

# DARRELL of the BLESSED ISLES.

By Irving Bacheller . . . Continued from Last Sunday.

"I promise only that you will love me if you see none you love better." They were slowly nearing the door. Suddenly she stopped, looking up at him.

"Are you sure you love me?" she asked.

"Sure?" he whispered.

"As sure as I am that I live."

"And will love me always?"

"Always," he answered.

She drew his head down a little and to his lips to his ear. "Then I shall love you always," she whispered.

Mrs. Vaughn was waiting for them at the fireless. They sat talking awhile.

"You go off to bed, Polly," said the mother presently.

"I'll tell you something to-night."

"I'll tell you," said she, laughing.

"Then we'll whisper," Trove answered.

"That isn't fair," she said, with a look of injury, as she held the candle.

Besides, you don't allow it yourself."

"Polly ought to go away to school,"

she said, after Polly had gone above stairs.

"She's a bright girl."

"And I so poor I'm always wondering what'll happen tomorrow," said

she.

"See, boy," said Darrell, with a little gesture of his right hand. "The theater of the woods! See the sloping hills, trees above trees, like winding galleries! Here is a colossal old, past reckoning. Why, boy, long before men saw the Seven Hills it was old. Yet see how new it is, how fresh its color, how strong its timber! See the many seats, each with a good view, an' the multitude of the people, yet most of them are hidden. Ten thousand eyes are looking down upon us. Tragedies an' comedies of the forest are enacted here. Many a thrilling scene has held the stage—the spent deer swimming for his life, the painter stalking his prey or leaping on it."

"'Tis a cruel part," said Trove. "He is the murderer of the play. I cannot understand why there are so many villains in it. Both the cat and the serpent bathe."

"Marry, boy, the world is a great school, an' this little drama of the good God is part of it," said Darrell. "An' the play hath a great moral—thou shalt learn to use thy brain or die. Now, there may be many perils in this land of the woods, so many that all its people must learn to think or perish by them. A pretty bit of wisdom it is, sor. It keeps the great van moving—ever moving—in the long way to perfection. Now, among animals a growing brain works the legs of its owner, sending them far on diverse errands until they are strong. Mind, then, boy, perfection of brain an' body is the aim of nature. The cat's paw an' the serpent's coil are but the penalties of weakness an' folly. The world is for the strong. Therefore God keep thee so or there be serpents will enter thy blood an' devour thee—millions of them."

They sat a little time in silence, looking at the shores of the pond.

"Have you ever felt the love passion?" said Darrell.

"Well, there's a girl of the name of Polly," Trove answered.

"Ah, Polly! She's the red lips an' the dark eye," said Darrell, smiling.

"She's one of a thousand." He clapped his hand upon his knee merrily and sang a sentimental couplet from an old Irish ballad.

"Have you won her affection, boy?" he asked, his hand on the boy's arm.

"I think I have."

"God love thee! I'm glad to hear it," said the old man. "She is a living wonder, boy, a living wonder. An' had I thy youth I'd give thee worry."

"Since her mother cannot afford to do it I wish to send her away to school," said Trove.

"Tut, tut, boy. Thou hast barely enough for thy own schooling."

"I've \$82 in my pocket," said Trove proudly. "I do not need it. The job in the mill—that will feed me and pay my room rent, and my clothes will do me for another year."

"On my word, boy, I like it in thee," said Darrell, "but surely she would not take thy money."

"I could not offer it to her, but you might go there, and perhaps she would take it from you."

"Capital!" the tinker exclaimed. "I'll see if I can serve thee. Marry, good youth, I'll even give away thy money an' take credit for thy benevolence. Teacher, philanthropist, lover—I believe thou'rt ready to write."

"The plan of my first novel is complete," said Trove. "That poor thief—"

he shall be my chief character—the man of whom you told me."

"Poor man! God make thee kind to him," said the tinker. "An' thou'rt willing I'll hear of him tonight. When the freight fliers—that is the time, boy, for tales."

They built a rude lean-to, covered with bark and bedded with fragrant boughs. Both lay in the freight. Darrell smoking his pipe, as the night fell.

"Now for thy tale," said the tinker.

The tale was Trove's own solution of his life mystery. Shrewdly come to after a long and careful survey of the known facts. And now, shortly, time was to put the seal of truth upon it and daze him with astonishment and fill him with regret of his cunning. It should be known that he had never told Darrell or any one of his coming in the little red sleigh.

He lay thinking for a time after the tinker spoke; then he began:

"Well, the time is 1835, the place a New England city on the sea. Chapter I—A young woman is walking along a street, with a child sleeping in her arms. She is dark skinned—a Syrian. It is growing dark. The street is deserted save by her and two sailors. One is approaching her. They, too, are Syrians. One seems to strike her. It is mere pretense, however—and she falls. The other seizes the child, who, having been drugged, is still asleep. A wagon is waiting near. They drive away hurriedly, their captive under a blanket. The kidnappers make for the woods in New Hampshire. Officers of the law drive them far. They abandon their horse, tramping westward over trails in the wilderness, bearing the boy in a sack of sailcloth, open at the top. They had guns and killed their food as they traveled. Snow came deep. By and by game was scarce and they had grown weary of bearing the boy on their backs. One, shortly, went to the woods with the little lad while the other went away to some town or city for provisions. He came back, hauling them in a little sleigh. It was much like those made for the delight of the small boy in every land of snow. It had a box painted red and two bobs and a little dashboard. They used it for the transportation of boy and impedimenta."

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