

THE ACCOUNTING OF LOCKHART WARWICK

BY EDWARD BOLTWOOD

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THE platform of the lonely railway station at Mount Manaton was much shorter than the train, so that the Rev. Dr. Glight, disembarking from the last car, was obliged to stumble uncomfortably among the ties of a siding. It was growing dark; the little doctor was near-sighted; and his suit-case wearied his feminine fingers. He wished already that he had declined Warwick's invitation.

In this unchristian mood, he saw Bessborough, tall and ponderous, descending from the Pullman ahead of him.

"Why!" he faltered. "Why, Bessborough!"

"Glight? You here, too?"

After a surprised pause, they shook hands with a heartiness obviously overforced by both. The celebrated lawyer gave a quizzical laugh.

"So Warwick has asked you and me for the same visit, eh?" said he.

"I had a letter from Warwick," said the clergyman somewhat stiffly. "I think I have not mistaken the date."

"He invited me for to-day by word of mouth," said Bessborough, "at the thirtieth reunion of the class, last June. I understand that he has quite a large establishment for a solitary bachelor. There may be plenty of others staying with him. Is no one here to meet us?"

They circled the station and found a smart mountain buckboard, drawn by a spirited pair of roans.

"Mr. Lockhart Warwick's?" questioned Bessborough.

The liveried driver touched his hat. The two bags were bestowed beside him, and the two guests took the rear seat. The road, dimly discernible in the gathering dusk, wound along the grade of the

California upland. Great clouds threatened rain, and the air was singularly stagnant.

"Devilish deserted country!" said Bessborough curtly. "How far to Mr. Warwick's, driver?"

"About four miles, sir."

"Party of visitors there?"

"No, sir. You two gentlemen is all, sir."

Bessborough took no pains to smother a grunt of puzzled disgust, of which the clergyman politely affected to be unobservant.

"I was not able to attend our class reunion," said Glight. "I should have liked to see Warwick. He has never been back before."

"Queer fish!" commented the lawyer, dropping his voice out of the coachman's hearing. "Warwick hardly said two words to anybody, although none of the gang had met him for thirty years. He just sat around in a corner and blinked. Something wrong with his eyes, you know — snow-blindness, or something, that he got in the Klondike. Anyhow, that was his excuse for not helping us tear the lid off things, the way he used to. Do you remember the time—but of course you wouldn't."

"I sincerely regret Warwick's affliction," said Dr. Glight formally.

"Well, he's made his pile," retorted Bessborough, and shifted uneasily on the cushion. "You ought to tackle him for that blessed missionary college of yours. Got up to the million yet?"

"We hope and work and pray, Bessborough."

The clergyman spoke with a trace of professional intonation, and his companion sniffed irascibly. The good doc-

tor did not add that he had already appealed to Warwick; that, in fact, his present invitation to Warwick's place was the sole result of a money-begging letter which he had written, having noticed Warwick's name and circumstances in a newspaper. But why had Warwick simultaneously invited Bessborough — Bessborough, successful but unscrupulous, who stood, in his private and public life, for all that was worldly and much that was evil? Dr. Glight sighed.

Ever since leaving the railroad, the buckboard had been climbing a steady slope, bare, so far as one could make out, of habitation. The flat mountain-top, over which they now drove, had about it an odd suggestion of the seashore. From it no higher ground was seen anywhere; the clouds drifted near; the infrequent trees grew squat, as if cautious of wind and weather. The driver finally guided his horses through a gateway in a rough wall.

"Warwick told me he rents this place from Jorgan, the artist," grumbled Bessborough. "Nobody would live by choice in such a wilderness, except an artist, or a fool, or Warwick. There he is, on the porch."

The ground story of the spacious and picturesque house was of native rock, above which jutted many gables of stained wood. At one side was a low, round building, connected with the main house by a short corridor.

"Jorgan's studio, I suppose," said Bessborough.

II

An elderly butler took their luggage; and their host ushered them into the broad hall. Warwick was a ruggedly framed man, long of limb, short of neck, with powerful shoulders slightly stooped, as if bearing an invisible weight. His clipped black beard lay close against the swarthy skin of his angular face; and he wore a loose suit of tweeds, markedly unfashionable.

"Now, you'll want to go to your rooms," said he briskly. "Simms will show you; but mind, I don't change togs for dinner, and neither shall you."

"Where are the spectacles, Lockie?" asked Bessborough. "Eyes better?"

"Oh, I'm seeing extraordinary clear

to-night," said Warwick. "Extraordinary clear, I assure you;" and he smiled curiously at them as they ascended the stairs.

From the landing, Glight, with a sudden impulse, glanced back. Warwick was still planted on the hearth-rug, but the smile was gone. His brow was furrowed, and his lips were set in a straight line. He clenched one fist and struck it passionately against the palm of his other hand. The little clergyman wheeled quickly into his bedroom.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed, to the reflection of his pale cheeks in the mirror.

The chamber was perfectly appointed, and a servant unpacked the doctor's traveling-bag. His preparations for dinner were soon accomplished, and he went down, a trifle timorously, to the hall; but Warwick had vanished.

Glight tiptoed into a library. Warwick was never a reading man; and Dr. Glight observed with amusement the monotonous rows of books, imprisoned behind glass, which lent a cold, unfriendly glitter to the luxurious bindings. From the library a door, now ajar, gave upon a dark passage; and at the end of the passage was another lighted apartment.

"That must have been the painter's studio," thought Glight; and he sauntered toward it.

Its equipment was peculiar—a blanketed camp-bed, a rude table, primitive toilet appliances, a gun-rack, and a row of pegs, from which hung jerseys and oilskins. If the round room had been squared and walled with logs, it might have been a miner's cabin.

"Merely a Klondiker's boudoir," said Warwick from the library. "Dinner's ready!"

He waited for his guest to precede him to the dining-room across the hall; and Glight heard him fasten the door of the passage.

An excellent dinner was excellently served by the butler and a maid. Bessborough began the meal with enthusiasm, pledging Warwick in the first tumbler of champagne, and rallying him with convivial memories. To these Warwick was sufficiently responsive for the demands of hospitality, but no more so than that. His glass was seldom touched. Bess-

borough did not once penetrate his courteous reserve; and Glight, after a few feeble essays, did not try.

"The weather," brilliantly remarked the doctor, sipping his *demi-tasse*, "is close to-night, I think."

"There's a big storm on the cards," said Bessborough.

"Probably," agreed Warwick lightly. "A big storm!"

He rose and pulled together the portières of the door into the hall. The man-servant placed a decanter of brandy and a silver tray of cigars.

"That will do, Simms," Warwick said. "We want to be quite alone. Clear the maids out of the pantry."

"Going to tell us a good story, are you, Lockie?" chuckled Bessborough. "You used always to have the spiciest ones. Let's make this married parson blush. I'm still a bachelor, like you;" and he applied himself zealously to the cognac.

Warwick, with inscrutable satisfaction, surveyed his ill-paired guests—the religious, high-minded clergyman, and Bessborough, keen and practised in the wisdom of a baser world.

"Stories, by all means," he said. "Shall I lead off?"

III

"THINGS happen to a fellow in the Klondike," began Warwick, as if searching his recollection for a diverting episode. "For instance, I was strapped in Dawson in the winter of ninety-seven. When the ice went out, and boats came up the river in the spring, I got a carpenter's job at eighteen dollars a day. I fed up and laid by a little dust. Then I decided that I'd make or break. I couldn't stand another winter, and I couldn't win to the States.

"Well, I bought a single-pack outfit and followed a fool stampede up Hunter's Creek. By the time we got there, the creek was staked from end to end, like a new city street; so I hit out alone over the divide toward the Beaver. There wasn't any trail. In the middle of a nigger-head swamp I ran into another prospector who was traveling lonesome, the way I was. The two of us made camp together. I recognized him for an old Spaniard who had fiddled in

a Circle City dance-hall. His name was Caravigo."

Warwick paused to select a cigar; and the clergyman looked toward the curtained door.

"What's that rustle?" said Dr. Glight, listening. "Rain?"

"Get on with your Spaniard, Warwick," drawled Bessborough, who was somewhat bored.

"It seems," resumed Warwick, "that once, for a freak, when I was flush, I'd paid Caravigo a pound of gold for fiddling a Liszt concerto while the crowd was yelling for 'Sweet Marie.' Caravigo had never forgotten it, and he thought I was a fine man—a kindred spirit. Well, we made camp. The minute he unrolled his pack, I saw he'd been lucky to meet me. He didn't have grub enough for a week, and second-class grub at that. I gave him supper, and found some liniment in my kitty-bag and rubbed it on his ankle, which he'd sprained, jumping a log. That won his heart, I expect—that and the Liszt concerto business. Anyhow, the next morning he showed me the laundry-slip, and told me where he was bound.

"It was the same old yarn. I'd heard the like of it a dozen times. A drunken Indian, a quart of whisky, a mysterious gulch where you could kick up nuggets with your bare feet, a wild-geese chase into a trackless desert on half rations—and your own silly skeleton under a snow-drift for a rollicking finish. Caravigo had taken down the Indian's directions on a laundry-slip. I laughed at it; but it was more than I had. I was pointed nowhere in particular, and as well as go there I might hitch up with the fiddler. Besides, he was sort of a helpless, pathetic figure in that deadly country. I took out a cartridge from my revolver and tossed it up. It fell with the bullet to the north. I went with Caravigo.

"His crazy chart, naturally, was no good—no more of a guide than the tip of your nose. I laid the course myself, aiming to fetch up at the head-waters of the Klondike River. Caravigo thought we were following the Indian map. He couldn't speak English very well.

"One afternoon we were sailing down a kind of a precipice affair toward a run-

ning creek. Caravigo limped along behind, with a crutch I'd made him to favor his crippled ankle. I heard a squeaky shout—"Madonna! Madonna!" it was—and I looked back. The crutch had keeled over a little boulder, hanging on the ledge, and showed up gold-sign—yes, loose gold—gold almost ready to mint! I dropped my pack, and grabbed out my pan, and flew at the creek. I'd never made a real big strike; and this was big—enormous. The first pan of muck proved it, but I'd washed maybe two or three before I came partly to my senses. Caravigo was still squealing out "Madonna!" alongside the boulder.

"I tramped half a mile or so down the gulch. It was virgin country—all ours to claim from. The walk steadied me, and I commenced to see straight. When I got back, the old Spaniard had moved down to the water. He had broken into the grub, and was gnawing, like a wolf, at a great hunk of raw bacon. In getting at the meat, he'd torn open the sack of beans, and the last of 'em was dribbling into the creek. I drew my gun—Caravigo didn't have any—and ordered hands up.

"'Rich! I'm rich!' he yelled. 'Rich, rich, rich!' and he capered about.

"No, it wasn't pleasant. I tied him to a tree—he wasn't strong, even in his delirium. Then I gathered up all I could of our provisions and took account of stock. We had been shaved down pretty close before. Now I could see that it would be a sprint between starvation and the best and swiftest one of us. As for the other one— Have a fresh cigar, doctor?"

Dr. Glight hastily declined, and eyed Warwick with dreadful apprehension.

"How about finding game?" suggested Bessborough.

"Not a feather," averred Warwick. "No chance of it."

The clergyman leaned forward.

"What did you do, Warwick?"

"Left him," Warwick replied.

"Left him?" echoed Bessborough, recoiling. "Left him to suffer and starve, like a dog—a lame, mad dog?"

"He didn't starve," said Warwick.

"I don't think he suffered. I took care of that. When Caravigo's body was found, three months later, by the first

stampeder up Lockhart Creek, there was the hole of my bullet in his skull."

IV

DR. GLIGHT pushed his chair back from the table.

"It is too horrible!" he broke out painfully. "I cannot sit here—cannot stay under this roof to listen to a—"

"Well, where else can you go, this weather?" railed Bessborough, with a hard laugh; but his voice was strained and shrill. "For Heaven's sake, let us understand you, Warwick," he said, and reached for the decanter.

"I have brought you two men here to-night on purpose to have you understand me," said Warwick, raising his voice emphatically. "My fortune is grounded on Caravigo's death."

The lawyer's face expressed only a little less of shocked dismay than Glight's; but Warwick noted neither. He looked straight ahead at the crimson tapestry of the door.

"I left Caravigo," he said stolidly, "and traveled down the gulch. I looked for the best gold-sign, and I staked out a discovery claim at quite a distance from where—from where I'd started. The creek seemed to shift to the east, and I knew my only chance was to the west, where I might strike a camp on the river. So I turned west. It was tough going. I don't remember much about it. When my grub was gone, and my belt and boot-tops, I ate some berries that gave me vertigo and cramps, and laid me out stiff for I don't know how long. And the funny part of it was that I was a millionaire all the time. I guess that's what kept me gripping to it. I crawled into a camp on the Klondike on my hands and knees, and the boys gave me the last slab of pilot bread they had in the tent."

Bessborough drew a long breath of relief.

"The Spaniard could never have lived through it," said he.

"I had just about enough strength," continued Warwick, not heeding him, "to hold my tongue. As soon as I could stand, I canoed to Dawson and filed my claim. I did a neat job in tipping off a few of my pals—the boys who gave me the bread were among 'em—and we

organized a secret outfit to beat the stampede. We did it, too. I sold out after a while, and that's all."

He paused, and thoughtfully crinkled the damask cloth between his thick fingers. The clergyman shook his head.

"No, that is not all," objected Glight. "Penitence—reparation!"

"Penitence?" sneered Bessborough. "Well, reparation—yes." He nodded at Warwick. "Had Caravigo any heirs?" said he.

Warwick smiled briefly.

"Do you both agree," he pursued, "that my next step should have been to hunt Caravigo's heirs?"

"More than that, Warwick," firmly insisted Glight. "You were called upon, by divine and human law, to—"

"One thing at a time, doctor," said Warwick. "Let us discuss one question, if you please, at a time. In Dawson the old Spaniard had left no acquaintances. After a while I went to Circle. In Circle his daughter, Carmen, a girl of eighteen, was employed in a bakery. She was poor, and proud, and friendless—and beautiful. The story of the finding of her father's body had drifted down there. She knew that Caravigo had been shot. Do you appreciate the Spanish nature? This girl's one idea was the detection of the unknown man whom she called her father's murderer.

"She had inherited a musical talent. I posed for a musical crank, and tried to make her talent an excuse for my interest in her. I hired a missionary's widow to live with Miss Caravigo, and I fitted them out with everything they could want. The excuse worked all right with Carmen, but it didn't go with anybody else. People commenced to talk about her and me. The temperature in Alaska sinks to seventy degrees below, but it doesn't freeze up Mrs. Grundy. Finally this gossip got to the girl, and she refused my help. I loved her, and I love her now. This I could not bring myself to tell her, but I asked her to bear my name."

"And she?" stammered Glight.

"She consented," said Warwick. "Her foreign notions, you see, of a marriage of convenience. She is my wife."

"With that black gulf between you—that impassable gulf of her father's

tragedy?" Bessborough half arose from his chair and sank back again, frowning.

"She is my wife," reiterated Warwick, "in law; but our marriage was—and is—a legal arrangement, and nothing more; an arrangement to give me the right to protect her—to let her share my money, without stain."

"I see," said Bessborough. "An act of reparation."

"But what of justice?" cried the clergyman. "I need not speak abstractly. What of practical justice to this girl's life, to her right to happiness?"

"And your own right, Warwick?" added Bessborough. "Have you forfeited that? The situation is intolerable, I think. The marriage was a cruel mistake to both—but I beg your pardon."

"I should be begging yours," said Warwick earnestly. "I have brought my two old friends to sit here as an expert jury—representative, if you will allow me, of opposite view-points; but you have agreed twice—once in approving my search for Caravigo's child, once in condemning my method of restitution. Will the jury agree again?"

"I will agree to no deceit!" vehemently declared Dr. Glight. "I will agree to nothing except a confession to your wife."

"Ah!" murmured Warwick. "And you, Bessborough?"

"I reach the same conclusion by a different road," said the lawyer. "It is obvious, to my mind, that you ought not to be married to the daughter of the man you—to this woman. Tell her the truth, then. For lack of witnesses, if for nothing else, you will be safe from criminal prosecution; but her knowledge of the story would result in an immediate separation, and without scandal. She would not dare, on her unsupported testimony, to raise a scandal. Tell her the truth!"

"My jury works well together," rejoined Warwick. "A separation! Is that also a part of your verdict, doctor?"

"Inevitably," assented Glight.

"For the first time," said Warwick, "and not five minutes ago, I told her the truth about my love for her, and about her father's death."

"What do you mean?" vociferated the minister, clutching the table-edge.

Bessborough was quicker-witted. He sprang toward the portières.

"Let's see!" he snapped; and threw the curtains wide apart.

In the hall, leaning against the massive newel-post, stood a girl.

"My wife, gentlemen," said Warwick softly.

V

SHE acknowledged neither Glight's automatic bow nor Bessborough's astounded scrutiny. Her great eyes, the greater now for the pallor of her perfect face, were riveted fast upon Lockhart Warwick. Slowly she raised one hand to the carving behind her; the lace sleeve fell back from her rounded arm; and she turned, so that her white profile, immutable as a cameo, gleamed against the dark wood.

The simple movement broke a certain spell which bound the men to silence. The clergyman fluttered around indignantly on his heel.

"Really, Warwick!" he protested. "This preconcerted—"

"Eavesdropping—yes," said Warwick. "I told you that I should abjectly beg your indulgence. I do so. I wished her to hear your expert advice given impersonally. Your civilized refinement has been untried by Carmen. Its expert advice I wished her to hear directly—not through me. I would take, you see, no color of advantage of her—a fragile excuse for my impoliteness, but the only one I have."

"I, too—I ask pardons," spoke Carmen clearly.

She advanced into the room. Over the table hung a scarlet lamp. With her head dominantly erect, she crossed the shadowy barrier into the circle of ruddy light. It was like the calm, defiant entrance of a knightly swordsman upon the arena of a mediæval tournament.

"I have to ask pardons, gentlemen. I do not know altogether—what you call—customs of this your world." She picked her phrases laboriously, but without the slightest embarrassment. "I am ignorant—I am not taught until lately, when I learn much. Oh, yes, so much to-night about this your world!"

"It appears," rasped Bessborough, still angered by the trickery of his host—"it appears, madam, that our ingenious scene was devised to instruct you!"

The brutality of the words, and the girl's brave loneliness, wrung Glight's sympathy as in a vise.

"My dear lady," said the kind clergyman impulsively, "if there is anything I can do for you—believe me, our world shall not leave you homeless, friendless. I promise you that. Mrs. Glight and myself—if there is anything—"

"Thank you, Glight," intruded Warwick.

"And, of course," followed Bessborough, after a pause, "if I can be of legal assistance—as to the separation, or otherwise—"

"Personified generosity!" observed Warwick grimly. "You hear, Carmen?"

"I have heard. I hear all."

"And do you understand?" pursued Warwick. "Do you understand the verdict of this higher, wiser world? We are not in the Yukon country now, Carmen. We are where the lives of men and women must be balanced as delicately as a canoe in Three-Mile Rapids. And there are no better judges of the various balances, I think, than Glight and Bessborough." He bowed constrainedly. "I ought to be willing to abide by their decision. Do you understand what must be done?"

"Do you?" she said.

"They decide that we must part," answered Warwick in a flat monotone. "That it is impossible and shameful—this form of marriage between you and the man who compassed your father's death. They have considered everything, and that is their decision."

"They have not considered everything!"

"Everything which has been told us," amended Glight.

"No, *señor!*"

Her hand strayed to the table and chanced upon the keen blade of a knife. A sinister fear mastered Bessborough, and he took a step in her direction; but Carmen disregarded him, slipping the blade for a moment between her graceful fingers. Suddenly she swept a little gesture with it and dropped the knife on the cloth. It was as if she had cut off Bessborough and Glick from her physical presence; and the minister withdrew vaguely toward the hall.

"Did they consider that you love me?" she demanded proudly.

Warwick started back, beyond the glow of the lamp.

"I love you!" he said, out of the shadow. "They know that I love you."

"And do they know that I, too—"

"Carmen!" whispered Warwick.

"Yes, my husband. May I not speak at last? What is done, that is done. What is to be, that will be. But my heart shall be yours forever!" Her voice rang like a silver bell. "The two wise men—what is their wisdom?" She waved her arm disdainfully. "My father is gone. You have told me how. I pray for his soul, as now I shall pray the good God to forgive you, who must needs release my father's broken spirit from his poor body. That was the cruel fortune of the so cruel North. That I can understand. But the wisdom of the two wise men? It is nothing. For why? Their wisdom is without love, my husband. Their wise world—I am ignorant—but it is not mine!"

"Nor mine, by Heavens!" cried Warwick passionately.

"They spoke of a black gulf between us, not to be passed," she recalled. "There is within me here a bridge to pass on;" and she clasped both her hands upon her breast.

"You can pray for my forgiveness," said Warwick, leaning forward. "Can you also forgive?"

"If you love me," said Carmen steadily.

Warwick glanced at the lawyer with misty, half-blinded eyes.

"Good night!" mumbled Bessborough awkwardly; and joined the clergyman on the stairs.

VI

THE sun was in a cloudless sky when Dr. Glight awoke. He hurried downstairs to find Bessborough pacing the library; while Simms, the butler, hovered about with the distracted countenance of a decorous servant who beholds the very pillars of social propriety crumble to the ground.

"Here's a flare-up, doctor!" prefaced Bessborough. "Warwick has gone!"

"Gone?" said the minister blankly. "He has gone?"

"Gone for good," said Bessborough. "Left me a letter."

"And one for you, sir," quavered Simms.

He handed a sealed envelope to Glight and sidled away doubtfully.

"Listen to mine first," proffered the lawyer. "This is what Warwick writes:

"DEAR BESSBOROUGH:

"I am completing my discourtesy to my guests last night by running away from them this morning. Invent any reason you can—perhaps it is to save you an argument and Glight a sermon. Money for winding up my household I have left with Simms, who is a trustworthy factotum, and who will give you, I hope, an edible breakfast. Before you finish it, I shall have commenced a long journey."

While Bessborough turned the note-paper, the clergyman's bewildered glance ran down the adjoining passage to the studio. The gun-rack and the row of pegs were unoccupied, and the bed was stripped of blankets. Bessborough continued the letter:

"I may add that my wife, having rejected, as you know, the verdict of the civilization which you and the doctor so comprehensively represent, has gone with me to begin a new fight for fortune in the North."

"Now, what the dickens does he mean by that?" queried Bessborough.

Dr. Glight mechanically tore open his sealed envelope. He drew from it two enclosures. One was a signed and witnessed memorandum, and the other was a bank draft; and at the six numerals cut across the draft the minister blinked incredulously.

"My college!" he breathed. "For my missionary college! No—it cannot be!"

He seemed afraid to move; and the draft shook in his fingers.

"Tainted money, eh?" jeered the cynical lawyer.

Glight stood speechless; but abruptly the scorn passed from the other's face, and his eyes became radiant with strong emotion.

"By the Lord, doctor, if you ask me," he cried, "I say that it is cleansed—fragrant—hallowed with a man's penance and a woman's love!"

"Amen!" said Dr. Glight.



THE OLD FARMHOUSE AT WEST HILLS, NEAR HUNTINGTON, LONG ISLAND, IN WHICH
WALT WHITMAN WAS BORN ON MAY 31, 1819

WALT WHITMAN'S EARLY LIFE ON LONG ISLAND

BY WILLIS STEELL

IN the definitive edition of his works, in ten sumptuous volumes, one may look in vain for the real Walt Whitman; and even in the biographies of him so far written one feels the absence of actuality. It is a cardboard man they present, not a man that one can walk around. In order to preserve the image of himself which the poet carefully set up—that of an “initiate”—his editors have outdone him, and have obliterated the human touches. They step into the artificial atmosphere which he created but did not breathe, and once there they begin to see with strange vision and to measure with outlandish tape.

Fortunately for the preservation of his memory as a man and not as a freak, there are still living people who knew Whitman and who treasure the recollection of their friend as a quiet gentleman

of simple manners, an affectionate friend, a good neighbor, and a thorough patriot.

On Long Island, in the several villages and in the one great city where the poet's childhood, youth, and early manhood were spent, many witnesses are to be found to tell cheerful stories of his optimism and his great heart. If a little dazed by his fame as a poet, these old acquaintances never begrudged him any good he was able to get out of life, and would not deflower his poet's wreath after death. But they remember him as a fellow mortal, with faults like themselves, or, at least, with human failings, but at the same time big with warm feeling, generous sympathy, and surpassing magnetism.

It may be as well to call these witnesses before it is too late; otherwise, critics and biographers will have their own way in making of Walt Whitman a sightless