

THE NEW POLICEMAN

Elritch was a small town in the south of Saskatchewan, and boasted of a population of five hundred people. Like most other small towns of the great wheat province, it was seldom the centre of any great excitement, excepting, perhaps, when a number of harvesters gathered in from the surrounding wheat farms to "blow in" some of their money and "make whoopee" for a while. Even this was the cause of little concern to the residents of Elritch, and they demonstrated the fact by allowing old Jim Gowan, a man over sixty-five years old and crippled with rheumatism most of the time, to act as the lone policeman of the town.

Gowan, useless at any time as an officer of the law, was at length superannuated, and a new policeman, James Swenson, was appointed. The new officer was a big sturdy man about forty years of age, with an unusually surly demeanor. He was so short and gruffy in his conversation that he soon created for himself a number of personal enemies.

About a month after his appointment, a sad and fatal accident—for such it was termed at the time—occurred at Dean's Bridge on the Blue Bend Road, about a half mile out of the little town. A Studebaker coach, with two people in it, was found upturned in a creek,—a drop of about ten feet below the bridge. The occupants of the car were Harry and Mary Clinton, brother and sister, and both were killed.

Policeman Swenson was one of the first to arrive at the scene of the tragic accident and he was followed shortly by a coroner, who pronounced death due to an accident and claimed that further inquest was unnecessary. The bodies of the deceased were hurried to a morgue in Elritch, and, as no relatives or friends showed up, were buried on the following day. The whole affair had taken place so suddenly and unexpectedly that the people of Elritch had scarcely time to realize what had happened before the victims of the accident were interred.

The reporter of the Elritch Gazette, a miniature daily paper, on hearing of the accident, quickly sought an interview with Policeman Swenson, to get an account of the particulars of the accident. He received a cold reception from Swenson and from the coroner, too, who,

being an intimate friend of the policeman, happened to be with him when the newspaper reporter arrived. Both men seemed anxious, for some reason, to keep the news of the accident out of the paper, and even told the reporter as much.

Now Jerry King, the reporter and incidentally the editor of the Elritch Gazette, filling both positions without much difficulty, was one of those who was not an admirer of the new Elritch policeman. Accordingly, on the following morning the front page of the Gazette was practically all taken up with an account of the Clinton accident and consequent deaths. All the particulars of the case, so far as could be ascertained, were given, and insinuations were handed out to both the policeman and the coroner, who, it stated, handled the case in an incompetent and unlawful manner.

Of course, the criticism of Swenson was thought to be a little too severe, and he, backed by public opinion, compelled Jerry to write an apology in the Gazette on the following day. Swenson even went further. He ordered his account of the accident to be published, and it was very different from King's. This added more to the editor's mortification. Swenson claimed that he had made a detective-like examination of all the marks about the scene of the accident, and also of the broken car, and had arrived at the following conclusions. The right front axle of the car must have cracked and broken off just as the machine was driven upon the bridge. This caused it to swerve to the right and crash through the railing. Neither Clinton nor his sister had had time to escape, went over the bridge in the car, and met their deaths when the upturned machine struck the creek bed. This explanation of the accident was apparently satisfactory to all the residents of Elritch. Jerry King alone refused to give credence to it. His incredulity was due in a large measure, no doubt, to his own personal dislike for the new cop and to his resentment of his newspaper mortification.

Somehow, though, Jerry could not cease to think of the Clintons. He wondered who they were, why they had come to live in Elritch, where they were bound on the night of their fatal accident, and why no one had come forward to claim their bodies and their small portion of worldly goods.

One night, about six weeks later, Jerry, who had al-

ways been fond of social entertainments, was at a party given by his friend, Albert Semple, at his home in Craik, another small town just fifteen miles from Elritch. It was a dancing party and Jerry, after havng had several dances with his favorite partners, was introduced by Albert to a young blond-haired girl whose name was Hilda Mack. She was apparently almost a stranger among the rest of the guests at the party, and Jerry imagined she seemed frightened or, if not, at least a little backward. He immediately attempted to make her feel at home at the party, and the following conversation ensued.

"Have you ever been in Craik before tonight, Miss Mack?", he inquired, in an unconcerned manner.

"Ye-e-s, I was here just six weeks ago tonight," she answered.

"Six weeks ago tonight." These words had a rather peculiar significance to Jerry, but he hardly knew why. It seemed strange that he should recall the fatal accident at Dean's Bridge just now. It had happened, he remembered, too, just six weeks before that very night. He wondered if she could possibly have heard of the Clintons.

"I suppose you didn't hear of the accident at Elritch, a little town fifteen miles away? It happened just six weeks ago tonight."

"Oh, yes; I heard about it—wasn't it terrible!"

"Did you happen to know the victims of the accident?"

"Yes, I knew them well. I went to the convent with Mary in Regina, and Harry, I—I knew him too."

"Did they live in Regina?"

"Yes, they lived there for ten years. I don't know where they lived before that. Mary once told me that she and Harry were under the care of a cross old guardian who looked after their affairs till Harry became twenty-one. After that they went down to the south of Saskatchewan, where Harry intended to buy a farm. They were coming to Craik to see me on the night they were killed."

"Strange you didn't come to Elritch when you heard they were killed, then?"

"Oh, I had to go back to Regina the next morning, and I never knew they were killed till two days after they were buried, and it was of no use to come then. Besides—"

Here the girl was interrupted and the conversation ceased, but Jerry was able to supply what she intended to say after a few days, in view of the occurrences which followed the dance.

Two days later King received the startling news that Hilda Mack had suddenly disappeared from the home of Jean Kilbride, where she had been staying during her visit in Craik, and was thought to be kidnapped. In fact, search warrants were given, but for several days no trace was found of the missing girl. The only clue to her whereabouts was given by little Mary Kilbride, who said that a big ugly man used to come to see Hilda since she came to visit Craik, and she thought Hilda was very much afraid of him. She believed that this terrible man had carried poor Hilda away.

Although little Mary's story was readily listened to, yet no one could furnish any information that would lead either to the finding of the girl or to the identity of the kidnapper. Jerry King was the first to make a guess at whom this sought for man could be. He thought of James Swenson and almost wished it had been he, and almost simultaneously he recalled that the Elritch policeman had a nefarious brother who might answer to the description given by the little girl. He drove to Craik and acquainted a few of the town officials with his suspicions, and immediately a search party authorized by law set out for Elritch and searched Policeman Swenson's home. Jerry proved that his suspicions were not ungrounded, for both Bill Swenson and the kidnapped girl, Hilda Mack, were found secreted in Policeman Swenson's home.

The second issue of the Elritch Gazette after this event, gave a full account of the capture and arrest of the Swenson brothers and the district coroner. It also contained the true version of how the Clintons had met their deaths. It appears that Harry Clinton and Hilda Mack were sweethearts, and that Bill Swenson was an unscrupulous rival of Harry. Hilda Mack had come to Craik, and had sent a message over to Harry Clinton in Elritch to come over to Craik and to bring his sister Mary. Swenson had found out what was going on between the Clintons and Hilda Mack and resolved to put an end to it. He held the brother and sister up at Dean's Bridge, struck each a blow on the head with a club, and drove their car

over the bridge. He then rushed to his brother, the policeman, in Elritch, told him what had happened, and fled north. The brother had attempted to cover up the tracks of the murderer as well as he could, and, as soon as he thought things were going to come out all right, had let his brother know. Bill Swenson returned to Craik to get Hilda Mack, by hook or by crook, and intended to force her to marry him. The failure of his attempt to succeed has already been recounted, and was the means of procuring for Jerry King an important position on the staff of a big Regina paper.

—F.L.C., '31

SYMPATHY

Disconsolate I flee the face of men;
They fail to see or do not seem to see
The sadness that is mine. So, vainly then,
I seek a voice, a word to comfort me.

"O trees, do *you* lament that my heart grieves?
Would *you* rejoice, my loneliness to ease?"
As murmuring reply they toss their leaves,
Their wide arms spread, and nod their heads in
the breeze.

A child I meet, a little one in tears.
A doll she's lost? Some childish toy, maybe.
She weeps not when I kindly calm her fears.
She's smiling now, and I've found sympathy.

—W.A.R., '31

Unerring Nature still divinely bright,
One clear, unchanged, and universal light,
Life, force, and beauty must to all impart,
At once the source, and end, and test of art.

—Pope