

THE BROAD HIGHWAY

A Tale of 19th Century England, Full of the Thrills of Adventure and Spirit of Romance

By JEFFERY FARNOL

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 Peter Vihart, an English schoolboy, dependent upon his uncle, Sir George Vihart, in his pocket only 15 guineas (157) by the old man, Maurice ("Black") Vihart, no serious price father, and says, a sonnet of Peter, is left 20,000 pounds (\$100,000). The money is given to him for the one who marries the Lady Sophia Selton within a year. Peter, against the protestations of his old friend with whom he lived, Sir Richard Ansturley, decides to go down "The Broad Highway" of Kent and live. His plans to work after the money is gone. He takes up his exciting adventures until he reaches Hastingburg village, where he becomes a blacksmith in the employ of "Black" George. Peter goes to live in a "haunter" house in a hollow. The principal feature in the first book is that Peter is three times mistaken for his cousin Maurice. The only difference between the two is that Peter is clean, shaven, and has a beard. At the end of this book "Black" George, convinced that Prudence, the daughter of the village, loves Peter, runs away in a jealous rage. Peter, however, merely considers her as a child. At the beginning of book II he is suddenly awakened by a man's voice calling "Charman!" He goes to his bedroom, he finds a strange woman about to shoot at a man entering his room. It is his cousin, Maurice, who is in his room in disguise. He beats into insensibility after a nervous rage. A position being removed the prostitute form. When Peter reaches home, dazed, Charles, thinking he is his cousin, darts at him with a knife, but also realizes her mistake in time. The next morning Peter awakes to find his guest gone. He left her behind as a memento. When Peter reaches the village he learns that "Black" George is seized with another fit of viciousness.

BOOK II.
 CHAPTER I.
 GOT TURBLE DRUNK, 'e did, over to Cranbrook—threw Mr. Scrope, the headle, over the churchyard wall—hecked down Jeremy Tullinger, the Watchman, an' then—went to sleep. While 'e were asleep they managed, cautious-like, to tie 'is legs an' arms, an' locked 'im up, mighty secure, in the workshop. 'Ow'ever when 'e woke up 'e broke the door open, an' walked out, an' nobody tried to stop 'im—not a soul, Peter. "An' when was all this?" "Why, that's the very p'nt," chuckled the Ancient, "that's the wonderful part of it, Peter. It all 'appened on Sat'day night, day afore yesterday as ever was—the very same day as I says to Simon, 'mark my words, 'e won't last the month out.'" "An' where is he now?" "Nobody knows, but there's them 'a says they see 'im makin' for Sefton

George's doing; he said I are very good friends—why should we quarrel?" "Then—then it weren't Jarge?" "No—I have not seen him since Saturday."

"Thank God!" she exclaimed, pressing her hand to her bosom as if to stay its heaving. "But you must go," she went on breathlessly. "Oh, Mr. Peter! I've been so fearful for 'ee, and—and—you might meet each other any time, so—you must go away."

"Prudence," said I, "Prudence, what do you mean?"

For answer, she held out the crumpled paper, and, scrawled in great, struggling characters, I read these words: "Prudence—I'm going away. I shall kill him else, but I shall come back. Tell him not to cross my path, or God help him, and you, and me." "GEORGE."

"What does it all mean, Prudence?" said I, like a fool.

Now, as I spoke, glancing at her I saw her cheeks, that had seemed hitherto more pale than usual, grow suddenly scarlet, and, meeting my eyes, she hid her face in her two hands. Then, seeing her distress, in that same instant I found the answer to my question, and so stood, turning over George's letter over and over, more like a fool than ever.

"You must go away—you must go away!" she repeated.

"Hum!" said I.

"You must go soon; he means it, I—'I've seen death in his face,' she said, shuddering; 'go today—the longer you stay here the worse for all of us—go now."

"Prudence!" said I.

"Yes, Mr. Peter!" from behind her hands.

"You always loved Black George, didn't you?"

"Yes, Mr. Peter."

"And you love him still, don't you?" A moment's silence, then: "Yes, Mr. Peter."

"Excellent!" said I. Her head was raised a trifle, and one tearful eye looked at me over her fingers. "I had always hoped you did," I continued, "for his sake, and for yours, and in my way, a very blundering way as it seems now, I have tried to bring you two together." Prudence only sobbed. "But things are

"Charman," said I, again, "you have come then."

Woods." Hereupon, breakfast done, I rose, and took my hat.

"To the forge; there is much work to be done, Ancient."

"But Jarge bean't theer to 'elp ye." "Yet the work remains, Ancient."

"Why then, if you're goin', I'll go wi' ye, Peter." So we presently set out together.

All about us, as we walked, were mute evidences of the fury of last night's storm: trees had been uprooted, and great branches torn from others as if by the hands of angry giants; and the brook was a raging torrent. Down here, in the hollow, the destruction had been less, but in the woods, above, the giants had worked their will, and here an empty gap showed where, erstwhile, had stood a tall and stately tree.

CHAPTER VI.
 AM at the forge, watching the deepening glow of the coals as I ply the bellows; and, listening to their hoarse, not unmusical drone, it seems like a familiar voice (or the voice of a familiar), a somewhat wheezy one, speaking to me in staccato gasps, something in this wise: "Charman Brown—desires to thank—Mr. Smith—but because thanks—are so near and small—and his service so great—needs must that he remember him—Remember me!" said I aloud, and, letting go the shaft of the bellows the better to think this over, it naturally followed that the bellows gave suddenly dumb, whereupon I seized the handle and recommenced blowing with a will.

"Remember him as a gentleman, and whereas the familiar," "Feh!" exclaimed.

"—yet oftener as a smith—"

"Hum!" said I.

"—and most of all—as a man."

"As a man!" said I, and, turning my back upon the bellows, I set down upon the anvil and, taking my chin in my hand, stared away to where the red roof of old Anos' osthouse peeped through the swaying green of leaves. "As a man!" said I to myself again, and so fell a-dreaming of this Charman, dead in my mind, I saw her, not as she had first appeared, tall and fierce and wild, but as she had been when she stooped to bind up the hurt in my brow with her deep eyes brimful of tenderness, and her mouth sweet and compassionate.

Beautiful eyes she had, though whether they were blue or brown or black, I could not for the life of me remember; but I knew I could never forget the look they had when she gave that final gasp to the bandage. And here I found that I was turning a little locket round and round in my fingers, a little, old-fashioned, heart-shaped locket with its faint inscription: "My true heart would keep for long—back to a gentle man and strong—"

I was sitting thus, plunged in a reverie, when a shadow fell across the floor, and looking up I beheld, Prudence, and straightway, slipping the locket back into the bosom of my shirt, I rose to my feet, somewhat ashamed to be caught thus alone.

"Her face was troubled, and her eyes fell from recent tears. 'This in her hand she held a crumpled paper.' " "Prudence!" she began, and then stopped, staring at me.

"Oh, Prudence!" "You've seen him?" "Whom—whom do you mean?" "Black Jarge?" "No, what should make you think so?" "You'd be all—but—you've been looking for him?" "And supposing I have, that is none of



the summer morning, but left her weeping in the shadows.

CHAPTER VII.
 TO FIND a man in Cambourne Woods, would seem as hard a matter as to find the needle in the proverbial 'bale of hay.' The sun crept westward, the day declined into evening; yet, a hungry though I was, I persevered in my search, not so much in the hope of finding him (in the which I knew I must be guided altogether by chance), as from a disinclination to return, just yet, to the cottage. "It would be miserable there at this hour," I told myself, "miserable and lonely."

Yet why should I be lonely; I, who had gloriied in my solitude hitherto? Whence then had come this change?

While I stood thus, seeking an answer to this self-imposed question and finding none, I heard someone approach, whispering and looking about a fellow with an axe upon his shoulder, who strode along at a good pace, keeping time to his whistle. He gave me a cheery greeting as he came up, but without stopping.

"You seem in a hurry," said I.

"Ah!" grinned the man, over his shoulder, "cause why?—cause I be goin' ome."

"Home!" said I.

"To supper," he nodded, and forthwith began to whistle again, while I stood listening till the clear notes had died away.

"Home!" said I, for the second time, and there came upon me a feeling of desolation such as I had never known even in my neglected boyhood's days.

Home! truly a sweet word, a comfortable word, the memory of which has been as oil and wine to many a sick and weary traveler upon this Broad Highway of life; a little word, and yet one which may come betwixt a man and temptation, covering him like a shield. "Roof and wall, be they cottage or mansion, do at me make home," thought I; "rather is it the atmosphere of mutual love, the intimacies of thought, the joys and sorrows endured together, and the never-failing sympathy—that bond invisible, yet stronger than death."

And, because I had hitherto known nothing of this, I was possessed of a great envy for this ace-fellow as I walked on through a wood.

CHAPTER VIII.
 THE moon was rising as, hungry and weary, I came to that steep descent I have mentioned more than once, which leads down into the hollow, and her pale radiance was already upon the world—a sleeping world wherein I seemed alone. And as I stood to gaze upon the wonder of the heavens, and the serene beauty of the earth, the clock in Cranbrook Church chimed nine.

And, presently, I descended into the shadows, and, walking on beside the brook, sat down upon a great boulder; and, straightway, my weariness and hunger were forgotten, and I fell a-dreaming.

Now as I sat thus, chin in hand, I heard a little sound behind me, the rustling of leaves, and, turning my head, beheld one who stood half in shadow, half in moonlight, looking down at me beneath a shy languor of drooping lids, with eyes hidden by their lashes—a woman tall and fair, and strong as Dian's self.

"Charman!" said I at last, speaking almost in a whisper. Surely this was the sweet goddess herself, and I the wondering shepherd on Mount Ida's solitude.

"Charman!" said I again, "you—have come then?" With the words I rose. "You have come, then?" I repeated. "But now she sighed a little, and, turning her head away, laughed very sweet and low—and sighed again. "Were you expecting me?" "I—I think I was—this is—I—I don't know!" I stammered.

"Then you were not—very surprised to see me?"

"No."

"And you are not—very sorry to see me?"

"No."

"And—are you not very—glad to see me?"

"Yes."

Here there fell a silence between us, yet a silence that was full of leaty stirrings, soft night noises and the murmur of the brook. Presently Charman reached out a hand, broke off a twig of willow and began to turn it round and round in her white fingers, while I sought vainly for something to say.

"When I went away this morning," she began at last, looking down at the twig, "I didn't think I should ever come back again."

"No, I—I supposed not," said I awkwardly.

"But, you see, I had no money."

"No money?"

"Not a penny. It was not until I had walked a long, long way, and was very tired, and terribly hungry, that I found I hadn't enough to buy even a crust of bread."

"And there was three pounds, fifteen shillings and six-pence in Donald's old shoes," said I.

"Sevenpence!" she corrected.

"Sevenpence!" said I, in some surprise.

"Three pounds, fifteen shillings and sevenpence, I counted it."

"Oh!" said I.

"She nodded. "And in the other I found a small, very curiously shaped piece of wood."

"Ah—yes, I've been looking for that all the week. You see, when I made my table, by some miscalculation, one peg persisted in coming out shorter than the others, which necessitated its being shored up by a book until I made that block."

"Mr. Peter Vihart's Virgil book?" she said, nodding to the twig.

"Yes," said I, somewhat disconcerted. "It was pity to use a book," she went on, still very intent upon the twig, "even if that book does belong to a man with such a name as Peter Vihart, but now, presently, seeing I was silent, she stole a glance at me and looking, laughed.

"But," she continued more seriously, "this has nothing to do with you, of course, nor me, for that matter, and I was trying to tell you how hungry—how awfully hungry I was, and I couldn't eat, could I, and so—and so I—I—"

"You came back," said I.

"I came back," said I.

"Being hungry."

"Famishing!"

"Three pounds, fifteen shillings, and sevenpence is not a great sum," said I, "but perhaps it will enable you to reach your family."

"I'm afraid not; you see I have no family."

"Your friends, then."

"I have no friends; I am alone in the world."

"Oh!" said I, and turned to stare into the brook, for I could think of that she was alone and solitary, even as I, which seemed like an inevitable bond between us, drawing us each nearer the other, whereas I felt ridiculously pleased that this should be so.

"No," said Charman, still intent upon the twig, "I have neither friends nor family, but money, and so—being hungry—I came back here, and ate up all the bacon."

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 I AM at the forge, watching the deepening glow of the coals as I ply the bellows; and, listening to their hoarse, not unmusical drone, it seems like a familiar voice (or the voice of a familiar), a somewhat wheezy one, speaking to me in staccato gasps, something in this wise: "Charman Brown—desires to thank—Mr. Smith—but because thanks—are so near and small—and his service so great—needs must that he remember him—Remember me!" said I aloud, and, letting go the shaft of the bellows the better to think this over, it naturally followed that the bellows gave suddenly dumb, whereupon I seized the handle and recommenced blowing with a will.

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not hopeless yet. I think I can see a means of straightening out this tangle." "Oh, if we only could!" sobbed Prudence. "Ye see, I were very cruel to him, Mr. Peter!"

"Just a little, perhaps," said I, and, while she dabbed at her pretty eyes with her snowy apron, I took pen and ink from the shelf where I kept them, which, together with George's letter, set upon the anvil. "Now," said I, in answer to her questioning look, "write down just here below where George signed his name what you told me a moment ago."

"You mean, that I—"

"That you love him, ye."

"Oh, Mr. Peter!"

"Prudence," said I, "it is the only way, so far as I can see, of saving George from himself, and no sweat, pure maid need be ashamed to tell her love, especially to such a man as this, who worships the very ground that little shoe of yours has once pressed."

She glanced up at me, under her wet lashes, as I said this, and a soft light beamed in her eyes, and a smile hovered upon her red lips.

"Indeed—does, Prudence, though I think you must know that without my telling you." So she stooped above the anvil, bushing a little, and sighing a little, and crying a little, and with fingers that trembled somewhat, to be sure, wrote these four words: "George, I love you."

"What now, Mr. Peter?" she inquired, seeing me begin to unbuckle my leather apron.

"Now," I answered, "I am going to look for Black George."

"No—no!" she cried, laying her hands upon my arm, "no—not if 'ee do meet him, he—he'll kill 'ee!"

"I don't think he will," said I shaking my head.

"Oh, don't go—don't go!" she pleaded, shaking my arm in her eagerness; "he be so strong and wild and quick—he'll give 'ee no chance to speak—he will be murder!"

"Prudence," said I, "my mind is set on it. I am going—for your sake, for his sake, and for my own—saying which, I looked her hands gently and took down my coat from its peg."

"Dear God!" she exclaimed, staring down at the floor with wide eyes, "if he were to kill 'ee, I should be a deal wiser in all things than I am today."

"And he—would—be hanged!" said Prudence, shuddering.

"Probably—poor fellow!" said I. At this she glanced quickly up, and once again the crimson dyed her cheeks.

"Oh, Mr. Peter, forgive me! I—I were only thinkin' of Jarge, and—"

"And quite right too, Prudence," I nodded; "he is indeed worth any good woman's thought; let it be your duty to think of him, and for him, henceforth."

"Wait!" said she, "wait!" And turning, she fled through the doorway and across the road, swift and graceful as any bird, and presently was back again, with something hidden in her apron.

"He be a strong man, and terrible in his wrath," said she, "and I—love him, but—take this wi' you, and if he—must be—use it, because I do love him." Now, as she said this, she drew from her apron that same brass-bound pistol that had served me so well against the "ghen," and thrust it into my hand. "Take it, Mr. Peter—take it, but—oh—here a great sob choked her voice—"don't—don't use it—if—if you can help it, for my sake."

"Oh, Mr. Peter, forgive me!" she bowed head very tenderly, "how can you think I would go against any friend with death in his hand—Heaven forbid!" So I took the weapon and, clapping it in my hat, strode into the glory of

SCRAPPLE

DOMESTIC LIFE IN THE TRENCHES

—London Mail.

Cook—Now, you chaps, hurry up with that water, we're waiting to make the tea.

THE PADDED CELL

AEH

History in the Making

Count Reventlow having proved that British supremacy is at an end, His Imperial Master poses for new design for German coinage.

Get a Bedspread

Editor—There's been a robbery at 22 Park place. I want you to go down and cover it.

Cub Reporter—Er, w'hat will I cover it with?

Generous

Heiress—Ah, Albert, I am wretched! Father has been speculating and has lost everything!

Albert—Then, dearest, far be it from me to rob him of you, also.

Irish Stew

"Are you the mate?"

"Nope; I'm the guy what bites the mate."

A Sneaking Face

Purey—I am sorry, my dear chap, that you didn't succeed. You must have read a refusal in her face?

Haruld—I did. She "nit" her brows!

SONGS WITHOUT WORDS

A Woman Crosses the Street

Willing to Comply

Mistress—And remember this, if I have occasion to remind you, I don't want you to answer me back.

Mary Ann—No, indeed, mum; I ain't that kind. If I've got anything to say, I'll speak it to yer face, mum.

Had All Jokers

The Instructor of the Sporting Volunteers—Squad-number! The Squad—One, Two, Three, Four, Five, Six, Seven, Eight, Nine, Ten, Knave, Queen, King, Ace.

The Modern Maid

Robert—My darling, when will you be mine?

Gladys—Never; but I don't mind marrying you.

—AND THE WORST IS YET TO COME

Playing Safe

"Wonder what brought Newweigh back home so quick?"

"Oh, his tailor died, so it's perfectly safe."

Kind Gentleman—My little boy, have you no better way to spend this beautiful afternoon than by standing in front of the house idling away your time?

Boy—I ain't idlin' away any time. There's a guy inside the house with my sister and he's payin' me a quarter an hour to watch for me father.

THE FLAGSHIP OF THE LAND NAVY