

THE NOVEL OF THE YEAR

BY GEORGE A. CHAMBERLAIN

PRELUDE

ON AN Indian summer afternoon of not very long ago Red Hill drowsed through the fleeting hours...

At right angles to the lake, a broad way, cut through the length of the hill, and itself in a dip at each end toward the valleys and the new world.

CHAPTER I Exiled

AUTUMN passed and winter, then on a day in early spring Alan Wayne was summoned to Red Hill.

House too were but faintly outlined in verdure and stood like empty sherry glasses waiting for warm wine.

The church was but a symbol—a mere shell. Within it presented the appearance of a lumbering creature...

In the shadow of its walls lay an old grange, whose porchway had long been undisturbed.

The supper call had sounded and the children's answering cries had ceased.

On the veranda of Elm House an old man in shirt sleeves sat whitening on a wicker chair.

When Alan reached the house Mrs. Wayne was in her study, and she was surveying winter's ruin.

Alan turned away briskly and started down the ladder.

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fly, seriously cordial to the stranger within the gates.

They gathered on a study lot. From old Captain Wayne to little Clematis McAlpin...

On Red Hill the mountain-ash thicket that gave the place its name was in its full glory.

Night fell on the Hill. The stars came out and with them a glow of light and warmth lit up the stately elm.

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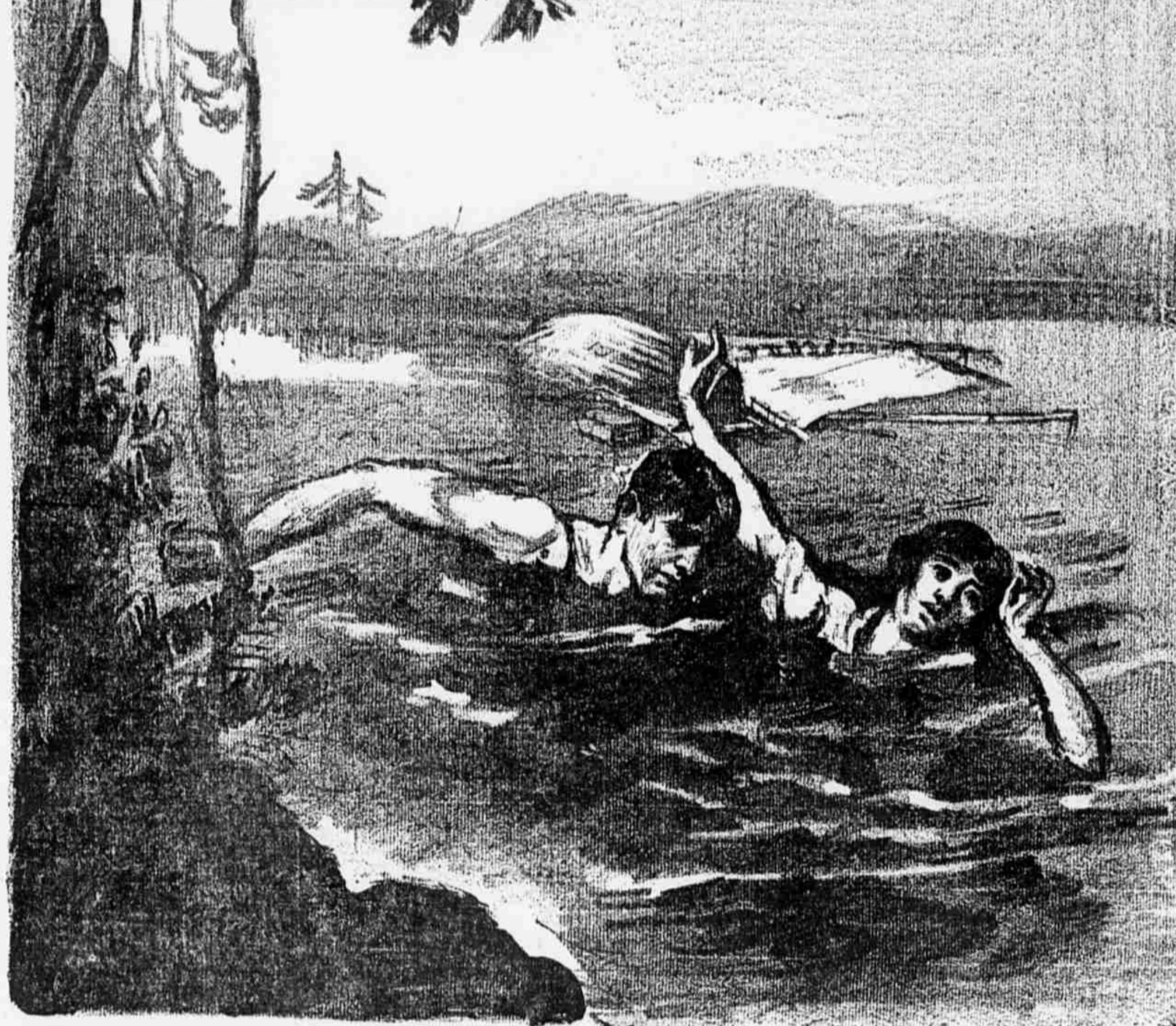
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Gerry had deliberately slapped her across the mouth, "Put one hand on my shoulder, I'll tow you to shore," he said.

In a word he had the perfect proportion that looks frail and is strong.

J. Y. began to speak. He spoke for a long quarter of an hour and then summed up all he had said in a few words.

"I've been your banker without telling you, but it takes more than a Wayne to be an banker without telling you."

For the first time Alan spoke. "What do you mean, sir?"

With the words his slight form straightened, his eyes blazed and there was a slight quivering of the thin nostrils.

J. Y. dropped his eyes. "I may have been wrong, Alan," he said slowly.

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was standing stock-still, one awkward lanky leg half crooked as though it were still running.

Alan recognized Clem's voice and turned. She was racing across a corner of the pasture.

Alan leaped from the cart and picked her up, quivering, sobbing and breathless.

Alan half shook her as he drew her thin body close to him.

Clem stifled her sobs and looked up at him with a sudden gravity in her elfish face.

Gerry's face was white and stern. "Put one hand on my shoulder and kick with your feet," he said.

"Put me on Hidden Rock," said Alex.

"I prefer to wait for a boat."

"It will take an hour for a boat to get here," answered Gerry.

"In a dead silence they plowed slowly to shore and when Gerry found bottom he stood up, took Alex into his arms and strode well up the bank before he set her down."

During the long swim she had had time to think, but not to forgive.

She stamped her sullen feet, shook out her skirts and then looked Gerry up and down.

Gerry held her with his eyes. "Yes," he answered. "I want it now."

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be high-strung, nervous and impulsive, a combination that led people to consider her flighty.

Then came calculation. Alex was out of the West, and that meant he could do for her in the way of education and culture had been done, but no one knew better than she that her culture was a mere veneer in comparison with the ingrained favor of the Lansings' family.

Here was a man she could love and with him he brought her the old homestead on Red Hill and an older brown stone front in New York, where position was as awkward as it was socially unassailable.

Alan's eyes narrowed and his thin lips curved into a smile as he gave his verdict: "Andromeda, consenting, chained to the rock."

CHAPTER III Warning

TO THE surprise of his friends Alan Wayne gave up debauch and found himself employed by the firm in the spring that saw his dismissal from Maple House.

He was full of preparation for the trip to Africa when a summons from old Captain Wayne reached him.

With equal horror of putting up at hotels or relatives' houses, the Captain upon his arrival in town had gone straight to his club and with the usual speculation of the club's windows.

Old members felt young when they caught sight of him as though they had come suddenly on a vanished landmark restored.

"How do you do, sir?" "Huh!" cried the Captain. "Sit down." He ordered a drink for his guest and another for himself.

"It doesn't seem to me that you are a club member," remarked the Captain, "a club was for privacy."

"They've made me a member, sir." "Huh!" cried the Captain. Alan took inspection coolly, a faint smile on his thin face.

"The Captain turned away his bulging eyes, and in a moment he was back in his chair, and finally spoke. "I was just going to say when you interrupted," he began.

"That engineering is a dirty job. Not, however," he continued, after a pause, "dirtier than most. It's a profession, but not a career."

"Oh, I don't know," said Alan. "They've got a few in the Army and they seem to do very well."

"Huh, the Army!" said the Captain. He subsided, and made a new start. "What's your appointment?"

"I don't know," said Alan. "I'm just a job as an assistant to Walter, the engineer the contractors are sending out. We're going to put up a bridge somewhere in Africa."

"That's it, I knew it!" said the Captain. "Going away. Want any money?" "The question came like solid shot out of a four-pounder."

Alan started, colored and smiled, and well open, and six feet of well-proportioned bulk was good to look at, but Alan's angry eyes did not admit it.

"They measured him scornfully, but it was not the look that hurt him so much as the way she turned from him with a little shrug of dismissal and started along the shore for camp."

Gerry reached out and caught hold of her arm. She swung around, her face quite white. "I see," she said in a low voice. "You want it now."

Gerry held her with his eyes. "Yes," he answered. "I want it now." "Why did you yell at me to jump into your horrible boat?"

"I took you for Nance," repeated Alex. "You took me for Nance," repeated Alex. "You took me for Nance," repeated Alex.

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CHAPTER II Accidental

IF ALIX BEERING had not barked her pretty shins against the centrepiece in Gerry Lansing's sailing boat on West Lake, it is possible that she would in the end have married Alan Wayne instead of Gerry Lansing.

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(CONTINUED IN MONDAY'S EVENING LEDGER)