

**No
Defense**
By Gilbert Parker

Author of
"The Seats of the Mighty"
"The Right of Way"

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BOOK II

CHAPTER VIII.

Dyck Calhoun Enters the World Again.

"Is it near the time?" asked Michael Clones of his friend, as they stood in front of the prison.

His companion, who was seated on a stone, wrapped in dark-green coverings, faded and worn, and looking pinched with cold in the dour November day, said, without lifting his head: "Seven minutes, an' he'll be out. God bless him!"

"And save him and protect him!" said Michael. "He deserved punishment no more than I did, and it's broke him. I've seen the gray gather at his temples, though he's only been in prison four years. He was condemned to eight, but they've let him free. I don't know why. Perhaps it was because of what he told the government about the French navy. I've seen the joy of life sob itself down to the sour earth. When I took him the news of his father's death, and told him the creditors were swallowing what was left of Playmore, what do you think he did?"

Old Christopher Dogan smiled; his eyes twinkled with a mirth which had more pain than gaiety.

"God love you, I know what he did. He flung out his hands and said, 'Let it go! It's nothing to me.' Michael have I said true?"

Michael nodded. "Almost his very words you've used, and he flung out his hands, as you said."

"Aye, he'll be changed; but they've kept the clothes he had when he went to prison and he'll come out in them, I'm thinking."

"Ah, no!" interrupted Michael. "That can't be, for his clothes was stole. Only a week ago he sent to me for a suit of my own. I wouldn't have him wear my clothes—he a gentleman! It wasn't fitting. So I sent him a suit I bought from a shop, but he wouldn't have it. He would leave prison a poor man, as a peasant in peasant's clothes. So he wrote to me. Here is the letter." He drew from his pocket a sheet of paper, and spread it out. "See—read it. Ah, well, never mind," he added, as old Christopher shook his head. "Never mind, I'll read it to you!" Thereupon he read the note, and added: "We'll see him of the Calhouns risin' high beyant poverty and misfortune some day."

Old Christopher nodded. "I'm glad Miles Calhoun was buried on the hilltop above Playmore. He had his day; he lived his life. Things went wrong with him, and he paid the price we all must pay for work ill-done."

"There you're right, Christopher Dogan, and I remember the day the downfall began. It was when him that's now Lord Mallow, governor of Jamaica, came to summon Calhoun to Dublin. Things were never the same after that; but I well remember one talk I had with Miles Calhoun just before his death: 'Michael,' he said to me, 'my family have had many ups and downs, and some that bear my name have been in prison before this, but never for killing a man out of fair fight.' 'One of your name may be in prison, sir,' said I, 'but not for killing a man out of fair fight. If you believe he did, there's no death bed enough for you!' He was silent."

for a while; then at last he whispered Mr. Dyck's name, and said to me: 'Tell him that as a Calhoun I love him, and as his father I love him ten times more. For, look you, Michael, though we never ran together, but quarreled and took our own paths, yet we are both Calhouns, and my heart is warm to him. If my son were a thousand times a criminal, nevertheless I would ache to take him by the hand.'

"Hush! Look at the prison gate," said his companion and stood up. As the gates of the prison opened, the sun broke through the clouds and gave a brilliant phase to the scene. Out of the gates there came slowly, yet firmly, dressed in peasant clothes, the stalwart but faded figure of Dyck Calhoun.

Terribly changed he was. He had entered prison with the flush upon his cheek, the tilt of young manhood in his eyes, with hair black and hands slender, and handsome. There was no look of youth in his face now. It was the face of a middle-aged man from which the dew of youth had vanished, into which life's storms had come and gone. Though the body was held erect, yet the head was thrust slightly forward, and the heavy eyebrows were like a penthouse. The eyes were slightly feverish, and round the mouth there crept a smile, half-cynical, but a little happy. All freshness was gone from his hands. One hung at his side, listless, corded; the other doffed his hat in reply to the salute of his two humble friends.

As the gates closed behind him he looked gravely at the two men, who were standing not a foot apart. There swept slowly into his eyes, enlarging, brightening them, the glamor of the Celtic soul. Of all Ireland, or all who had ever known him, these two were the only ones welcoming him into the world again!

Michael Clones, with his oval red face, big nose, steely eyes and steadfast bearing, had in him the soul of great kings. His hat was set firmly on his head. His knee breeches were neat, if coarse; his stockings were clean. His feet were well shod, his coat worn, and he had still the look that belongs to the well-to-do peasant. He was a figure of courage and endurance.

Dyck's hand went out to him and a warm smile crept to his lips. "Michael—ever-faithful Michael!" A moisture came to Michael's eyes. He did not speak as, with a look of



"Michael—Ever-Faithful Michael!" gratitude, he clasped the hand Dyck offered him.

Presently Dyck turned to old Christopher with a kindly laugh. "Well, old friend! You, too, come to see the stag set loose again? You're not name, that's sure." A grim, hard look came into his face, but both hands went out and caught the old man's shoulders affectionately. "This is no day for you to be waiting at prison's gates, Christopher; but there are two men who believe in me—two in all the world. It isn't the killing," he added after a moment's silence—"it isn't the killing that hurts so. If it's true that I killed Eriss Boyne, what hurts most is the reason why I killed him."

"One way or another—does it matter now?" asked Christopher gently.

"It is that you think nothing matters since I've paid the price, sunk myself in shame, lost my friends and come out with not a penny left?" asked Dyck. "But yes," he added with a smile, wry and twisted. "Yes, I have a little left!"

He drew from his pocket four small pieces of gold, and gazed ironically at them in his palm.

"Look at them!" He held out his hand, so that the two men could see the little coins. "Those were taken from me when I entered prison. They've been in the hands of the head of the jail ever since. They give them to me now—all that's left of what I was."

"No, not all, sir," declared Michael. "There's something left from Playmore—there's ninety pounds, and it's in my pocket. It was got from the sale of your sporting kit. There was the boat upon the lake, the gun and all kinds of ruffraff stuff not sold with Playmore."

Dyck nodded and smiled. "Good Michael!"

Then he drew himself up stiffly and blew in and out his breath as if with the joy of living. For four hard years he had seen denied the free air of free men. Even when walking in the prison yard, on cold or fair days,

when the air was like a knife or when it had the sun of summer in it, it still had seemed to choke him.

In prison he had read, thought and worked much. They had at least done that for him. The attorney general had given him freedom to work with his hands, and to slave in the workshop like one whose living depended on it. Some philanthropic official had started the idea of a workshop, and the officials had given the best of the prisoners a chance to learn trades and make a little money before they went out into the world. All that Dyck had earned went to purchase things he needed, and to help his fellow prisoners or their families.

Where was he now? The gap between the old life of nonchalance, frivolity, fantasy and excitement was as great as that between heaven and hell. Here he was, after four years of prison, walking the highway with two of the humblest creatures of Ireland, and yet, as his soul cried, two of the best.

Stalking along in thought, he suddenly became conscious that Michael and Christopher had fallen behind. He turned round.

"Come on. Come on with me."

But the two shook their heads. "It's not fitting, you a Calhoun of Playmore!" Christopher answered.

"Well, then, listen to me," said Dyck, for he saw the men could not bear his new democracy. "I'm hungry. In four years I haven't had a meal that came from the right place or went to the right spot. Is the little tavern, the Hen and Chicken, on the Liffeside, still going? I mean the place where the seamen and the merchant-ship officers visit."

Michael nodded. "Well, look you, Michael—get you both there, and order me as good a meal of fish and chops and baked pudding as can be bought for money. Aye, and I'll have a bottle of red French wine and you two will have what you like best. Mark me, we'll sit together there, for we're one of a kind. I've got to take to a life that fits me, an ex-jailbird, a man that's been in prison for killing!"

"There's the king's army," said Michael. "They make good officers in it."

A strange, half-sore smile came to Dyck's thin lips.

"Michael," said he, "give up these vain illusions. I was condemned for killing a man not in fair fight. I can't enter the army as an officer, and you should know it. The king himself could set me up again; but the distance between him and me is ten times round the world and back again! No, my friends, what is in my mind now is that I'm hungry. For four years I've eaten the bread of prison, and it's soured my mouth and galled my belly. Go you to that inn and make ready a good meal."

The two men started to leave, but old Christopher turned round and stretched a hand up and out.

"Son of Ireland, bright and black and black and bright may be the picture of your life, but I see for you brightness and sweet faces, and music and song. It's not Irish music, and it's not Irish song, but the soul of the thing is Irish. Grim things await you, but you will conquer where the eagle swoops to the shore, where the white mist fies from the hills, where heroes meet, where the hand of Moynn stirs the blue and the witches flee from the voice of God. There is honor coming to you in the world."

Having said his say, with hand outstretched, having thrilled the air with the voice of one who had the soul of a prophet, the old man turned. With head bent forward, he shuffled away with Michael Clones along the stony street.

Dyck watched them go, his heart beating hard, his spirit overwhelmed.

It was not far he walked, yet every footstep had a history. Now and again he met people who knew him. Some bowed a little too profoundly, some nodded; but not one stopped to speak to him, though a few among them were people he had known well in days gone by. Was it the clothes he wore, or was it that his star had sunk so low that none could keep it company? He laughed to himself in scorn.

At the door of the inn he sniffed the dinner Michael had ordered.

"Man alive!" he said as he entered the place and saw the two men with their hands against the bright fire. "There's only one way to live, and that's the way I'm going to try."

"Well, you'll not try it alone, sir, if you please," said Michael. "I'll be with you, if I may."

"And I'll bless you as you go," said Christopher Dogan.

CHAPTER IX.

Whither Now?

England was in a state of unrest. She had, as yet, been none too successful in the war with France. From the king's castle to the poorest slum in Seven Dials there was a temper bordering on despair. Ministries came and went; statesmen rose and fell. The army was indifferently recruited and badly paid. England's battles were fought by men of whom many were only mercenaries, with no stake in England's rise or fall.

The admiralty pursued its course of seizing men of the mercantile marine, taking them aboard ships, keeping them away for months from the harbors of the kingdom, and then, when their ships returned, denying them the right of visiting their homes. The press-gangs did not confine their activities to the men of the mercantile marine. From the streets after dusk they rapt and brought in, often after ill-treatment, torn from their wives and sweethearts, knocked on the head

for resisting, tradesmen with businesses, young men studying for professions, idlers, debtors, out-of-work men. The marvel is that the British fleets fought as well as they did.

Poverty and sorrow, loss and bereavement, were in every street, peeped mournfully out of every window, lurked at street corners. From all parts of the world adventurers came to renew their fortunes in the turmoil of London, and every street was a kaleidoscope of faces and clothes and colors, not British, not patriot, not national.

Among these outlanders were Dyck Calhoun and Michael Clones. They had left Ireland together in the late autumn, leaving behind them the stirrings of the coming revolution and plunging into another revolt which was to prove the test and trial of English character.

Dyck had left Ireland with ninety pounds in his pocket and many tons' weight of misery in his heart. In his bones he felt tragedies on foot in Ireland which concession and good government could not prevent. He had fled from it all. When he set his face to Holyhead, he felt that he would never live in Ireland again. Yet his courage was firm as he made his way to London, with Michael Clones—faithful, devoted, a friend and yet a servant, treated like a comrade, yet always with a little dominance.

The journey to London had been without event, yet as the coach rolled through country where frost silvered the trees; where, in the early morning, the grass was shining with dew; where the everlasting green hedges and the red roofs of villages made a picture which pleased the eye and stirred the soul, Dyck Calhoun kept wondering what would be his future. He had no profession, no trade, no skill except with his sword; and as he neared London town—when they left Hendon—he saw the smoke rising in the early winter morning and the business of life spread out before him, brave and buoyant.

As from the heights of Hampstead he looked down on the multitudinous area called London, something throbbled at his heart which seemed like hope; for what he saw was indeed inspiring. When, at last, in the Edgware road, he drew near to living London, he turned to Michael Clones and said:

"Michael, my lad, I think perhaps we'll find a footing here!"

So they reached London and quartered themselves there in simple lodgings in Soho. Dyck walked the streets, and now and then he paid a visit to the barracks where soldiers were, to satisfy the thought that perhaps in the life of the common soldier he might, after all, find his future. It was, however, borne in upon him by a chance remark of Michael one day—"I'm not young enough to be a recruit and you wouldn't go alone without me, would you?"—that this way to a livelihood was not open to him.

His faithful companion's remark had fixed Dyck's mind against entering the army, and then, toward the end of the winter, a fateful thing happened. His purse containing what was left of the ninety pounds—two-fifths of it—disappeared. It had been stolen, and in all the bitter days to come, when poverty and misery ground them down, no hint of the thief, no sign of the robber was ever revealed.

Then, at last, a day when a letter came from Ireland. It was from the firm in which Bryan Llyn of Virginia had been interested, for the letter had been sent to their care, and Dyck had given them his address in London on this very chance. It reached Dyck's hand on the day after the last penny had been paid out for their lodgings and they faced the streets penniless, foodless—one was going to say friendless. The handwriting was that of Sheila Llyn.

At a street corner, by a chemist's shop where a red light burned, Dyck opened and read the letter. This is what Sheila had written to him: "My Dear Friend:

"The time is near (I understand by a late letter to my mother from an official) when you will be freed from prison and will face the world again. I have not written you since your trial, but I have never forgotten and never shall. I have been forbidden to write to you or think of you, but I will take my own way about you. I have known all that has happened since we left Ireland, through the letters my mother has received. I know that Playmore has been sold, and I am sorry."

"Now that your day of release is near, and you are to be again a free man, have you decided about your future? Is it to be in Ireland? No, I think not. Ireland is no place for a sane and level man to fight his fight for honor, fame and name. I hear that things are worse there in every way than they have been in our lifetime."

"After what has happened in any case, it is not a field that offers you a chance. Listen to me. Ireland and England are not the only places in the world. My uncle came here to Virginia a poor man. He is now immensely rich. He had little to begin with, but he was young like you—indeed, a little older than you—when he first came. He invested wisely, worked bravely, and his wealth grew fast. No man needs a fortune to start the business of life in this country. He can get plenty of land for almost nothing; he can get credit for planting and furnishing his land, and, if he has friends, the credit is sure."

"All America is ready for 'the likes of you.' Think it over, and meanwhile please know there has been placed with the firm in Dublin money enough to bring you here with comfort. You must not refuse it. Take it as a loan, for I know you will not take it as a gift."

"I do not know the story of the killing, even as it was told in court. Well, some one killed the man, but not you, and the truth will come out in time. If one should come to me out of the courts of heaven and say that there it was declared you were a rogue, I should say heaven was no place for me. No, of one thing I am sure—you never killed an undefended man. Wayward, wanton, reckless, dissipated you may have been, but you were never depraved—never!"

"When you are free, lift up your shoulders to all the threats of time, then go straight to the old firm where the money is, draw it, take ship and come here. If you let me know you are coming, I will be there to meet you when you step ashore, to give you a firm hand-clasp; to tell you that in this land there is a good place for you, if you will win it."

"I beg you take ship for the Virginia coast. Enter upon the new life here with faith and courage. Have no fear. Heaven that has thus far helped you will guide you to the end."

"I write without my mother's permission, but my uncle knows, and though he does not approve, he does not condemn."

"Once more good-by, my dear friend, and God be with you."

"SHEILA LLYN."

"P. S.—I wonder where you will read this letter. I hope it will find you before your release. Please remember that she who writes it summons you from the darkness where you are, to light and freedom here."

Slowly Dyck folded up the letter, when he had read it, and put it in his pocket. Then he turned with pale face and gaunt look to Michael Clones.

"Michael," said he, "that letter is from a lady. It comes from her new home in Virginia."

Michael nodded.

"Aye, aye, sir, I understand you," he said. "Then she doesn't know the truth about her father?"

Dyck sighed heavily. "No, Michael, she doesn't know the truth."

"I don't believe it would make any difference to her if she did know."

"It would make all the difference to me, Michael. She says she wishes to help me. She tells me that money's been sent to the big firm in Dublin—money to take me across the sea to Virginia."

Michael's face clouded. "Yes, sir. To Virginia—and what then?"

"Michael, we haven't a penny in the world, you and I, but if I took one farthing of that money I should hope you would kill me. I'm hungry; we've had nothing to eat since yesterday; but if I could put my hands upon that money here and now I wouldn't touch it. Michael, it looks as if we shall have to take to the trade of the foot-pad."

(To be continued.)

NOTICE OF ADMINISTRATION.
Having this day duly qualified as Administratrix of the estate of Geo. W. Stinson, deceased, late of the county of Union and State of North Carolina, this is to notify all persons holding claims against the estate of the said Geo. W. Stinson, deceased, to present them to the undersigned Administratrix on or before the 10th day of September, 1922, or this notice will be plead in bar of their right of recovery.

All persons indebted to said estate will please make prompt settlement. This the 6th day of September, 1921.

SALLIE STINSON, Administratrix of Geo. W. Stinson, deceased, of Waxhaw, N. C.

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