



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.—The second day on her farm Prue's adventure into the barn loft after eggs. She slips on the hay and falls to the ground—would have been badly hurt had not strong young arms been there to catch her. The arms are those of Rodney Gerard, rich young man, who lives at High Ledges on the neighboring farm. There is at once a mutual attraction between the two. Rod decides to stay at his home throughout the fall and winter, "looking after the timber." But Prudence decides to maintain a cool attitude toward him. She suspects men since her sister's husband ran away with her brother's wife.

CHAPTER III.—Len Calloway, a rival of Rod Gerard, tries to buy the timber off Prue's land, but she dislikes his conceited attitude and contracts with Rod to dispose of the trees. On the evening Prue is expecting David from New York she is visited by Mrs. Walter Gerard and her thirteen-year-old daughter, Jean. They are hateful, curious persons and leave Prue rankled.

CHAPTER IV.—A few days later Prudence comes in contact with them again when she accompanies Rod to his place. A clown comes, advertising a circus in a nearby town. Prue promises to accompany Rod and Jean to the circus.

CHAPTER V.—They go to the circus, and while they are watching the parade, Chicot, an old clown, is accidentally killed. He was the grandfather of Milly Gooch, one of the circus riders. Rod became friendly with Milly when she and her parents spent a year on Prosperity Farm. Now her parents are dead. Calloway intimidates the available laborers in the district so that they cannot be hired to cut the timber for Rodney Gerard.

CHAPTER VI.—Milly Gooch broke her engagement to Calloway; he believes Rod was the cause and has since been Rod's enemy. After the accident to Chicot, Rod calls on Milly to see if he can be of any help. Prue hardens herself still more against Rod when she sees in the newspaper a flashlight picture of him with Milly.

CHAPTER VII.—Rodney is forced to go to New York for timber cutters. David goes with him and helps select men from among the Rescue Mission hangers-on. After their departure for New York, the ne'er-do-well Walter Gerard arrives, evidently wishing to borrow money from his half-brother, Rod.

"Light the lamp, Jean," said Prudence.

Jane Mack clutched her shoulder. "No! No! The convict might see and s-shoot. I know folks."

"Pull yourself together. Wait till I've drawn the hangings, Jean."

"Don't go near those windows, Miss Prue."

"Nonsense, Macky. All right, Jean. Light the lamp."

Spooky shadows cast by the wavering flashlight skulked into corners as a soft glow suffused the room.

"That's better. The light will send your bad dream bustling, Macky. Sit down and tell us what happened."

Jane Mack twisted her bony hands, Jean, in her candy-striped pajamas, put her arm about Prue's waist. The woman sniffed.

"You two girls think I've had a dream, don't you? Well, I haven't. I was just getting into bed—I thought I heard a door creak down here. I stole down quietly. I didn't want to scare you. I tip-toed to this door. A man was flashing a light over that!" She pointed a blanched finger toward the safe. "You'd left it unlocked."

"I knew in a minute 'twas the escaped prisoner I'd been expecting. I guess I gurgled. He pulled his hat lower over his eyes. Pointed his light straight at my face, so I couldn't see anything."

"Got you covered. Make a s-sound, woman, an' I'll s-shoot!" he hissed.

Prudence's eyes widened with incredulity. Could this vibrant, dramatic woman be the taciturn, dour spinster who cooked and scrubbed for her every day?

Jane Mack swallowed hard. "All I could think of was the money you had tied up in those jewels, Miss Prue, an' what 'twould mean if you lost them. What was this old body of mine good for, anyway? So I yelled."

"I'll say you yelled. Then what did the man do?" Jean demanded. "Did he shoot?"

"If he did, I didn't know it."

"Perhaps he sneaked in to look around because he was born here or his father died here; we haven't had one of those old-timers drop in on us for a week."

Jane Mack sniffed. "Better look and see if the 'old-timer' got any of your jewels."

"Never mind the jewels, Macky. I don't care to lose them for forgetting to close the safe. Sure you are not hurt?"

"Sure, Miss Prue."

Jean was on her knees before the safe frantically examining the white packets when Prudence reached it. She looked up with frightened eyes.

"Gone!" she whispered. "What's gone?"

"The emerald and diamonds!"

"You ought to set the sheriff after that convict," Jane Mack insisted for the third time the next afternoon.

At the kitchen table Prudence was snipping the stems of the roses before placing them in vases of fresh water. Impulsively she put an arm about Jean's shoulder and hugged her as the child drew a long, hard breath. She knew what she was thinking, knew that she was remembering the look in her father's eyes as he had asked if the jewels were kept in the house. Of course, Walter Gerard had not stolen the gems, he wouldn't fall so low as that, but—

"I'll wait until Mr. David comes, Macky. He will be here so soon that we had better consult him before we enter complaint."

"Well, of course, if you can afford to lose that emerald and the diamonds, Miss Prue, it's up to you. If you'd seen what I saw in my tencup this morning—" With a sniff Jane Mack disappeared into the pantry.

Snug in fur coats, red beret and green beret making brilliant spots of color in the gray day, Prudence, with Jean, backed the cart out of the shed. They were too early for the train.

In the village they indulged lavishly in ice-cream cones, and still the minutes lagged.

"Let's drive out the pond road a little way, Jean."

Prue's thoughts wandered. Why had Dave decided to stay at High Ledges? It would make it awkward for her. Of course, she would want to see Dave daily; equally, of course, distrusting Rodney Gerard as she did, she couldn't go to High Ledges.

Rodney! She had wondered if Calloway had forged that letter about the check. After Jean's revelation about the photograph she had found in her uncle's desk, how could she doubt any more? Walter Gerard had been right, the unfinished word was love, of course. "Flitting from flower to flower!" Mrs. Walt had been right, too, her brother-in-law was unreliable. He was the type of man Julie had married.

She must put the Gerards out of her mind. They were becoming an obsession. Her own affairs needed all her attention. Who had stolen the jewels? The escaped convict? She did not believe it any more than she believed that Walter Gerard was the thief.

"Here comes Mr. Calloway in that snappy red car of his."

Jean's excited whisper set Prue's pulses quickstepping. Calloway on his way to the village! How soon was the train due? She pushed back her glove. Maddening. She had forgotten her wrist watch. Jim Armstrong had said: "I wish Calloway might be providentially called out of town an hour or so before that train arrives."

Evidently Providence was busy elsewhere. Could she stop him? "Success" was in line with the pasture bars from which a path—now a mere shadow under the snow—led uphill to the southerly boundary of her property, the Hundreds. That gave her an idea. She would ask him to show her the trees he wanted to cut. It would be adventure with a capital A to lead him off the scent, and she loved adventure. She gripped Jean's arm.

"Stop a minute! Drive the car home, K. K. Don't go to the village. At the crossroads take the turn to the right; that will bring you to the back of the red brick house."

"What's the big idea?"

"I'll ask Len Calloway to show me where he wants to cut. If he consents, I will keep him away from the village until the new gang is at High Ledges."

"Good afternoon, Mr. Calloway," Prudence acknowledged the sweep of the dark-eyed man's ten-gallon hat with gay friendliness. "This is a clear case of thought transference. I suppose seeing that path to the Hundreds brought you to my mind. I hate quarreling with my neighbors, it's so—so tenement-housey. Can't we arbitrate? Perhaps when you have time you'll tramp over the land with me and show me what to cut—but I'm detaining you. Drive on, Jean."

"Just a minute!" Calloway's nearest eyes were triumphant. "What's the matter with now, Miss Schuyler? My business at the village can wait. What say if we take that tramp now? This snow won't amount to much."

Prudence smiled the most radiant smile in her not limited repertoire.

"I'm all for it, if you are, Mr. Calloway. I'm the original 'do-it-now' girl."

She looked intently at Jean. "Wait here, won't you, K. K. I—"

"Don't have the kid wait. I'll take you home, Miss Schuyler."

"That would help. Drive very care-

fully, Jean, and straight home, remember. Tell Miss Mack that Mr. Calloway is personally conducting me over The Hundreds. Go out to the barn and tell Mr. St. He and I were planning to set an incubator this afternoon, but that can wait." Having posted which two sentinels on the ramparts of protection, she stepped over the bars that Calloway lowered.

Why didn't the man speak? He was leading the way along the snowy path. Woods stretched endlessly ahead, dense, dark, dismal. She didn't for an instant doubt Calloway's respectability, but she had a shivery sense of repressed fury smoldering under his urbanity.

"Here we are!" Calloway stopped to brush the snow from the top of a granite boulder. "See that B cut in the stone? It marks the southeastern corner of the tract your uncle purchased from my father. Here's a trail.

"We'll go in a little way so that you can see the quality of the timber."

"All sweetness and light again, aren't you?" Prudence mentally addressed his straight back as she followed him. He paused and turned.

"Sorry to have made trouble for you about your timber, Miss Schuyler, but when I say I'll put a thing through, I do it, no matter what the consequences may be to anyone else."

Prudence looked up at him. Wistfulness was entirely out of her line, but she did her best with voice and eyes.

"Suppose—suppose—is it too late to change my mind and let you—"

The shrill whistle of a locomotive shattered the silence. The train had arrived! In a moment or two the gang would be on its way to High Ledges, and Calloway was here! Prudence lowered her lids. She felt as if her eyes were twinkling stars of triumph.

"Suppose I agreed to let you cut my timber, would you still try to stop Rodney Gerard?"

Calloway, who had started on again, turned. Prudence stopped so as better to preserve the distance between them. His massive figure blocked the trail where it divided and ran east and west.

"Do you mean that you'll chuck Rod Gerard and give me the contract to cut? Do you mean that?"

His eyes burned red as he hurled the question. Perhaps it was the shadow of his theatrical hat that gave the effect. Whatever the cause, she didn't like it, Prudence told herself. She would back track as soon as she was sure the men were well away from the village.

"Can't a girl change her mind?" Calloway's eyes flamed. He caught her shoulder. She shook off his hand. "Don't!"

She stared unbelievably. Closed her eyes. Opened them. She was awake. Every hard-drawn breath had been wasted; every step she had run, every fall had been futile. Calloway's furious, triumphant eyes blazed down at her.

(Continued Next Week.)

America Leads in Inventive Genius

Granting 2,009,957th Patent Tops Other Countries

IN the huge building, sprawling over two blocks, which houses the United States Patent Office in Washington, a curious little ceremony took place. To Joseph V. Ledwinka, veteran Chief Engineer of the Edward G. Budd Manufacturing Company, of Philadelphia, Commissioner of Patents Conway P. Coe handed a document, simultaneously pronouncing these sonorous words, *The Literary Digest* reports:

"Mr. Ledwinka, this patent, numbered 2,009,957 in the current series, has importance as a testimony that some two millions of American inventors, including yourself, have, through the years and decades, given their country industrial preeminence among the nations."

Actually, it was the 2,009,957th patent issued in the United States, for before the present series began, on July 23, 1836, 9,957 patents had been issued, the first, in 1790, to Samuel Hopkins, for a method of making "pot and pearl ashes," the name then given to lye.

The first patent bore the signature of George Washington.

Patenting Abroad

A year ago, when approximately 1,900,000 patents had been issued by the Government, the Patent Office made a survey of the patents of other countries, and found the French to be the next most inventive people, with 871,532 patents up to January 1, 1934.

Great Britain had 797,153; Germany, 583,728; Italy, 273,598. Canada rated high in inventiveness, in proportion to population, with a total of 325,800 patents. Japan had issued 83,361 patents, and the U.S.S.R., 63,992.

Second Largest Diamond Bought

American Buys Stone Insured for \$1,000,000

HARRY WINSTON, New York City gem-dealer, has bought the Jonker Diamond, world's second largest, from the Diamond Corporation, Ltd., of London, *The Literary Digest* reports.

Winston, saying that he "wanted the finest gem in the world," is reported to have paid £150,000 for the stone. It is insured for at least \$1,000,000 by the St. Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Co.

Cullinan Largest

The largest uncut diamond in history weighed 3,025 1/2 carats. It was christened the Cullinan Diamond, after the chairman of the company which discovered it.

I'll go back for the watch. I can find it quicker alone. Wait here."

Taking compliance for granted, he stalked back. As he disappeared

around a bend, Prudence darted along the trail which turned sharply east.

She went on cautiously looking for the blaze on trees. No sign of human occupation. She stopped to listen. Was Calloway following? Did he think her a quitter? She wasn't. She was, to use a favorite legal term of David's, merely "in the exercise of due care," while she diverted his attention from the village.

The trees thinned. What was that sound? A brook! She couldn't be far from home if it was the stream which crossed her lower meadow. She climbed a high bank, drew a long, ragged breath of relief. No danger of being lost now. She had her bearings.

"Hullo! Hullo! Hullo!"

Calloway shouting. A thin gray fog of doubt dimmed her satisfaction in the success of her role of Providence. Perhaps her idea hadn't been such a knockout after all. She had better get home. The trail on the other side, a little way down stream, looked familiar. She would wade to that.

Zowie, the water was icy. She slipped on slimy, concealed rocks, splashed through pebbly shallows, plunged into a good pool.

"I'll bet I gave the trout the thrill of their lives," she said aloud, as she pulled herself up by shrubs to the bank. A fresh blaze! She had seen Jim Armstrong slash it. She was on the home trail now! Better rest for a moment.

"Hullo—o—o!"

The call set her nerves vibrating. It didn't frighten her, but she didn't like it. It was too near. The woods seemed to be closing in on her. She hated the feeling. She couldn't be mistaken about this trail. She was sure that she had been on it before. She must get into the open. She was freezing.

She ran as swiftly as clutching bushes and treacherous tree roots permitted. Her cold, wet skirts lashed her knees; her teeth chattered. How long could she keep this pace? Damn! What fiend had looped that root across the trail? She picked herself up. Ouch! What a lump! Lucky she had struck in the middle of her forehead, not under her eyes.

What was that? Was she just seeing things, or was it—it was a log cabin! She had been following the freshly blazed trail to her cabin instead of one to the clearing! What difference did it make? There was a chimney. She could get warm.

She stumbled toward it. Threw herself against the door. It opened! The breaks were with her! She plunged in. Lost her balance. Some one caught her.

She stared unbelievably. Closed her eyes. Opened them. She was awake. Every hard-drawn breath had been wasted; every step she had run, every fall had been futile. Calloway's furious, triumphant eyes blazed down at her.

(Continued Next Week.)

ROADSIDE MARKETING

By T. J. Delohery

FARM WOMEN'S MARKETS FURNISH HOMES

ELECTRIC refrigerators, sweepers, irons, washing machines, kitchen cabinets, rolling work tables and other doodads and modern gadgets make housework easier for thousands of farm women who earn substantial profits each year from the sale of cake, fresh eggs, vegetables, fruit, jams, jellies, canned goods and other products of the farm, kitchen and garden to city housewives who patronize the hundreds of curb and farm women's markets which are spread over the country.

Reliable estimates are that about 150,000 farm women take in upward of \$5,000,000 a year from this source, the money being used to buy farm, home and family needs which the regular farming income is unable to supply.

Through the south, parts of the mid-west, New England and the east these markets are promoted by the extension service of the agricultural colleges, farm bureau, Grange and other farm organizations. In other places the markets are carried on by individual groups of farm women or under the auspices of enterprising town merchants who realize that helping



Attractively Displayed Produce.

earn this additional farm revenue will result in the purchase of things which otherwise could not be bought.

And these farm women, on the other hand, have been careful to offer fair competition to businessmen handling the same line of products, thus resulting in co-operation and friendly relationships with mutual benefits.

Housewives have been quick to trade with the farm women, practically every market reporting an increased volume of business each year. In some instances receipts have been heavier despite lower prices. In fact, one or two such markets reported 100 per cent increase in receipts in a single year.

J. Frank McDermand, Indiana merchant, is a great booster for farm women's markets; in fact, he started one and gave the women the use of the basement under his general store. McDermand always had a small vegetable garden, but when the weather prevented his planting anything one year, he got the idea that farm women might be able to bring in their vegetables, chickens and other such food and find many buyers among the town people. The county agent, when consulted, thought it a good idea and the matter was taken up with several farm women.

A market was organized, a score of women bringing in all kinds of fresh and canned foods. Advertising in the *Attica* and other city newspapers they found customers from the opening day.

Members of the various farm women's clubs in Garfield county, Oklahoma, send their produce to the Enid market, where total sales run from \$250 to \$350 a day. They specialize in ingredients for Sunday dinners, and also have other foods such as sausage, fresh eggs, milked poultry, cakes, cottage cheese and raisin bread. Practically every one of these club women spends the income for household appliances, clothes and school expenses for the children.

West Virginia has made a notable record in marketing farm produce for women, especially those living inland away from good roads. Upward of 300 farm women send produce to the stores in various parts of the state. More than \$13,000 worth of standardized and graded products were marketed by these women last year, some of the contributors receiving as much as \$100 a month.

In Virginia, where markets are county-wide affairs, huge sums have been realized, with business growing better each year. In 1931 the Parkersburg market took in \$10,000. Last year the receipts were \$25,000. In Augusta county sales rose from \$15,000 in 1931 to \$30,000 in 1932.

"The most important thing of all," said Miss Maud Wallace, state home demonstration agent, who is pushing the markets, "is that every dollar taken in is used to build up the social, educational and physical standards of the farm homes."

"In starting our markets we are trying to be thoughtful of the city merchants. We realize they are permanently in business and have to pay overhead, but we are trying to show them that a market will, in time, be an asset to the community. It will enable farm women to purchase more and pay cash for what they buy."

Thirty-five such markets, in as many North Carolina towns, made total sales of \$280,000.

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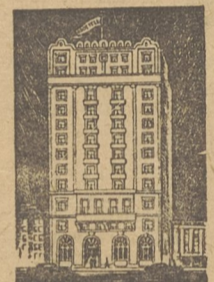
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