

Glenville of the Lone Peak.

By J. OLIVER CURWOOD.

IT MUST have been a very subtle caprice of nature indeed, that had induced this silent, unobtrusive, yet strikingly interesting young man to seek his lonely eyrie here, betwixt

the gloomy, weather-beaten face of the mountain on the one hand and the low, primeval stretch of aged forest and reeking morass on the other, when a thousand others, awaiting merely the creation of a hut or canvas bower to complete the exquisite beauty of a second Eden, lay at his disposal. The morning sun, as it rounded midway between the base and the towering peak of the spurred mountain, shed its effulgent beams for an hour or so upon the vine-clad cabin, then slipped away and appeared not again till high noon. In this periodical manner had the golden orb of heaven gazed down upon the self-same scene for two long years.

The possessor of the strange hermitage appeared anything but a whitened, bare-brained anchorite, who had retired from civilized life to avoid the temptations of the world, and subsisted upon a yearly monastic allowance. In fact, with his dog, his gun and his camera, a handsome mustached face, bronzed by exposure, erect step and manly bearing, one might have taken him for a prospector, a surveyor or possibly a worldly man of the metropolis on a summer vacation. Yet beneath the broad, noble brow there lurked an expression of such infinite sorrow that might well have claimed the pity of Nero.

Glenville Meredith was a man of the world. Three summers previous had found him a prosperous business man of Boston, betrothed to one of her fairest daughters, and well on the road to success. But many a man has reckoned without his host—so had Glenville. He failed. It was not a partial loss, involving others as well as himself, but complete and irrevocable. And everything but the clothes upon his back went to satisfy his creditors. For a night and a day succeeding the hapless event he walked the streets like one denuded, neither recognizing old friends nor observing the eyes of others. His sweetheart's words rang in his ears from morning till night, and were indubitably fixed upon his brain in letters of fire. "Remember when you can return to me, that you have lost, I will stand

beside you at the altar." Meredith's mighty efforts to recover himself were futile, and with a last resolve he turned his face toward the mountain fastnesses of Vermont for—what?

It was a beautiful afternoon in June. That was when the little cabin bashed in the welcome warmth of the sun, and the broad, shining leaves of the creeping vines glistened like tiny mirrors, while the deeper foliage of the mountain side took on a dark, rich shade that put to shame the gray, fissured rocks. Even the mighty peak towering far toward the blue vault of heaven smiled down upon the strange little nestling, and the ground squirrels left their cool home to scamper across the roof, and about the sunny doorway. Down toward the swamp the sunlight was playing in a thousand prismatic colors, transforming the gloomy forest belt to a sea of golden splendor, and the dank marsh to a beautiful prairie. A shrill whistle sounded from down the mountain side, where the hard-beaten path meandered in a dozen tortuous windings, and Glenville came in view.

He had fallen into the habit of talking aloud to his faithful hound, who would answer with looks of intelligence that threatened to excel those of the most human. At the moment when Glenville appeared he was evidently deeply engaged in conversation with the sagacious animal, who attentively listened with the courtesy of a well-bred pedagogue, and looked up with dancing eyes at the conclusion. From the master's shoulders were suspended a well filled game bag, and the camera.

"I tell you, dear boy, we're not far from home and I'm mighty glad of it. This path is as winding as the crooked route to heaven, and three times as peculiar position." What do you think of our new neighbor, dear boy? Don't like him, eh? Well, that's where you and I disagree, I do. Glenville caressed the dog's head tenderly. "But I wouldn't trade a hair of your tail for his whole head, my faithful old friend. Coming over to visit us tomorrow? Where? I don't like that. What? You're mad! Don't want him to come? Well, that's queer. I believe you're crazy. But we'll have to treat him decently now. He'll do us no particular good but could do us plenty of harm. Two weeks more, dear boy, and we start for civilization. You and I will be a fortune in time. How we both will love you in our new home. Your dog shall be one half of our team till you see you have helped me to accumulate a fortune—accumulation—accumulation—accumulation."

Glenville relaxed into a moody silence. His pale face turned upward as though detecting a male specter to

beaver. The woodrat had been his eyes and nostrils. Biting himself to the ground he buried his face in his hands and sobbed like a child. The dog's howl ceased close beside his heart—broken in misery and agony. His own nose caperingly across the bronzed cheek, whining pitifully, as though the mysterious blow were a double one.

The gentle caresses and loving concern of the dog roused Glenville from the black chaos of despair to which he had fallen, to a higher and abler can we say nobler—sense of immediate duty, and rising to a sitting posture, he twined one arm affectionately about the great, shaggy neck of his companion, while with the other he flung back the disordered hair from his pale, tear-stained face.

They sat there, as the blood-red disk of the sun slowly crept behind the distant mountain, diffusing the first ghostlike shadows of a dying day over the somber peak, holding silent communion, the loving, trusting soul of the brute with that of the man. As the light disappeared, throwing a last ray on the bare head of him who had deviated from the path of all that held mankind kindred, for the sake of a woman's love, the discordant cry of the night-crow sounded like the harbinger of evil from the swamp below. The man shuddered, and the hound, with a cold look in his wistful eyes, slunk closer to his friend. The early moon, which appeared to the human gaze just above the white-capped peak, took on a dull, leaden hue; and the soft twittering of tiny brush-birds, and the harsher notes of a faraway raven among the clustering pines, tokened the approach of night.

With a sigh which seemed to rise from the profound depths of a broken heart, Glenville rose to his feet and possessing himself of his discarded accoutrements, proceeded to the cabin door. A hearty supper, and a cheerful blaze soon glowing in the hearth, appeased the conflicting emotions of the young man's soul, and he resumed his natural mood of buoyancy. When the moon at last shone down upon the wild scene in all the splendor of a summer night, he strode to the open door, peered keenly down the winding pathway and the shadowy corridors of the contiguous mountain-belt, then he re-entered and barred the door behind him.

The faint gleams of quivering light that shot athwart the fainter beams of the moon from betwixt the chinks of the cabin logs, faded away entirely, and the lone hut lay under the frowning brow of the haunted gorge of a mountain recess. From the swamp down in the valley rose the nocturnal cries of the aquatic night prowlers, amplified on the still air to mingle with those of the night-hawk and owl further up the peak. The child-like scream of a wandering mountain-cat floated from the dark firs of the forest, an agonizing appeal for help which was taken up again and again by the wily voice of the raven, only to be lost at last in a gurgling echo. Slowly creeping up the narrow mountain path, appeared a figure, completely grotesque

in the dim evening light. It passed near the doorway and peered at the star for a moment, then hurried down the trail. That was all.

The sun had scarcely pierced the bank of evening mist on the east the previous morning when Glenville's new neighbor put in an appearance. He was one of those individuals whom we so rarely meet of whose age it is difficult to form a just opinion. He was capable of presenting a very winning exterior, being endowed by nature with a pair of dancing blue eyes, and a mouth ever on the verge of a good-natured smile. He derived a visible fondness for his unlimited fund of ludicrous adventures, which Glenville found to be a very congenial diversion from his monotonous every-day duty. It was not surprising that these two light-hearted natures, beating to an impulse so nearly akin, should solicit a degree of conviviality which bade fair to ripen into a closer intimacy of true friendship. The old hound alone appeared to resent all advances of the jovial stranger, and relapsed into an air of sullen dejection when near him.

"Jealous, dear boy?" asked Glenville once or twice, laughing sideways at his neighbor. "Come now, make friends." And the stranger would extend his hand with a conciliatory air, only to be hurriedly withdrawn if from the enraged hound.

This intense hatred became a general topic of conversation between the two men, and where others sometimes failed, it held them interested, and many fragile theories were advanced concerning the brute devotion and antipathy of a dog.

"It is instinct," declared Glenville. "Some subtle comprehension which is beyond our ken warns the dumb animal of an enemy. I feel as positive of it as though I were in the dog's place myself, a canine's blood flowing through my veins. But why my faithful old hound should feel thus toward you, I am at a loss to understand."

"A mere brute fanaticism," argued his companion, though his very looks belied the empty words.

"By my soul, no. It's truth. Such truth as a human being is totally incapable of realizing. I make a single concession to you, my friend. The hound has made a mistake—one out of a thousand."

"The concession is admitted, yet it places me in a singularly embarrassing position. By your words I imply that I am not beyond causal suspicion."

"Banish the thought, my friend. If I have unwittingly allowed such an impression to rest upon you, I retract my theory to the last word."

"Thanks!" and the stranger extended his hand across the rough board table to Meredith, who grasped it warmly. "An odd whim should not curtail a friendship so grandly begun, and I believe you as a brother, to lay aside your groundless fancies."

"As an impartial judge I do so. But you, friend Gregory, as you style yourself, what object can you have in this desolate mountain region?"

"Chiefly compensation," rejoined an ex-sturdy tongue," laughed the other.

"I wish, this case I will trust to good law, and wish you to confer. I am an outlaw."

"An outlaw?" The words rose to Glenville's lips in a gasp. He turned deadly pale and stretching forth his arms, cried in a hoarse, voice deep and quivering with passion. "And I—oh, God! I am—"

"What?" interrogated the stranger eagerly, leaning forward in his chair until his flushed face nearly touched that of Glenville Meredith.

"What people sometimes style—a k-dak bond."

"What a terrible change! Twenty seconds had transformed a face of living despair and repentance to one of rigid front. The muscles slowly relaxed, the dark eyes lost their fire, the crimson blood returned to the whitened cheeks and Glenville was himself again, a cool, self-possessed man of the world. "Do you have those fits often?" queried the new neighbor.

"Periodically," replied Glenville coolly. "You see how it affects me in the presence of a prison bird."

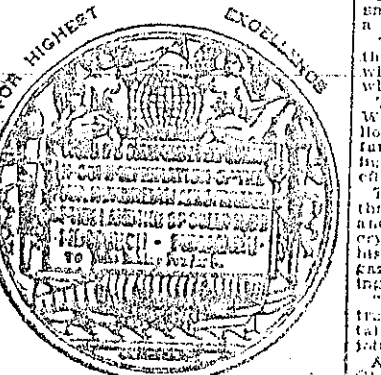
"Ha! ha! I am subject to them myself—repentance, you know, and all of that sort. Strong. Be sure and come over, tomorrow with your dog, and gun."

In this manner the "new neighbor" departed. Daily intercourse now became an ordinary occurrence. Day after day the two would traverse the forest, mountain and swamp in search of game, invariably accompanied by the hound, who neither by coaxing, swearing nor threatening, could be induced to nose a trail pointed out by Gregory.

On a beautiful evening at dusk, nearly two weeks after the introduction of

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