



# HILLTOPS CLEAR

By Emilie Loring

## THE STORY

CHAPTER I.—Prudence Schuyler comes from New York to Prosperity Farm, inherited from her uncle, to make a new life for herself and her brother, David, whose health has been broken by tragedy.

## CHAPTER II

Prudence stopped settling her possessions the next day at noon long enough to inspect the outside of her inheritance. Her tour of inspection ended at the long weather-stained barn.

With a frenzied "cut-cut-cut-ada-ku!" a black hen flew down from the topmost loft. Prudence watched her squawk and cackle and flap through the open doorway, before her eyes returned to the spot from which she had descended. Had she been stealing a nest? Could she find it? What fun!

She tugged a light ladder into place, and with excited agility mounted. Past the first row. Up to the highest, almost touching the roof. That black hen hadn't been sitting up here to see the soldiers go by, she must have left a nest. She touched warm feathers. A sharp peck from a yellow beak dampened her lashes but steeled her determination. She shut her eyes tight and grabbed. She flung the squawking fowl to an adjacent mound of hay where it made the rafters ring with its outraged cackle.

Prudence sat back on her heels and counted. Eight eggs! "SI! Oh, SI!" The cheery call came from below. A man's voice. Not the voice in the fog. That had appeared in person early this morning. Who could it be? Prudence cautiously placed the eggs in her white skirt, gathered up the front of it, and leaned too far over. The hay slid. Struggling to retard her progress, she went with it, down, down into the arms of a man.

"Boy! That was a narrow squeak!" Prudence had closed her lids tight when she felt herself going. She opened them wide, looked up into the deepest bluest eyes she ever had seen. Her glance traveled on to light hair which had an engaging kink at the temple, then back to the face. Its expression sent a ripple along her nerves. Who was he? The muscles of his jaws were set, his arms still gripped her.

"Seems idiotic to say just 'Thank you' when you really—" Her smile was tremulous, her voice shaken. She shivered.

"Don't think about it. I was the man for the moment, all right. What possessed you to lean over that hay-mow?"

Prudence freed herself and stepped back. She resented the dictatorial question.

"Don't lose your temper. That's my usual one-two-three-go! method of descending from haymows. Rather original—if you get what I mean." Now that his color had returned, the curve of his sensitive mouth set her on the defensive. It was so darn boyish for a man his age; he must be about thirty.

"Okay with me. Every move a picture. But is this method of transporting eggs also original with you?" He glanced at her white skirt which she still gripped with one hand. From the side a stream of egg yolks was dripping.

"My word!" She looked from her skirt to his perfectly tailored gray sports suit. It was liberally spotted with yellow which had not been part of the weaver's design. The sight wiped her eyes and voice clean of assumed indifference.

"I'm sorry! I'm terribly sorry. I—I've made you look like an omelette." His eyes deepened as they met hers contritely appealing. His lips tightened. Was he furiously angry because she had spoiled his clothes?

"Truly, I'm sorry. I haven't even thanked you for saving me from a horrid fall—I'd loathe being mushed—forgive me for being flippant. I am on my knees in apology for the damage to your clothes. Come into the house and Jane Mack will take off the spots. She's a demon cleanser."

"No, thank you, my man will do it." "If you scorn our help, you will let me say 'Thank you,' won't you?" She held out her hand. "I am Prudence Schuyler of Prosperity farm."

"Don't apologize for the damage, which amounts to nothing, or the snub which I deserved. I am—"

"Well, Rod, here you are!" SI Puffer in work-stained blue overalls extended a knob-jointed hand. "What you doin' here? Thought you left High Ledges last week. Whatta mean is, didn't know you and Miss Prue was acquainted."

So this was the glamorous Rodney Gerard! The playboy whom she had

planned to treat with superb disdain when or if they met! Life certainly had a nice sense of humor to fling her into his arms. Prudence debonairly answered the question in SI Puffer's slate-color eyes.

"We aren't—that is, we weren't, but quite suddenly I took the quickest way down from the haymow, Mr. Man-of-the-Moment caught me—and look!" She held out her skirt.

"Well, I'll be darned—and eggs forty cents a dozen! You'd better chuck the mess an' go get that skirt cleaned."

"I'm going. Good morning, Mr.—Mr. Rod, and thank you again." Prudence smiled and nodded to the two men watching her, as she left the barn.

"Pretty as a movie star and smart as a steel trap," SI Puffer commented.

"Who is she? What is she doing here?"

"Haven't you heard? Austin Schuyler left all his holdings here to that slip of a girl. He up an' died, just after he'd paid a lot of money for an annuity, too. Can you beat it! Miss Prue came last night with a hatchet-faced woman who's going to be the housekeeper. She's come to the farm to see if she can get her brother David's health back. They say he had an income enough to live on—he was a lawyer—besides his practice till the crash came. Two years ago his wife walked out on him with his sister Julie's husband."

"Schuyler! Is that the family! That rotten scandal staggered even the most hard-boiled people I know. This Miss Schuyler's sister Julie was charming but too domestic for the man she married. Her husband wanted a woman who would make other men stop, look, listen. His wife's sister-in-law was that type, so he stepped up and took her. He didn't have her long. Mrs. David Schuyler was smashed up in an automobile accident a week after she ran away."

"Gorry-me. Makes me think of them words in the Bible, 'an' the wages of sin is death.' Folks say David Schuyler put in all his spare time helping the down-an'-out at a rescue mission. Miss Prue's got grit. Whatta mean is, last night when I brought them in, the road was so thick with fog you could cut it. Once when I looked round I could see tears glistening in her eyes, but she kept her voice like music. I'll bet she sings."

"So she intends to farm! Haven't they any money?"

"Lost it; investments wiped out as quick and as clean as you can wipe writing from a slate. Whatta mean is, they lost their money, that's the talk in the village. She can get their living all right from the place if—only she will stick it out. In spite of radios an' movies, I guess 'twon't seem much like the city. Thought you'd gone, Rod. Don't you usually go flying or playing polo or visiting this time of year?"

Rodney Gerard looked quickly at Puffer's inscrutable face. "You're not crazy about me as a solid citizen, are you, SI? I was going, but Len Calloway held me up. He wants my decision on the timber now so that he can make his contracts for the increase in his cut."

Puffer rubbed his hand up and down his unshaven cheek. He drawled: "I'll donate one piece of advice, Rod. Don't trust Calloway. Whatta mean is, that old trouble between you two is only smolderin'. Len's always been a queer mixture of terrible temper and a sense of justice. When he gets mad he sees blood-red."

"He's all right now, SI. He has been mighty fair and agreeable."

"Hmp. That's because he wants something. Butter wouldn't melt in his mouth when he aims to please. Just the same, don't let him have that timber."

Rodney Gerard paused in the act of applying a lighter to a cigarette. "What's the idea? You told me yourself that a lot of big stuff ought to come out for the good of the forest."

"I did. There's thousands of feet of standing timber that's no longer growing, more than half of it decayin' an' likely to be destroyed by the first storm. I told you something else too—that you ought to have a forester here to mark every tree that was to come out, not leave it to the judgment of any man who can swing an ax, and that you ought to be here yourself when the cutting was done to see it was done right."

"I haven't forgotten, but, SI, they cut trees when the snow is on the ground. What would I do here in winter?"

"Folks have lived here through a winter, Rod, and slept and et like human beings. I calculate 'twouldn't hurt you none."

With a boyish shout of laughter, Rodney Gerard flung his arm about Puffer's shoulders.

"Don't you go back on me. I bank on you to stand by me as you have ever since you taught me to hold a

gun. As to Len Calloway, I'll say 'nothing doing' to him now, and when I get around to it I'll have a forester give us a report on the trees."

"All right, Roddy. When you get the forester here, have him look over that wood lot of Miss Prue's. There's about five hundred acres along the rise that Austin Schuyler bought of Len Calloway's father. That stretch called The Hundreds between the highway an' the sky line. You an' I have been shooting over it year after year. It's the best stand of spruce and pine in the county. Ought to bring that spunky little girl a nice bunch of cash; but I'm afraid if Len Calloway gets hold of Miss Prue before she knows its value, he'll make a sharp trade with her. He's the kind of chap girls and women fall for—only the Lord knows why and he ain't telling—kinder mesmerizes them, I guess. He hold me up in the fog last evening to ask when she was comin'. I didn't let on I had her in the back seat that very minute. Didn't want him to get in a liek till I'd warned her to watch her step. But he beat me to it. He's been to see her this morning."

"This morning!"

"Gorry me, Rod, what's there in that to get so excited about? Every unmarried man in the county—I wouldn't put it past some of the married ones—will come buzzin' round the red brick house like bees around a honey pot, now that girl is there."

Rodney Gerard thoughtfully regarded a fish hawk sailing high above him. He was looking at a different world from the world he had known as he entered the old barn. The sky seemed bluer, the air more sparkling; his blood raced through his veins. He had the sense of a new beginning, as if again, as in his ardent boyhood, he set his compass by a shining star. Of course he had given to charities—money, not his time. Spending for a round of amusement seemed flat, when you saw a girl taking life in both hands and forcing a living from it. He colored as his glance came back to the quizzical eyes watching him.

"Look here, SI, don't let Miss Schuyler sign up with Calloway. She will listen to you. I'll have a forester here within a month if I have to buy one. I was going to New York tonight—but I'll cut out the social stuff this autumn, stay here and attend to the timber."

"What sort of man is Mr. Calloway, Mrs. Puffer? Something of an exhibitionist, isn't he?"

The stout woman's placidity was slightly shaken. "Dearie, you gave me a start. SI told me I must warn you about Len, and I was thinking how I'd best begin when you up and ask the question. Don't trust him."

Prudence chuckled. Mrs. Puffer's portentous voice was so out of character with her personality.

"Has he always lived here?"

"He was born in this house."

"Here!"

"Lors, Miss Prue, before you've lived here a month you'll think every person in the United States had a relative who was born in this house, or one who died here. Folks is everlastingly stopping to ask if they may look around because someone who belonged to them once lived here."

"Sort of a combination of maternity hospital and detention house for heaven, wasn't it? It is almost dark. Let's have a light." She applied a match to the wick in the lamp on the table. "It's out! I'm clumsy. Wonder why Uncle Austin didn't have electricity put in. There! It's lighted!" She adjusted the green shade.

"I guess your uncle thought he'd spent enough on the old house for a start. If he'd had women folks, they would have struck for it. I've got everything electric from an ice-box to a sewing machine. Don't know that it gets me any more time, though." With difficulty she extricated herself from the chair. "I must be going. When's your brother coming, dearie?"

"Just as soon as I get the house in order. It won't be but a few days now. Do you think he will like it? David and I are all that are left of the family. Mother and Father died in my debutante year. He was so much older than I that he has taken their places. He has been everything to me—since I lost my sister. Oh, Mother Puffer, you think he will get well here, don't you?"

"Get well! Never knew anyone who once settled in this village to die of anything but old age. He'll be spry and dancing at your wedding before you have time to turn around."

"My wedding! I married!" Prudence coughed in the vain hope of counteracting the bitterness of her exclamation. "I hope Dave gets well long, long before that. Thanks heaps for everything, Mrs. Puffer. Good night! Come again soon!"

Prudence curled up in the wing-chair, confided to the fire:

"The long winter evenings! Seed catalogues for entertainment! Zowie! 'Self-pity almost caught me that time. Ingrate! Walling over prospective long evenings, when, within my first twenty-four hours here, an all-conquering lumberman has called, and I have been snatched from a messy accident by a rich playboy."

She relived that episode. Shivered. Her realization of the smash from which Rodney Gerard had saved her had ripped off the shell of indifference to men in which she had encased her heart. She had actually liked him! Would she be able to harden again? Already the heavenly beauty and freshness of the place she had inherited was making life seem thrillingly worthwhile. The great spaces seemed as full of life as had the city streets crowded with pushing, dawdling humanity.

"Supper's ready, Miss Prue." Prudence joined the woman at the door. "I'm hungry; that's why I'm low in my mind, Macky. Didn't Mother Puffer say that life could be awful dark and dreary on an empty stomach?" She linked her arm in that of the woman. "She's a dear to bring us things, and a wonderful cook."

Jane Mack sniffed. "She may be a wonderful cook, but she's a terrible talker. She said to me, 'What makes Miss Prue so bitter about men—a pretty child like her? Did her city beau turn her down because she lost her money?'"

Prudence bit her lips to steady them, blinked hard. Since the warning tap on her brother's shoulder, little hot, salty springs seemed in constant motion behind her eyes.

Mrs. Puffer's question about the city beau returned to Prue's mind as several hours later she unclasped the string of pearls before the mirror on the chintz dressing table. She looked

Mrs. Puffer's eyes filled, her lips quivered. "SI is all the men in the family now—we had one boy." She touched a tiny gold star pinned on the breast of her gown. "This stands for a white cross in France."

Prudence laid her hand on the plump fingers. "Dear Mrs. Puffer, I can understand your heartache. I wasn't very old when David went across, but I remember Mother's eyes when the doorbell or the phone rang. They seemed to knife through my heart even when she smiled and talked in her beautiful voice. She had such gay courage."

"Gay courage! That's the sort. Most folks talk of grim courage. I guess that idea came from our Puritan ancestors. But your brother came back safe, dearie. They told me in the village that he wears ten bars on his Victory medal."

"Yes, for carrying ammunition to the Front of the Front in ten campaigns."

"They tell me, too, that isn't all you have to be proud of him for." She resolutely cleared her voice. "We're getting kind of solemn in the firelight. You look real handsome in that dress, it's just the color of the shine in your hair, 'tain't red an' 'tain't yellow, it's like some of my prize zinnias—and those wax beads around your neck are awful pretty."

Wax beads! Julie's pearls! What would Mrs. Puffer say if she knew their value?

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## ROADSIDE MARKETING

By T. J. Delohery

### TOURISTS A CASH CROP

THAT the tourist is a profitable customer for farm produce, prepared food and spare rooms in farm homes has been discovered by thousands of farm women.

In West Virginia, twenty-eight farmers' wives have formed an organization called the Mountain State Tourists' Home. This association, fostered by the West Virginia extension service, adopted rules and regulations governing the service and uses a uniform sign which is posted in front of each member home.

Advertising folders, bearing the name and location of each member as well as the interesting sights nearby, are widely distributed in advance of each tourist season with the result that members of the association have experienced an increase in business during the six years of this co-operative effort.

More than 6,000 people stopped from one to several days at these 28 farms last year. They came from 40 states, England, Norway, Finland, Germany, India, Korea, Philippine Islands, Canal Zone and Canada.

Rates are uniform the state over, lodging being charged at \$1.50 per night for two persons, with breakfast at 25 cents per person and 50 cents each for dinner and lunch.

"Our experience is that tourists are a profitable market not only for spare rooms but for fruits, vegetables, eggs, milk, honey, meats and other things we produce right here on the farm," said Mrs. Paul Priest of Franklin, W. Va. "I buy some fruit, especially grapefruit and oranges; also cereal, tea, coffee, sugar, crackers, cocoa and spices."

"We raise our own tomatoes, tomato juice, corn, beets, apples, peaches, pears, cherries, blackberries, grape juice, chicken, eggs, mutton, veal and pork. I find tourists like our cured meats and canned goods. They have a special liking for country cured ham."

These Mountain State Tourists' Homes, scattered over the state of West Virginia, are making an effort to have city people spend their vaca-

tion in one place. They are also pointing out the advantages of hunting and fishing, because of the large number of sportsmen who get away from the cities in the summer and fall to follow their favorite sports and who are always eager to find good accommodations.

While West Virginia scenery helps the tourist-catering business for these farm women, visitors are making a practice of stopping in the country for both lodging and meals. They find it handier and more economical.

Altoona, Ill., hasn't much attraction insofar as the scenery is concerned, but Mrs. George Stuckey puts up two to three tourist parties a week in a spare room of the large Stuckey farm home. Located in the quiet and cool of the country it is an ideal spot to stop for the night.

Mrs. Fern Berry of Marion, Mich., sells a large amount of fresh garden truck at a nearby tourist camp. Twice a week Mrs. Berry fills the car with red beets, carrots, green onions, radishes, corn, cabbage and cucumbers. Potatoes in two-pound bags, enough for one meal, sell well as do her canned goods and horseradish. Prices are gauged according to city retail

at the lovely, gleaming things which dripped from her pink palm. Her sister's pearls! Lovely Julie, who had married the son of a multi-millionaire, adoring him, believing in him. When after two years of marriage she had discovered his unfaithfulness—the treachery of her brother's wife—she had crumpled, her life had gone out like a candle, and with it the life of her baby. The tragedy had seemed to run back into the very roots of Prue's heart—if one's heart had roots—or the spring of her heart which threatened so often to bubble up in tears. It had killed the lovely shining belief she had had in people, taken the sunshine out of living.

Time had eased the ache, but it had not restored her faith. She had had men friends, but she had steeled herself against their protestations. There were plenty of safe, sane interests without staking her happiness on a man.

Men. The eyes of the girl in the glass narrowed a trifle. She had met two today. Mrs. Puffer had declared: "There's one or two smart Alecks in the village who'll do you, if they get the chance."

Prudence laid the pearls in their satin bed and snapped the case shut. She tapped the velvet lightly with a finger as she reflected aloud:

"One or two smart Alecks. I wonder—I wonder if Mrs. Puffer was warning me against one or both of my new acquaintances."

(Continued Next Week.)

## Atherton Promoted; Succeeded By Darte

### County's 1st FHA Mortgage Approved, Washington Announces

Appointment of Colonel Thomas H. Atherton, Wilkes-Barre Architect, as chairman of Better Housing Region No. 3, embracing twelve Northeast Pennsylvania counties, was coupled yesterday with announcement in Washington that approval had been given for the first Federal-insured mortgage in Luzerne County.

Colonel Atherton will be a volunteer associate of the Federal Housing Administration, supervising community better housing activities in Lehigh, Carbon, Pike, Lackawanna, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Monroe, Northampton, Luzerne, Wayne, Bradford, and Wyoming counties.

He will be succeeded as Luzerne County Better Housing chairman by Alfred Darte, president of the Real Estate Board, and member of the Board of Education in Wilkes-Barre. Mr. Darte, a graduate of Penn State College, has offices in the Miners National Bank Building. Mr. Darte will be assisted by Charles Levy, president of the Wilkes-Barre and Scranton chapters of the American Institute of Architects.

The Government's mortgage insurance commitment was made to the Second National Bank of Wilkes-Barre, and covers a property at 301-303 Washington street, that city. The land has frontage of 45 feet, depth of 105 feet. The dwelling is a 2½ story frame building, twin house construction, built for two families. The property was re-modeled in 1932. Each side consists of three rooms and a hall on the first floor, three rooms, a bath, and a hall on the second floor, and three rooms and a hall in the third floor.

The mortgage contemplates the re-funding of an existing mortgage, and was taken for 19 years and 2 months, to be amortized monthly at cost of \$51.18 a month. The mortgage is in the amount of \$4500. The mortgagors are Mr. and Mrs. Henry Sippel, who reside in the property.

## Hay Production

Lancaster, York, Bradford, and Chester counties each produced over 100,000 tons of hay in 1934. The production for all the counties was valued at almost \$10,000,000—the fourth most valuable hay crop of any state.

## Schools Join

Annexation for school purposes of a portion of South Strabane township to East Washington borough, Washington county, was approved at a recent meeting of the State Council of Education.

## 171 Certificates

One hundred seventy-one certificates of incorporation were granted in March records in the office of David L. Lawrence, Secretary of the Commonwealth, show.

Seven acres on a side road doesn't sound attractive from a profit-making standpoint, but Mrs. Grace B. Baertsch of Baraboo, Wis., had made it, with the aid of her kitchen, giving them a living and cash in the bank. Mrs. Baertsch sells eggs, poultry and cooked food to a tourist camp some distance away during the summer months, and by good salesmanship has made many of the same people buy her eggs, which are sent by mail to their city homes, during the winter months. Her egg money runs as high as \$100 a month, even though she does not charge as much as the traffic will bear—that is, Mrs. Baertsch attempts to take a premium through the season instead of following the heavy jumps and recessions of the market.

No end of farm women, knowing their town sisters don't care to bother with big dinners on Sunday and that city people have a hankering for a good farm-cooked dinner, have made a specialty of this service. Customers are made largely by local advertising; also by using boys to pass out cards announcing the business.

Following the same thought some farmers with gardens and other sources of food such as flocks of poultry, canned meats, a small orchard or a lake on the premises, have built tourist cottages so that they not only can attract the food and outing trade, but offer sleeping accommodations for tourists and city folks who care to spend the night.

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## First National Bank

DALLAS, PA.

MEMBERS AMERICAN BANKERS' ASSOCIATION

DIRECTORS:

R. L. Brickel, C. A. Frantz, W. B. Jeter, Sterling Machell, W. R. Neely, Clifford W. Space, A. C. Devens, Herbert Hill.

OFFICERS:

C. A. Frantz, Pres. Sterling Machell, Vice-Pres. W. B. Jeter, Cashier.

Two and One-Half Per Cent Interest On Savings Deposits

No account too small to assure careful attention.

Vault Boxes for Rent.