

April 1909

the palace by way of reconnoitering its defenses against a day of battle. As I passed out of the Champ de Mars, one of a hundred squads of pickets dozing by corner and gateway, with sudden access of zeal, sprang up with presented bayonets and a fierce "Qui vive!" I bade them go to blazes; at which, with much amiability, they came to salute.

It was without concern that I found myself trotting through the streets of the capital against which I was a plotter. The interest of the place, however, at once became great. I found it a miracle of filth and horror. Jacinél was an outlying symptom, Port-au-Prince the central ulcer. It was a city sore with filth. There were no sidewalks; the streets were filled with darkies, donkeys, and vociferation; the buildings were almost all ramshackle affairs. Once or twice I was recognized by members of our band. They stared at me as at a madman. I spurred on, not seldom knocking over a slow-moving buck, eager to leave behind me this cesspool of squalor. I suppose I was a spectacle myself—a big man on a big horse hurtling in anger and contempt through the crowded streets.

It was—I ascertained the point afterward—opposite a shabby shop dubbed the Magasin du Louvre on the Rue de Miracle that I ran into a party issuing from another street, the Rue des Fronts Forts. My speed carried me into the midst of this party—I was in no mood to draw rein—and before I had time even to look at the men, they were yelling and shooting. They were all generals, without a doubt, with swords and chapeaus. They shot wildly—not at me at all, being afraid of hitting

each other. Their chief was a man of two hundred pounds, with a white plume in his chapeau, mounted on a white horse. I saw at a glance that he was worth them all, and, with the fit of contemptuous rage still on me, I went for him.

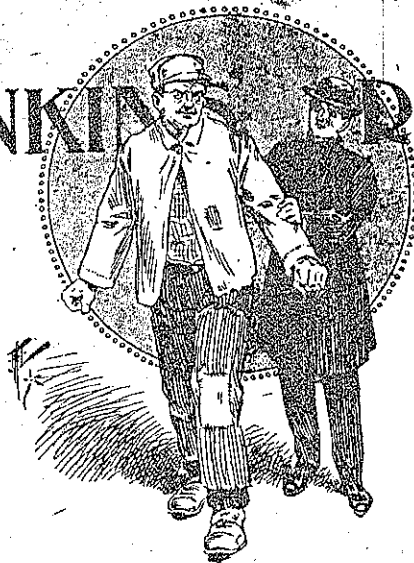
A dapper chap, much frightened, was between us. From this fellow's hands I snatched a club, and then pushed past to the big general, who by this time had his pistol out and was about to put it into action. I remember I had thought my club was a sugar-cane—it was a *cocomacaque*—but I tried it for a rap, anyway. It fell on the general's wrist in the nick of time, and the pistol dropped, exploding, to the ground. At that moment the exclamations of the troop, making me suddenly aware with whom I had to do, fell in with a sudden plan of escape I had formed, and transformed it with the energy of lightning into a glorious, a stupendous, design. I knew that the minute I got out of the press the shots would hit me; it had crossed my mind to flee with a human shield.

When the cries "The president! Rescue! Rescue! Sucre!" arose; I seized the fat chief, and, with a wrench which in truth nearly broke my back, had him out of his saddle and across my own. At the moment I noticed that the iris and white of his eyes were streaked with yellow.

Then we were galloping down the Rue de Miracle—I believe they name it now in the plural—horse, rider, and prisoner, much winded, with never a shot from an amazed staff of generals. The President of Hayti lay across my saddle-bow, just as more than once a deer has come back to camp with me, on vacations in the Michigan woods.

To be Concluded.

JENKINS RIVAL.



BY
JAMES
OLIVER
CURWOOD



It had been a hard day among the longshoremens of Dock Number 3. Jenkins was one of them. For thirteen hours he had worked in a coal-pit on a rush job at forty cents an hour. Three times he had stopped—once for a fifteen-minute dinner, again for supper, and now, to drag himself as black as the coal he had been shoveling, up the dimly lighted, cobble-stoned street that led from the river. His head was bent, his shoulders rounded, his long arms dropped lifeless beside him.

At the street corner he lifted his eyes. Their pupils were large and glaring; the white of them shone with startling distinctness through the black of coal-dust. A passing girl drew with a quick movement to the farther side of the walk, and the man's lips parted in a grim smile of resentment. He knew what he was—that his appear-

ance was only half human now. All that afternoon, in the coal-pit, he had worked with the automatic precision of the dummy-engine on deck. He had given no thought to his toil, had obeyed commands by instinct rather than reason. But he had been thinking—thinking with terrible, brain-racking earnestness. His mental energies had burned within him until he was half insane. He realized that it must have left its physical effects upon him.

He took a side street where there was gloom to hide his ugliness. A policeman passed him, turned around, and looked suspiciously. For an instant Jenkins had leveled the glare of his eyes at him. He struck off into an alley. In the black rear entrance of a huge brick building he sat down on a box.

Slavedom! Almost vagabondage! That was what he had fallen to since three years ago that night. This was

the anniversary of the beginning. Through his lips escaped something that was almost a groan—it might have been a sob. He turned his face upward, where a slit of the sky appeared between the tops of the many-storied buildings. There were stars there, shining dimly through the smoke and grime in the air. Stars were his friends. Always they linked him with the past, crowded him with memories of the old and happier days, spoke soothingly, in their way, and quieted him.

But they failed this night. He was at the bottom. Misery could drive him but one step further, and he rose to his feet with clenched hands, a great force somewhere within him impelling him to take it. There came a crunching step from up the alley, and he knew that the policeman was following him. So he slunk along in the shadows, like a thief, until he came out again into a street; a gloomy, deserted street, where traffic had ceased for the day. From a distance he heard faintly the sound of an organ, and he went in its direction. It was a sign of life in the little old Seamen's Church, where amid the smell from kerosene-lamps and clouds of tobacco-smoke men of the Lakes were wont to assemble.

The organ ceased and he heard a voice. It was that of the preacher. Ordinarily he admired these men, who came down among them for an hour or a night from the luxurious big-salaried pulpits up-town; but the voice that came indistinctly through the open door jarred upon him. Yet he climbed the wooden steps. Soon the organ would begin again. He loved that. He stopped at the door. The fumes of tobacco-smoke came strong in his face. Cautiously he entered into it and sat

down on a bench with half a dozen others, peering about through the clouds of smoke to see if there was any one there whom he knew. Then he rested his eyes upon the preacher.

A word came in a gasp from his lips. Had the man asleep beside him been awake he would have felt the longshoreman's arm twitching against his own; he might have seen his eyes, with the light of the new madness in them. Jenkins seemed hardly to breathe. For five minutes he watched the minister, unheeding his words. Then he slipped to the end of the bench, pulled his grimy hat low, and went out through the door. He stumbled as he went down the steps. At the foot of them he heard the organ start up, and the sound stopped him as though an invisible hand had reached out and gripped him by the throat.

He sat down in a deep shadow at one end of the steps. The music came to him softly, at times almost dying away. A hundred times he had listened to the same thing. He bowed his head upon his breast. A delivery-wagon rattled past. From the river there came the shrill screeching talk of a ship's modoc. Men came out of the church and passed within three feet of him. But he had lost conception of all sound save that of the organ. It came to him as if from a great distance. It was—yes, it was three hundred miles away! There was a little cottage there, a cottage very near the lake, with apple-trees about it; a cottage smothered in honeysuckle and morning-glory vines, and with a girl within playing the organ.

He had been very proud of the girl. She had been day and night, and all of life to him. She had always been this since he could remember, even in

the days when she was a little red-faced, wordless thing, and he an ungainly urchin of seven, with neither father nor mother, and living on the bounty of the fisherman who had lived through the tragedy in which his father had died. He had played and worked and fought hard for this girl, with the valiant ambition to make something of himself for her sake. In time the girl had put up her braids and donned long dresses. And then—

There came a sudden ending crash of the organ, and Jenkins sat up, startled. The music ceased. Again he heard indistinctly the voice of the minister. That, too, came as if from a great distance. Three years had not made much change in it. It was the same voice that he had heard one day when he went to the trysting-place in the old orchard. The stranger was there, sitting very near to the girl, and she was laughing up into his face, a flush in her cheeks. The flush had deepened when she saw Jenkins—and he had turned away. He heard her call, but feigned not to hear. A new and terrible fire was burning in his heart. He had never known its sensations before. That night he did not go into the cottage; but in the evening he heard the organ, went near, and saw them through the window. It was a new experience for him. Perhaps it should not have hurt him so.

"He is visiting at the Wilkinses," the girl had explained to him the next day. "Kate brought him over, and they stayed to supper. Kate was in the house when you came to the orchard."

He had not believed her, and in his anger had told of seeing them alone through the window. It was then that the Woman had been born. Pride shone in her white face, resentment in

the flash of her eyes. The split had come, then. The boy had seen them together often after this. Sullenly he had held aloof, stunned, punished to the verge of madness. And then—

It had happened one night soon after. He was coming up late along the edge of the lake when he saw them. They stood for a few moments where the light of the moon fell upon them, the girl held close in the man's arms. Still later that night he met the man—alone. Without explanation he began to mete out his vengeance, and when it was over the man from the city lay upon his back, breathless and bloody.

"You're going to marry her?" Jenkins had whispered, his breath hot against the fallen man's face. "You're going to marry her?"

"Yes."

Before morning he had scribbled a note to the girl and had gone into the big world; and since that hour no one but himself had known where his steps had taken him.

In the little old church the minister was praying. His words were few, for the tobacco-smoke was growing stifling. As the organist started the closing hymn, he passed down among the rough men of the Lakes, and one after another gripped a hundred toughened, outstretched hands. As the last of the throng passed out through the door, he lighted a cigar and followed. On the steps he paused for a moment to take in a deep breath of fresh air. From below him a face stared up. It was a black, sinister face, with eyes gleaming oddly in the gloom. The minister gave it a casual glance as he went down into the street.

Jenkins followed. His mind was aflame now with a single desire. His

old enemy was going home. Each step brought him nearer to the woman whom they both loved. The woman! Jenkins felt the blood surging hot in his face. Intense longing—excitement—madness, almost, mastered him. To him she was still *the girl*. Three years could not have made much change in her. And yet—

He almost sobbed in his eagerness. He would see her again—this night—even though it were but to catch a glimpse of her through a window. His heated brain did not measure results. *She* was near. Perhaps even now she was thinking of that night just three years gone—and wondering. For she could not have forgotten him. He knew that. Sometimes there must come thoughts to her of the old days when the cottage, the orchard, the lake, and just they two were the whole world, beyond which nothing held interest or lure for them. She might laugh, she might regret that those days had ever been, but still—she *would* think of him!

He crossed the street, keeping close in the shadows. Sense of distance and place left him. After a time the two entered between rows of houses dark in the gloom of trees, and Jenkins crept up behind the other until he might have touched him. The man ahead began to whistle. He was happy. The longshoreman shivered; he dug his fingers into the palms of his hands, and the spirit of retaliation whispered within him. In the heat of it he came still nearer. He longed to grip the throat ahead of him. After a little he battled down his desire and fell a dozen paces behind. The minister stopped, tossed the glowing end of his cigar away, and opened a lattice gate. Behind this Jenkins dropped in a crouching heap. Up the walk light shone

faintly through curtained windows. Against one of these curtains there was suddenly thrown a shadow—and the gate creaked with the crushing force of Jenkins' grip. The shadow was motionless as the minister's footsteps sounded up the walk. Then it disappeared, the door was opened from within, and a woman stood in the frame of light.

Jenkins forgot concealment; his black, staring face rose above the wicket gate.

"Margaret!" he called. "Oh, Mar—"

The words forced themselves between his lips before he could catch himself. In an instant the man and the woman had turned. Both saw the black face hanging over the gate. With a startled exclamation the woman ran up the steps and stood poised for further flight. The light from the door fell upon her. For a moment Jenkins stared. Something began to burn and crackle and fill his head with sound. He saw the man approaching, but did not hurry to retreat. The buzzing and palpitating in his head continued. He felt dazed—weak—and only a powerful effort kept him from surrendering to his desire to lie down upon the grass and rest. He began to understand what was the matter. He had worked too much overtime. The throbbing of the donkey-engine still sounded in his ears. Suffocating clouds of coal-dust seemed filling his nostrils. He needed a bath—and sleep—above all, sleep. He walked away slowly. The man hurried through the gate and came up behind him.

"Hello, there! Who are you? What do you want?" he asked.

Jenkins mumbled something about having made a mistake and started to move on, but the other detained him.

The woman had run down to the gate, and now called affrightedly to the minister who hesitated. He met Jenkins' eyes. Something in them made him clutch harder on the arm he held.

"I'll be back in a moment, Kate!" he called over his shoulder.

"Kate," repeated the longshoreman. He spoke as if to himself. "That was Kate—Kate—"

"Yes, it was Kate, Jenkins," said the minister. "You see, I haven't forgotten you!"

They moved on, slowly. Jenkins' grimy hand now clutched the other's arm. It tightened as he repeated the woman's name.

"I didn't recognize her," he mumbled. "I thought—"

"I know what you thought, Jenkins," the other interrupted. "You were wrong. You've always been wrong. I married Kate."

Jenkins' brain was clearing. He heard the minister laugh. It was a gloating sort of a laugh, he thought. He began to reason.

"You didn't marry—Margaret?" he asked.

"No!"

The minister was very cheerful. The longshoreman's fists knotted themselves in the gloom. His shoulders became rigid. The truth was dawning upon him. This man had not only ruined his life; he had jilted the girl. He drew away to secure distance.

"You lied!" he snarled. "You told me—"

"That was your mistake, not mine,

Jenkins. I never wanted Margaret. Margaret didn't want me. It was Kate you saw me with that night, the night you walloped me. I didn't know you thought it was Margaret until we read your note. You attacked me like a pirate, and asked me if I intended to marry her. I thought you meant Kate, and said yes. That was the truth. I have."

He pulled a couple of cigars from his pocket and offered Jenkins one. Then he struck a match. For an instant the two faces were within a few inches of each other. The minister's white teeth gleamed in a silent laugh. It was a good-humored, friendly laugh, and the glitter went out of Jenkins' eyes.

"And Margaret?" he asked.

"Home—still waiting for you!"

The match went out, and there came a choking sob in the darkness.

"She's just where you left her, Jenkins—in that little old cottage down by the lake. Kate was over to see her a few weeks ago, and she says that Margaret still believes you will come back some day. She says that she drove you away, but she has never told us how. I always thought it was because of that night you saw Kate and me together on the beach. Why, man—"

Jenkins, tired, broken, with the new joy pouring in upon his soul, slipped down upon the grass. The minister could only dimly see his shadowy hulk stretched there. But he heard. And he turned; slowly, and went back to the woman waiting at the gate.

