

Satan Sanderson

By HALLIE ERMINE RIVES.
Author of "Heart's Courageous," Etc.
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in the room Jessica had left the turmoil was shimmering down. Here and there a match was struck and showed a circle of brightness. The glimmer of one of them lit the countenance of a man who had brushed her sleeve as he entered. It was Hallelujah Jones.

"Wait, wait!" he cried. "I have evidence to give!" He pointed excitedly toward Harry. "This man is not what you think. He is not—"

The judge's gavel thumped upon the wood. "How dare you," he vociferated, "break in upon the deliberations of this court? I fine you \$20 for contempt."

Felder leaped to his feet. "What could this man know? He took a bill from his pocket and clapped it down on the clerk's desk.

"I beg to purge him of contempt," he said, "and call him as a witness."

Hallelujah Jones snatched the Bible from the clerk's hands and kissed it. Knowledge was burning his tongue. The jury were leaning forward in their seats.

"Have you ever seen the prisoner before?" asked Felder.

"Yes."

"When?"

"When he was a minister of the gospel."

Felder stared. The judge frowned. The jury looked at one another, and a laugh ran round the hushed room.

The merriment kindled the evangelist's distempered passion. Sudden anger flamed in him. He leaned forward and shook his hand vehemently at the table where Harry sat, his face as colorless as the flower he wore.

"That man's name," he blazed, "is not Hugh Stires. It is a cloak he has chosen to cover his shame. He is the Rev. Henry Sanderson of Anjston."

Harry's pulses had leaped with excitement when the street preacher's first exclamation startled the courtroom; now they were beating as though they must burst. Through the stir about him he heard the crisp voice of the district attorney:

"I ask your honor's permission before this extraordinary witness is examined further," he said caustically, "to read an item printed here which has a bearing upon the testimony." He held in his hand a newspaper which earlier in the afternoon, with cynical disregard of Felder's tactics, he had been casually perusing.

"Read it, sir."

Holding the newspaper to a candle, the lawyer read in an even voice, prefacing his reading with the journal's name and date:

This city, which was aroused in the night by the burning of St. James' chapel, will be greatly shocked to learn that its rector, the Rev. Henry Sanderson, who has been for some months on a prolonged vacation, was in the building at the time and now lies at the city hospital, suffering from injuries from which it is rumored there is grave doubt of his recovery.

In the titter that rippled the courtroom Harry felt his heart bound and swell. Under the succinct statement he clearly discerned the fact. He saw the pitfall into which Hugh had fallen—the trap into which he himself had sent him on that fatal errand with the ruby ring on his finger. "Grave doubt of his recovery!" A surge of relief swept over him to his finger tips. He would be free to go back—to be himself again, to be Jessica's—if Hugh died. The reading voice drizzled in his ears:

The facts have not as yet been ascertained, but it seems clear that the popular young minister returned to town unexpectedly last night and was asleep in his study when the fire started. His presence in the building was unguessed until too late, and it was by little short of a miracle that he was brought out alive.

As we go to press we learn that Mr. Sanderson's condition is much more hopeful than was at first reported.

Harry's heart contracted as if a giant hand had clutched it. His elation fell like a rotten tree girdled at the roots. If Hugh did not die, he chilled as though in a spray of liquid air. Hugh's escape—the chance his conscience had given him—was cut off.

The judge reached for the newspaper the lawyer held, ran his eye over it and brought his gavel down with an angry snort.

"Take him away," he said. "His testimony is ordered stricken from the records. The fine is remitted, Mr. Felder. We can't make you responsible for lunatics. The court stands adjourned."

Felder had been among the last to leave the courtroom. He was discomfited and angry. At the door of the courthouse Dr. Brent slipped an arm through his.

"Too bad, Tom," he said sympathizingly. "I don't think you quite deserved it."

Felder paced a moment without speaking. "I need evidence," he said then; "anything that may help. I made a mistake. You heard all the testimony?"

The other nodded.

"What did you think of it?"

"What could any one think? I give all credit to your motive, Tom, but it's a pity you're mixed up in it."

"Why?"

"Because, if there's anything in human evidence, he's a thoroughly worthless reprobate. He lay for Moreau and murdered him in cold blood, and he ought to swing."

"The casual view," said the lawyer gloomily. "Just what I should have said myself—if this had happened a month ago."

His friend looked at him with an amused expression. "I begin to think he must be a remarkable man!" he said. "Is it possible he has really convinced you that he isn't guilty?"

Felder turned upon the doctor squarely. "Yes," he returned bluntly. "He has. Whatever I may have believed when I took this case, I have come to the conclusion—against all my professional instincts, mind you—that he never killed Moreau. I believe he's as innocent as either you or I!"

"He has as good as admitted to Miss Holme that he knows who did it."

"Come, come! Putting his neck into the noose for mere Quixotic feeling? And who, pray, in this God forsaken town, should he be sacrificing himself for?" the doctor asked satirically.

"That's the rub," said the lawyer. "Nobody. Yet I hang by my proposition."

"Well, he'll hang by something less tenuous, I'm afraid. But it won't be your fault. The crazy evangelist was only an incident. He merely served to jolt us back to the normal. By the way, did you hear him splutter after he got out?"

"No."

"You remember the story he told the other night of the minister who was caught gambling on his own communion table? Well, Hugh Stires is not only the Reverend Henry Something-or-other, but he is that man too! The crack brained old idiot would have told the tale all over again only the crowd hustled him. These he is now," he said suddenly as a light sprang up and voices broke out on the opposite corner. "The gang is standing by. I see your friend Barney McGinn," he added, with a grin of enjoyment. "I doubt if there are many converts tonight."

Even as he spoke there came a shout of laughter and warning. The spectators scattered in all directions, and a stream of water from a well directed hose deluged the itinerant and his music box.

Ten minutes later the street preacher, drenched and furious, was trundling his melodeon toward Funeral Hollow, on his way to the coast.

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Harry stood again in the obscure half darkness of his cell it came to him that the present had a far-reaching significance; that it was but the handiwork and resultant of forces in his own past. He himself had set Hugh's feet on the red path that had led him to the shameful terminus. He had gambled for Hugh's future, forgetting that his past remained, a thing that must be covered. He had won Hugh's counters, but his own right to be himself he had staked and lost long before that game on the communion table under the painted crucifixion.

The words he had once said to Hugh recurred to him with a kind of awe: "Put myself in your place? I wish to God I could!"

Fate—or was it God?—had taken him at his word. He had been hurled like a stone from a catapult into Hugh's place—to bear his knavery, to suffer his dishonor and to redeem the baleful reputation he had made.

A step outside the cell, the turning of the key. The door opened, and Jessica, pale and trembling, stood on the threshold.

"I cannot help it," she said as she came toward him, "though you told me not to come. I have trusted all the while and waited—and—prayed. But today I was afraid. Surely, surely, the man you are protecting has had time enough. Hasn't he? Won't you tell them the truth now?"

He knew not how to meet the piteous reproach and terror of that look. She had not heard the street preacher's declaration, he knew, but even if she had it would have been to her only an echo of the old mooted likeness. He had given her comfort once, but this was no more to be, no matter what it meant to him or to her.

"Jessica," he said steadily, "when you came to me here that first day and I told you not to fear for me I did not mean to deceive you. I thought then that it would all come right. But something has happened since then—something that makes a difference. I cannot tell who was the murderer of Moreau. I cannot tell you or any one else, either now or at any time."

She gazed at him startled. She had a sudden conception of some element hitherto unguessed in his makeup—something inveterate and adamant. Could it be that he did not intend to tell at all? The very idea was monstrous. Yet that clearly was his meaning. She looked at him with flashing eyes.

"You mean you will not!" she exclaimed bitterly. "You are bent on sacrificing yourself, then? You are going to take this risk because you think it brave and noble, because somehow it fits your man's gospel. Can't you see how wicked and selfish it is? You are thinking only of him and of yourself, not of me."

"Jessica, Jessica!" he protested with a groan. "But in the self torture of her questionings she paid no heed. "Don't you think I suffer? Haven't I borne enough in the months since I married you for you to want to save me this? Do you owe me nothing, me whom you so wronged, whose—"

She stopped suddenly at the look on his face of mortal pain, for she had struck harder than she knew. It pierced through the fierce resentment to her deepest heart, and all her love and pity gushed back upon her in a torrent. She threw herself on her knees by the bare cot, crying passionately:

"Oh, forgive me! Forget what I said I did not mean it. I have forgiven you a thousand times over. I never ceased to love you. I love you now more than all the world."

"It is true," he said, hoarse misery in his tone. "I have wronged you. If I could coin my blood drop by drop to pay for the past I could not set that right. If giving my life over and over again would save you pain I would give it gladly. But what you ask now is one thing I cannot do. It would make me a pitiful coward. I did not kill Moreau. That is all I can say to you or to those who try me."

"Your life!" she said with dry lips. "It will mean that. That counts so fearfully much to me, more than my own life a hundred times. Yet there is something that counts more than all that to you."

His face was that of a man who holds his hand in the fire. "Jessica," he said, "it is like this with me. When you found me here—the day I saw you on the balcony—I was a man whose soul had lost its compass and its bearings. My conscience was asleep. You woke it, and it's fiercely alive now. And now with my memory has come back a debt of my past that I never paid. Whatever the outcome, for my soul's sake I must settle it now and wipe it from the score forever."

She rose slowly to her feet, with a despairing gesture.

"He saved others," she quoted in a hard voice; "himself he could not save." I once heard a minister preach from that text at home. It was your friend, the Rev. Henry Sanderson. I thought it a very spiritual sermon then. That was before I knew what his companionship had been to you."

"If there were any justice in the universe," she added, "it should be he immolating himself now, not you. But for him you would never be here. He ruined your life and mine, and I hate and despise him for a selfish hypocrite."

That was what he himself had seemed to her in those old days. The edge of a flush touched his forehead as he said slowly, almost appealingly:

"He was not a hypocrite, Jessica. Whatever he was it was not that. At college he did what he did too openly. That was his failing, not caring what others thought. He despised weakness in others. He thought it none of his affair. So others were influenced. But after he came to see things differently from another standpoint—when he went into the ministry—he would have given the world to undo it."

"Men's likings are strange," she said. "Because he never had temptations like yours and has never done what the law calls wrong you think he is as noble as you—noble enough to shield a murderer to his own danger."

"Ah, no, Jessica!" he interposed gently. "I only said that in my place he would do the same."

"But you are shielding a murderer," she insisted fiercely. "You will not admit it, but I know. There can be no justice or right in that. If Harry Sanderson is all you think him, if he stood here now and knew the whole, he would say it was wicked—not brave and noble, but wicked and cruel."

He shook his head, and the sad shadow of a bitter smile touched his lips. "He would not say so," he said.

A dry sob answered him. He turned and leaned his elbows on the narrow window sill, every nerve aching, but powerless to comfort. He heard her step. The door closed sharply.

Then he faced into the empty cell, sat down on the cot and threw out his arms, with a hopeless cry: "Jessica, Jessica!"

cross parted in halves. Words were engraved on the inside of the arms—a date and the name Henry Sanderson.

The recurrence of the name jarred and surprised her. Hugh had dropped it—an old keepsake of the friend who had been his beau ideal, his exemplar and whose ancient influence was still dominant. He had clung loyally to the memento, blind in his constant liking, to the wrong that friend had done him. She looked at the date. It was May 28.

She shuddered, for that was the month and day on which Dr. Moreau had been killed. The point had been clearly established today by the prosecution. To the original owner of that cross perhaps the date that had come into Hugh's life with such a sinister meaning was a glad anniversary.

Suddenly she caught her hand to her cheek. A weird idea had rushed through her brain. The religious symbol had stood for Harry Sanderson, and the chance coincidence of date had irresistibly pointed to the murder. To her excited senses the juxtaposition held a bizarre, uncanny suggestion. This cross, the very emblem of vicarious sacrifice! Suppose Harry Sanderson had never given it to Hugh! Suppose he had lost it on the hillside himself!

She snatched up the paper again. "Who has been for some months on a prolonged vacation"—the phrase stared sardonically at her. That might carry far back—she said it under her breath, fearfully—beyond the murder of Dr. Moreau. Her face burned, and her breath came sharp and fast. Why when she brought her warning to the cabin had Hugh been so anxious to get her away unless to prevent her sight of the man who was there, to whom he had taken her horse? Who was there in Smoky Mountain when he would protect at hazard of his own life?

Jessica's veins were all afire. A rector murderer? A double career? Was it beyond possibility? It came to her like an impinging ray of light, the old curious likeness that had sometimes been made a jest of at the white house in the aspens. Moreau and Prendergast had believed it to be Hugh. So had the town, for the body had been found on his ground. But on the night when the real murderer came again to the cabin perhaps it was his coming that had brought back the lost memory. Hugh had known the truth. In the light of this supposition, his strained manner then, his present determination not to speak, all stood plain.

What had he meant by a debt of his past that he had never paid? He could owe no debt to Harry Sanderson. If he owed any debt it was to his dead father, a thousand times more than the draft he had repaid. Could he be thinking in his remorse that his father had cast him off, counting himself nothing, remembering only that Harry Sanderson had been David Stires' favorite and St. James', which must be smirched by the odium of its rector, the apple of his eye?

Jessica had snatched at a straw, because it was the only buoyant thing afloat in the dragging tide. Now with a blind fatuousness she hugged it tighter to her bosom. One purpose possessed her—to confront Harry Sanderson. What matter though she missed the remainder of the trial? She could do nothing. Her hands were tied. If the truth lay at Anjston she would find it. She thought no farther than this. Once in Harry Sanderson's presence, what she should say or do she scarcely imagined. The horrifying question filled her thought to the exclusion of all that must follow its answer. It was surety and self conviction she craved, only to read in his eyes the truth about the murder of Moreau.

She suddenly began to tremble. Would the doctors let her see him? What excuse could she give? If he was the man who had been in Hugh's cabin that night he had heard her speak, had known she was there. He must not know beforehand of her coming lest he have suspicion of her errand. Bishop Ludlow, he could gain her access to him. Injured, dying perhaps, maybe he did not guess that Hugh was in jeopardy for his crime. Guilty and dying, if he knew this, he would surely tell the truth. But if he died before she could reach him? The paper was some days old. He might be dead already. She took heart, however, from the statement of his improved condition.

She sprang to her feet and looked at her chatelaine watch. The eastbound express was overdue. There was no time to lose. Minutes might count. She examined her purse. She had money enough with her.

Five minutes later she was at the station, a scribbled note was on its way to Mrs. Halloran, and before a swinging red lantern the long incoming train was shuddering to a stop.

To Be Continued.

Cheerfully Adds His Endorsement.

Capt. J. E. Peterson, Goldsboro, N. C., President of the Farmers State Alliance of North Carolina under date of October 19, 1908, writes: "I cheerfully add my endorsement to the wonderful curative powers of Dr. Worthington's Southern Remedy for bowel diseases. I commenced using it five (5) years ago, when it was first recommended to me. I wish that I had heard of it forty (40) years ago, I could have avoided many days of suffering and much expense. To try it is to praise it and never be without a bottle in your home."

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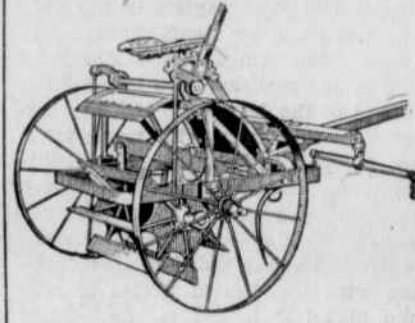
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Who was taken to Massachusetts when four years old. He grew up, not only with the New England accent and prejudices, but saved his pennies to give to missionaries that they might convert the Red Man. "On the plastic mind of a child, you can make impressions that are indelible." If you will teach your child the value of saving his pennies, and show him the importance of a growing Savings Account, you need not give yourself further concern about his future financial salvation. It will help him to build character, too. His account will be welcomed at

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We have just added to our stock of furniture an excellent line of cook stoves and heaters which are guaranteed to give perfect satisfaction. They are made of the best material obtainable and so far as quality, long service and satisfaction are concerned they are unexcelled. We carry stoves and heaters in all sizes and styles and at prices to suit you.

We have also just received one car furniture and two cars of American and Ellwood field fencing and are now prepared to give you excellent values in both furniture and fence. When you are in need of furniture or stoves or anything in home-furnishing and wire fence, it will be greatly to your interest to call to see us. Yours very truly,

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