear and cool; the stars shone down steadily; the wind rustled lightly but mournfully in the trees; over in the east the moon was just coming up round and red, casting long shadows among the trees. They lay thus for a long time with no other sounds. Aleo would have gone to sleep long ago had he not been so very tired.

Suddenly George asked, as if he were inquiring what o'clock it were, but half expected to find his bedfellow asleep:

"Did you ever kiss her before?"

"No," said Aleo in the same tone. "I don't know how I happened to then, only she looked so lonely."

"Do you think she cares for me?" came the question after a little pause.

"Why, of course. I am sure of it. Didn't you know it? I knew it from the first night I said there. You know that Saturday evening you came. I saw her cry a little behind the door when you were gone."

There was a very long silence after this. Neither moved nor offered to speak. But at last George said in his old cheery tone:

"You'd better go to sleep, Aleo. It's tough tramping over the mountains for the first time. I'm pretty stiff myself, and we must be off early tomorrow. It's a good thing we've got all the cattle in."

The journey home was a long and tedious one. One of the men had to walk all the way, and they took turns. At the end of the first day they were so fagged out that George decided to secure a pen if possible in which to keep the cattle for the night, and at last succeeded. The next day one of the steers ran away, and while ten miles from home they were obliged to drive the other cattle into a neighbor's barnyard and go to hunt for the missing one, which they found along near midnight and drove back to the others. They reached Ashton about 10 o'clock in the evening of the third day. The store was still lighted, and George seemed in exceedingly cheerful spirits as they drew near.

They drove the cattle into the great barnyard at the rear, and then George brought the horse around to the front of the store, while Aleo entered the building at the rear. As everything in the kitchen was still dark, he made his way into the dining room, where supper was spread for himself and George, though no one was there, and then he went on into the store, where Lisbeth must be, and no doubt the children had gone to bed, and possibly Mrs. Higgins also.

To his surprise, he found the store full of strangers. Aleo read in their faces that something had happened, and he hurried on toward the outer door, where he could see Lisbeth and Mrs. Higgins looking into the dark for himself and George. As he reached the door he made a sound, and Mrs. Higgins turned suddenly and fell on his neck sobbing as she murmured out:

"Oh, Mr. Howe, I knew you would come! I knew you would come! You've always been that good to me and Lisbeth, and even Joe spoke well of you. I knew you would come!"

"What is the matter?" asked Aleo, looking at Lisbeth, and involuntarily drawing away somewhat from Mrs. Higgins' embrace.

Lisbeth turned a sad, pale face on him, and said shortly:

"Father's had a fit and died about two hours ago. We've been waiting for you to come. Where is George?"

"There," answered Aleo, for George had come up in the dark and was standing on the step. Lisbeth turned and stood facing him.

"Father's dead," she said in the same monotonous tone in which she had addressed Aleo. "He died in one of those fits about two hours ago. We've been waiting for you. The neighbors came in and offered to help, but they could do nothing."

Others had crowded around, much to Aleo's annoyance, but Lisbeth and Mrs. Higgins and George seemed to think it only natural that they should. But Lisbeth said in the same tone as before:

"Come in and have your supper. I've had it waiting for you. Come on, George. Don't talk about going off now. Come in. Supper's all ready."

CHAPTER XVII.  
THE CONSEQUENCES OF JOE HIGGINS.

As the doctor and a neighbor had performed the necessary offices for the dead, there was naught to do now but eat supper and go to bed. Kind women followed Mrs. Higgins and Lisbeth fairly into the dining room, and had to be assured many times that there was nothing to be done, no assistance needed, that they were perfectly comfortable

for the night now that George and Aleo had come home. And at last, as George and Aleo were finishing their supper, the four were left alone in the dining room, and Mrs. Higgins and Lisbeth sank into chairs at the table with the young men. Mrs. Higgins by turns wept on the virtues of her deceased husband. All three tried to comfort her, but in vain. She became hysterical, till Lisbeth spoke to her:

"Mother, stop! Stop, mother!"

But Aleo had been watching the face of Lisbeth. Not a tear had escaped her eyes; her face was pallid and drawn in tense lines.

Aleo suggested to Mrs. Higgins that he should help her into the parlor, and she would gratefully have accepted his assistance, but Lisbeth jumped up and said:

"I'll go with mother."

"No, you stay with George," said Mrs. Higgins, even at this moment thoughtful of the proprieties to her guest.

"George can take care of himself. Aleo can look after him," said Lisbeth curtly, and took her mother's arm.

The two men sat looking at each other for a little while. Then Aleo said: "I think I'll clear off the table. Lisbeth must be pretty well used up tonight."

As he began his work George rose and said he thought he must be going; that he would come over in the morning, and be glad to do anything in the world he could do.

"No; stay a little while. Lisbeth will be back," said Aleo, and went on with his work. So George sat down in a corner of the room and waited.

In ten minutes our dainty city lad had performed the duties of the table girl. Then he went to close up the store. He bolted the front door and put out the lights. Then he went the round of the windows in the tavern, fastening them as Mrs. Higgins had been accustomed to do. As he went toward the dining room he heard voices and knew Lisbeth must be there. George was standing in front of her, a hand on each of her shoulders.

"I don't know but this is a bad time to say it," George was saying, "yet I don't know but it's the right time. I mean to say it when I get back. I was thinking about it all the way along. Now that he's gone you'll need somebody to take care of you and the folks, and I don't know that I'm good for anything else if you'll just leave me, Lisbeth."

He spoke in a hesitating, jerky way. But Lisbeth understood.

"But," said she, "I won't tie myself to any man with all my father's family hanging on my skirts. If mother and the children get enough out of the store and things to take care of them properly, perhaps I might."

Then Aleo heard something that sounded like a kiss. A moment later George was stumbling blindly out into the dark. He stumbled into Aleo, who shook hands with him and bade him a hearty good night, which quite brought him to his normal senses. Aleo fastened the door after him and went into the dining room, where Lisbeth was standing by the table.

"I've fastened all the windows," said Aleo, "and the doors are bolted except out this way."

"I'll fasten out here," said Lisbeth, but Aleo followed her, and their hands sometimes met in the dark. A tear or two dropped on his, and then he noticed that she was sobbing and could not stop despite her every effort. When they got to the dining room where there was a light, she lay her head on the table, her arms stretched out before her, and gave way at last to the grief she had so long contained. Aleo stood and watched her till the tears began to run down his face too.

But at last she stopped and they began to talk. They consulted as to what was to be done. In a veiled way they talked over Lisbeth's possible marriage. Lisbeth decided that she and Aleo must get the store to rights and manage things for the winter. In the spring perhaps—but it would be time enough to talk about it then.

"The children don't know," said Lisbeth, "they don't know a thing."

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They didn't know about father's not being well even, and I put them to bed. It's strange that with the noise and everything they have not been down to see what the matter is. But they went after leaves today after school and got very tired. I suppose that is the reason. But we shall have to tell them in the morning."

"Let me tell them," said Aleo.

"Doesn't even Jim know?"

"Not a word."

Then they put out the light, and together stumbled out in the dark to the stairs. At the top of the landing, as they separated to go to their own rooms, they pressed each other's hands warmly and lingered a moment, then said an cheery a good night as possible and were gone.

By daylight the next morning Aleo was dressed and down in the kitchen. And there he found Lisbeth before him, hard at work by lamplight in her pantry, getting ready a large baking, for the house would be crowded during the next three days by neighbors and friends, and of course they must be fed, and as everything had happened so suddenly Lisbeth was not prepared.

Aleo consulted with her about keeping the store closed till after the funeral. He thought it was only proper as a sign of respect. But Lisbeth said people would have to have something to eat, and as there was no other place at which they could conveniently buy, the store must be kept open. Besides there was the mail to be distributed. They finally concluded that if the store was open in front for an hour at noon when the mail came that would be sufficient. The back door might be left open the rest of the day, and if any one was needed he could come in that way.

The children would be down shortly, and Aleo walked out toward the front of the house to meet them when they came down the stairs. Lisbeth, he knew, dreaded to see them. And very soon they came, all slithering down the steps together, laughing and shouting, unmindful and unconscious of the death

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## TALE OF A TRAMP.

Bob Breckinridge's Story of His Wanderings in Asia and Africa.

Bob Breckinridge, for years considered incorrigible, the son of the ex-congressman, has returned home after three years' tramp.

He left Lexington, Ky., in the early summer of 1893, going to New York. From there he shipped on a sailing vessel before the mast to Calcutta, doubling the Cape of Good Hope, sailing through the Indian ocean and the Bay of Bengal. Arriving at Calcutta he held the ship's employ and secured an appointment as a government guard, which position he held for nine months. Tiring of India, he shipped as a sailor on a vessel bound for Cape Town. He remained there for several months when he went to Quilimane, on the Zambezi river. He found South Africa worse than India and concluded to return to Calcutta. He shipped on the Forte Viote, a vessel which sank with all on board on its next voyage, two weeks after he had arrived at Calcutta. He remained in India several months when he engaged with a vessel going to Australia.

He landed in New South Wales, where he remained a year. He says the country is suffering from hard times which are ten times worse than anything known in the United States. From the antipodes he sailed on a Scotch ship across the Pacific to Acapulco, Mexico. He tramped through that country to the City of Mexico, a distance of 250 miles, crossing the Sierra Madre mountains over the old Guadalupe trail. After many adventures and much privation he continued his journey to San Antonio, Tex., where he was taken ill with fever. After remaining in a hospital several months he obtained work on a coasting schooner plying between cities on the gulf. A month or two later he took a trip to Arkansas, where the fever again kept him in bed for a month. He then came direct home. He says he is tired of adventure and will settle down to work.