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ROB MCGREGOR.

BY MARTHA McCULLOCH WILLIAMS.

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SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS INSTALLMENTS.

In order that new readers of THE ENQUIRER may begin with the following installment of this story, and understand it just the same as though they had read it all from the beginning, we here give a synopsis of that portion of it which has already been published:

CHAPTER I.—Life in Walnut Creek, in Tennessee, centers around Topmark's store. Magnolia Tubbs, a mysterious newcomer in the neighborhood, not without attractions of a coarse type, is a nocturnal caller on Topmark.

CHAPTER II.—Mrs. Topmark dies from the poison of herbs brought to the store by a charming working Negress, ostensibly to kill mice. Gossips and a managing mamma are trying to bring about a match between Topmark's niece, Alice Winfold, and aristocratic Colonel Talbot's son Jack. But spirited Rob McGregor, heir of Roscoe, has been before Jack's eyes from childhood.

CHAPTER III.—Topmark covets the Roscoe acres, which are heavily mortgaged and adjoin his own. Rob is the mainstay and comfort of her widowed and blind father.

CHAPTER IV.—Jack Talbot is a frequent caller at Roscoe. So is the newly made widower Topmark. Jack proposes to Rob and meets with a good humored refusal.

CHAPTER V.—Magnolia Tubbs holds a mysterious land claim of value, and Topmark seeks to secure it.

CHAPTER VI.—Alice Winfold places a stumbling block in the path of true love by telling Rob that Jack has proposed to her.

CHAPTER VII.—Mrs. Talbot prevails upon Jack to act as the escort of Alice Winfold. He does so reluctantly, but ends in trifling with her while his heart is set upon Rob McGregor.

CHAPTER VIII.—A series of mysterious persecutions of the people of Roscoe inaugurated by the theft of Rob's favorite saddle horse, Lightfoot.

CHAPTER IX.—Jack drives Alice Winfold to the great annual church meeting. Rob is there in the company of Topmark, having arranged it to spite Jack Talbot for his supposed double dealing. She believes Alice Winfold's story.

CHAPTER X.—All the gossips have it that Jack Talbot and Alice Winfold are engaged, but Jack again proposes to Rob. She cleverly evades the question.

CHAPTER XI.

At Monday night's supper table Mrs. Talbot said to Jack, "Son, if you have not made other plans, will you go with me tonight to church?"

"With pleasure," Jack said, making a great ado over the heat of his coffee. "You surely don't think I prefer anybody's company to yours, mammy? How shall we go—on horseback?"

"Yes, that will be best," Mrs. Talbot said, smiling fondly on her boy. Jack made a grimace, but masked it with a pretense of swallowing awry. His mother's simple wiles were plain to him. She meant to go by Mrs. Winfold's place and make Miss Alice bear them company. To object was for him out of the question, and thus he would seem to keep on with what he could not deny went far to justify Rob in the way she was behaving toward that exacted old fool Ben Topmark.

This, be it understood, is an exact quotation from young Mr. Talbot's mental phraseology. Though he had been in a fever ever since the night before, a glimmer of light and common sense had pierced his love clouded understanding. Rob was all he had believed her. There was certainly something more than girlish coyness back of her seeming transformation. Even in her faults she was noble. He would go to her, face the thing out, and not leave her until he had got to the bottom of it.

Not at once, of course. Cerintha Payne was there for the meeting, which might last two weeks and was certain to hold for one. But until he could thus see her he would take care so to act that she should not be able again to fling Miss Winfold in his teeth. After all, it was no more unreasonable that she should feel aggrieved by his devotion to the neighborhood paragon than that he should grow furious over seeing her the object of Mr. Topmark's devotion, though she must know how little a free agent her lover was. She had laughed with him times without number over his compulsory gallantry, but that was before. What if she had found out that she really did care and was thus exigent because of the knowledge?

There was comfort untold in the thought. Yes, he would be careful—show himself as friendly and kind as of old, until Rob was once more solitary at Roscoe. Though widowers did strike a tremendous gait in the lovelorn, he had not much fear that this particularly tormenting widower could carry off Rob under his eyes in the space of one revival. Perhaps the man really meant nothing serious—it might be he had chosen Rob in the giddiness of a first emancipation, but would let his vagrant fancy range to some one more suitable when it came to serious thought of matrimony.

Therefore it was trebly irritating to find himself again constrained to seem to do the thing he had vowed to leave undone. But it was not worth while to growl and look black over it when he knew so well that dear mother had his best good so at heart. When they were mounted and riding away, he talked to her gaily of the things he knew she best liked to hear. He could and would give her new frocks and china and paint the house anew, he said, now that the worrying debts were so near done with. The twins, Frank and Billy, should have a college course too. He might even hope next year to take his mother upon the tour they had so often planned

among the Virginia kinfolk whom he had never seen.

There Mrs. Talbot stopped him, saying half shyly: "Maybe you will make it a bridal tour, son. You are the best son any mother ever had, but because of that we must not be selfish and never let you think of anything of your own. You are 25—quite old enough to marry. Indeed, my dearest wish is to see you married well."

"I could not marry a woman less a lady than my dear mother," Jack said, touching her free hand lightly, "and if I get one who is as much a lady I must marry well. But, mother, dearest, please remember I could not be happy with an angel if I did not love her with all my heart."

"I never saw an angel, but am sure I don't want one for my daughter," Mrs. Talbot said, smiling demurely. "All I ask is that your wife shall be sweet tempered and a woman of sterling character and good sense."

"Which her name it is—Winfold. Eh, mammy?" Jack said lightly, trying to fetch a compass to his point of objection. Mrs. Talbot sat straight in her saddle.

"Jack, how can you?" she said, as near to stern reproof as she could possibly pitch her gentle voice. "Alice is, I admit, very near my ideal. I never saw her equal anywhere. But, dear me, to think of your taking me up that way! If she knew it, it would half kill her. She is so modest and delicate she would never be seen in company with any Talbot again."

"Bug pardon—hers and yours," Jack said contritely. "It was awfully like Teddy Barton, that speech of mine. But I ain't quite sorry I made it, for, mammy, dear, I've had a sneaking notion you did want Miss Alice for a daughter. I'm ever so glad to have found out my mistake."

"I have not said you were mistaken, son," Mrs. Talbot answered, and in spite of the dusk Jack saw that her face grew pink. "But I love the dear child too well to insult her delicacy by speaking as if—well, as if she was only waiting to be asked. I do feel toward her very much as toward a girl of my own. She is so sweet and mild, so unlike many girls—for instance, that poor, wild child at Roscoe."

"Let's not speak of her if you please, mammy," Jack said quickly. They were by this abreast of the Winfold gate. Jack flung it wide, and his mother rode through, but before she had got half way to the inner gate hoofs came toward them, and Nina called through the dusk:

"Here we are, Miz Talbot, an here you are, at last! I'm so glad of it I wanter shout."

"Oh, do hush, Ninesy!" Miss Winfold implored. "You all know how to take her, though. If you didn't, I don't know what I should do." She went on in her most confiding tone. "You know how wild she is, without meanin any harm."

"Yes, I'm wild. I've got ter be," Nina admitted, with an air of the most admirable candor. "Why, jest look at you! You're er reg'ler old nobody. You'd never have a bean of it wa'n't fer Miz Talbot. An there's Rob McGregor, with Unc' Ben an all of 'em, jest crazy!"

"Ninesy, you are the crazy one! Don't talk so," Miss Winfold implored, but Jack's laugh drowned her supplication.

"I don't blame you, Nina," he said, reins his horse beside hers. "Let's begin being wild right now and ride a race to church. Our elders and betters can keep each other company, and it is time we young people had a show."

"Oh, you mustn't, Ninesy! You shan't!" Miss Winfold began. She might as well have spoken to the wind. Nina was riding alone for almost the first time. She felt equally the indignity of having been kept in the place of a small girl after she was a very big one and the intoxication of having Jack for her own special gallant. With a gurgling, triumphant giggle she set her horse off at a gallop. Jack, keeping well beside her, leaned across and caught her reins.

"You hold on. I'll keep him in the road," he said, noting how Nina wobbled in her seat. He did not mind leaving the others behind. It could not be very far. His mother rode as light and free as upon her wedding day, and, as to Miss Winfold, truth is he did not much care if the pace he set did ruffle both her temper and her unrippable locks. He was so hurt, so full of doubt that was torture, any sort of fooling was relief. It was more than impossible, he felt, to endure quietly the painful perfection that so beset his path. So he kept the horses remorselessly to their sweeping gallop until they came to the foot of the hill whose top was crowned with Bethel church.

There, as he halted for the others to come up with him, he saw and heard that which made his teeth set, his nails clench till they dug into the palm. It was a mighty inoffensive sight withal—merely four riders soberly pacing along the dusty highway, going two and two, and evidently so wrapped in discourse with one another they had no thought for the rest of the world.

Cerintha Payne and her minister came first. Ten yards back of them, sitting as light as thistle down upon Mrs.

Payne's ambling mare, Rob rode, with Mr. Topmark at her elbow, the very moral of sunny content. How was Jack to comprehend that the collocation was, so far as it concerned Rob, wholly accidental? She had set out in company only of Cerintha and Cerintha's lover, meaning to keep herself wholly and amiably in the background. The three had encountered Mr. Topmark some little way beyond his own gate, and it was the most natural and neighborly thing in the world for him to bear them company the rest of the way.

If Rob had not known it, the encounter was not nearly so accidental as it looked. Though after his cavalier dismissal Mr. Topmark had not dared to seek Rob's society outright, by cunning questioning of such black folk as came from Roscoe to the store that day he had found out her purpose of going to church and had plotted to join her. Things had fallen out to a nicety as he had planned. He had disarmed suspicion, he felt, by his well acted surprise over the sight of Miss Payne and his feint of wishing to ride beside her.

"Mr. Topmark, have you no conscience whatever?" Rob had said over that, pretending to whisper, but with an arch glance at Cerintha and the minister. "That's worse than playing dog in the manger. If that is your game, just wait till we get past you. Then you can come along by yourself—though, if you can behave like a Christian, we shall be glad of your company."

"I'll be good, better'n a lamb, ef you say so," Mr. Topmark had returned, smiling fatuously. Rob had laughed outright.

"Don't you think you are a trifle mature for a lamb," she had asked, "rather horny and woolly? If you had said



He heard that which made his teeth set, an elephant, now! Oh, they do look so good humored and big, yet people say there's no counting on them. Is it that way with you, Mr. Topmark? I mean are you most dangerous when you look most innocent? If you are—well, I had better begin to say my prayers."

"You air the dang'ous one. You air that!" Mr. Topmark had said, dropping still farther behind the other two. "Lord love you, Miss Rob, I ain't got no notion er sp'illin the preacher feller's ride. I won't lay nare straw in his way. I know how it is myse'f, an ef I didn't I'd do jest anything in the world you said I mus'. Try me now an see ef I won't."

"Take care!" Rob had answered, with a little, reckless laugh. "I am a mighty fine hand to bargain when it's for somebody else. If you mean what you say, it may cost you something. But I bear a conscience. You may take back your word if you choose."

"I won't that!" Mr. Topmark had made haste to say. "Ask jest what you like. You'll git it er else I'll break er trace. You see, I'm tryin ter make it give an take between us. One er these days, in short, I'll be askin you fer somethin—somethin I want the wust in the world."

"Oh, ho! So you are not generous—only want to trade!" Rob had said, laughing more than ever. Much as the man repelled her, there was a certain intoxication in the sense of power over him. Besides, she was very human and fallible, this poor Rob. Socially she owed Mrs. Winfold a long long score. It was not strange that she felt a sort of half elfin delight in befooling and making a mock of Mrs. Winfold's brother, the man of men in that good lady's eyes. Then, too, the man himself was so crassly idiotic he had no right to consideration when in every action he invited mockery. There was no danger of hurt to ought save his vanity, for in the hardness of youth which tolerates no falling below its ideals Rob had instantly decided that a man so ready to be consoled could not possibly have a heart.

"You ought to have kept that part secret," she had continued. "I have not the least scruple left now that I know you are bargaining. You shall swear to do as I bid without knowing in the least what you are swearing to."

"Anything whatever unless it's ter keep erway from you," Mr. Topmark had said gallantly, and again Rob had laughed outright as she said with a pout that took all sting from the words: "That was one of the things. As you bar it I must make the other one harder."

"I'm your's ter command," the widower had returned, trying to take her hand. She had snatched it away, saying as she drew to the other side of the road, "Oh, you have got to give Brother Walton a new horse, bridle and saddle the day he marries Cerintha."

"Agreed, agreed!" Mr. Topmark had almost shouted. "I like ter hear tell of weddin's. I do, now, fer true. I'll do that an mo'. I'll ingage the brother ter marry us an give him er hundred dollars cash for the job. An, what's mo',

you shall have the finest horse in the state ter make up fer losin Bonnybel!"

"Thank you! But how came you to know I had lost her?" Rob asked, with a keen look. "I charged Uncle Allen not to tell, and he is the only one besides myself that knows she and her colt were stolen from the pasture!"

What Topmark might have answered she was destined not to know. Her questioning was cut short in the most surprising fashion. Jack, in wait at the roadside, had caught Topmark's last speech and reined in his own horse so sharply the beast reared a trifle. Mr. Topmark rode at him, saying as he laid a hand on the creature's neck: "Hello, Jack! Whar's the rest er the fam'ly?"

Rob knew then he must have overheard, and she grew cold and sick in the knowledge, though underneath her qualms there was a strain of burning triumph in the thought that he was suffering, even as she had been made to suffer. But the mood passed quickly. By the time she was seated in the amen corner, whence Cerintha could look undisturbed at her idol in the pulpit, she was as miserable a woman as ever lifted desperate eyes to a heaven blind and dumb.

Miss Winfold, snug at Mrs. Talbot's elbow, said in that dear woman's ear as they looked over the assemblage: "Really, I begin to comprehend Uncle Ben's infatuation. I never did think Rob McGregor a ravin beauty, but positively tonight she is dazzlin'."

TO BE CONTINUED.

Miscellaneous Reading.

THESE ARE LAWS.

Titles of the More Important Acts of the General Assembly.

An act to amend the act to create a school district of Yorkville, in York county, and enable it to organize a system of free schools, to levy a tax in support of the same and to purchase and hold property, and the act amendatory thereof relating to the election of trustees and their duties.

Joint resolution to authorize the directors of the penitentiary to furnish 15 convicts to Winthrop college and 20 convicts to the regents of the asylum.

Joint resolution constituting the governor, attorney general and comptroller general a commission to adjudicate the claim of Thomas J. Mackey for services alleged to have been rendered in prosecuting the claim of the state against the United States for rent of the South Carolina Military academy.

Making it a misdemeanor for any state or county officer to receive any rebate on school books or supplies or advertising.

The administration dispensary law. To require an additional graduated license fee from certain companies doing business in this state.

The income tax bill. To require any insurance company or association to be possessed of \$100,000 surplus, or in lieu thereof, to have \$100,000 on deposit with some state for the benefit of all policy holders, or in lieu thereof, to deposit with state treasurer \$10,000, said securities to be subject to any judgment as a lien on such securities, and providing a penalty for the violation of the provisions of this act.

An act to amend an act to incorporate towns of more than 1,000 inhabitants.

An act to provide for a laborer's lien.

To require all state institutions to pay for transporting, clothing, guarding and for medical treatment of all convicts received by them under acts or joint resolutions of the general assembly, and to give receipts for their work.

To amend section 2064 of the revised statutes of 1893, changing the time for executors and administrators to account to the probate judges.

To provide a penalty on railroad companies owning, leasing or operating competing railroad lines within this state, and to provide for the recovery thereof.

To amend an act to require contractors in the erection, alteration or repairing of buildings to pay laborers, sub-contractors and material men for their services and material furnished.

To further prescribe the terms and conditions upon which foreign corporations may do business within this state.

To provide punishment for laborers after they have received supplies.

To require commutation tax to be expended in townships where collected.

To facilitate the settlement of estates of testators.

To amend an act to regulate the dieting of all prisoners before and after conviction when in the custody of the supervisors and sheriffs of the state.

To amend an act to regulate the schedule of passenger trains in certain cases.

To make corporations liable for damages resulting to land owners from the wrongful obstruction of water courses.

An act providing punishment for laborers who violate either written or verbal contracts after having received supplies.

To prohibit secret Greek letter fraternities or any organizations of like nature in state institutions.

To amend an act to establish local boards of health in the cities and incorporated towns of the state and to define the powers thereof.

To require the sinking fund commission to lend funds to the several counties

To provide compensation for members of county boards of assessors while serving as members of county boards of commissioners.

To require common carriers to pay damages for goods damaged.

To establish Bamberg county.

To establish Cherokee county.

To establish Dorchester county.

To amend an act to authorize elections in cities and towns for the purpose of issuing bonds.

To require certain officers to keep an itemized account of their income by virtue of their office, and to require them to make annual report of the same to the county supervisor.

To provide for the election of cotton weighers.

To prohibit trusts and combines.

To require the supervisors of the state to publish quarterly reports.

To prevent employment of other than convict labor on state farms.

To establish Greenwood county.

To provide for the collection of past due railroad taxes and for the distribution of the same.

An act to amend the criminal statutes relating to disturbing public worship.

An act to authorize the holding of special elections in cities and towns for the purpose of issuing bonds for corporate purposes.

To apportion the road fund.

An act to define the jurisdiction of magistrates.

To provide for the removal of county officers in certain cases.

An act to authorize municipal corporations to issue coupon bonds for the purpose of refunding bonded indebtedness existing at the time of the adoption of the present constitution.

An act to render uniform the mode of taxation in towns and cities in accordance with the present constitution.

An act to amend the new county law and provide new voting places in certain contingencies.

To provide a penalty for disobedience to the regulations of the interstate railroad commission.

An act to amend an act to regulate the election of mayors and wardens.

Authorizing the railroad commissioners to require all railroads to erect depots.

To amend the county government law as far as it relates to working roads.

To authorize the deposit of money in proceedings in the courts in lieu of bonds.

To prohibit the carrying of concealed weapons.

To exempt Confederate soldiers and sailors from taking out licenses as hawkers or peddlers.

To protect the Mongolian pheasant.

To provide public school pupils with books at actual cost.

To provide for the transportation of bicycles as baggage.

To authorize sheriffs to purchase and keep bloodhounds.

To amend the law relating to pensions.

To regulate the licensing of distillers in this state.

To further provide for the return and assessment of property for taxation.

To regulate traveling medicine vendors in plying their trade.

COTTON IS KING.

The South's Great Staple In No Danger From the Power of Money. Abbeville Press and Banner.

THE YORKVILLE ENQUIRER is generally so nearly in accord with our own views that we seldom feel disposed to dissent from its utterances, but we think our neighbor is off the track on the question of the round bale, and the matters leading up to it.

That paper evidently approves a trust or combination among the farmers whereby the production and price of cotton may be controlled. From a farmer's standpoint, that idea may commend itself to their favorable consideration. But when the ghost of a trust appears to pack and control the crop, that is quite another thing.

From the standpoint of The Press and Banner, a trust is a trust, regardless of who may form it. If a trust is formed to squeeze money out of the people, we fail to see wherein it is commendable in one set of men, while others are blamed for doing exactly the same thing.

The round bale may be approved by railroad men and spinners. The round bale may be approved by farmers—and we think they will approve it. The round bale may be a good thing from every standpoint—and we doubt not that it is.

Please read again the paragraph from Chicago, on which THE ENQUIRER'S article is based. That article bears internal evidence of having been written by some one who either does not know what he is talking about, or else is careless of his statements.

If these machines are not put into the hands of the ginners, how are the owners of the patent process to be benefited? Does anybody suppose that the railroads will transport cotton in the seed to New Jersey to have it packed in a round bale? We do not understand how any idea that there is a saving of transporting cotton in the seed could be maintained except by a man who has wheels in his head.

The idea of saving nearly \$3 a bale is the merest moonshine. The average bale is about 400 pounds. The charges for ginning and packing such a bale would be \$1. The cost of bagging and ties would be \$—.

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The present cost of packing the present square bale after it is ginned is next to nothing—or about the expense of packing the round bale. The cost of bagging and ties could not be greatly reduced by the round bale. If such cost should be reduced the farmer would lose in proportion to the reduction—his bale would weigh that much.

The chief advantage of the round bale is that it is more compact and requires less carroom in which to ship a given amount. Then will the railroads ship cotton in the seed to New Jersey, or to widely separated cities for packing?

The cost of ginning, packing and transporting a bale of cotton to Liverpool—as now packed—is perhaps \$3. The idea that any trust composed of speculators can put down the price of cotton is about on a par with the idea that the farmers can form a trust to raise the price of the staple.

Within the past few years there have been many theories for benefiting the farmers without work, and many schemes for fleecing him have been devised. The agitation of any idea that the great mass of the people may make themselves rich by undertaking to work a rabbit foot on the public has done much harm to the farmers. Such action may deceive some of them, or cause them to relax some of their energies in producing their crops.

The people of the south are peculiarly blessed in the fact that they have almost a monopoly in furnishing the world's supply of the best cotton. Cotton is the best money crop in the world, and is certain to bring the ready cash every day in the year. The money is sent to the cotton fields, and no sane man thinks of parting with it until he has received the cash.

The miners are not so fortunate. They must sell their iron ore on a credit. The manufacturer of iron, wood and other material must go abroad and seek a buyer for his goods—and he must sell them on a credit, and take the chances of collecting his bills. Not so with the cotton producer. He gets the ready cash and runs no risk.

The western grower of corn and wheat does not get a price for his product which would induce the cotton raiser of the south to haul it to market, even when he could find a buyer. The raiser of western hogs, western mules, and western horses must incur the risk, expense and waste of time to bring his product to the door of the cotton raiser.

Cotton seems really to be a royal king, to whom the earth pays its ready tributes. Those people who may want the staple must send the money with which to move it, and the western man must bring his product to our doors if he would fill his pockets with the golden harvest of the southern cotton field.

All the talk about forming combinations to decrease the product or to force its price from its legitimate place is demoralizing and injurious to our farmers. The true way to do is to reduce unnecessary expense in its production, and to increase the crop sufficiently to make good the reduction in price.

The farmer who has cotton to sell, can prosper and have money. Nobody would go to the non-producing cotton farmer to borrow money or to sell anything.

As every farm and every farmer is different in some respects from every other farm and every other farmer, the same details will not suit for every farmer in this country, but there is one general principle that will apply to all, namely: Make all you can, with as little expense as possible. With any such rule as this the energetic and intelligent citizen need have no fears of combines or trusts.

MOLTKE AND THE LANDLORD.—Once while traveling, Moltke, the German general, came to Zurich, and walked to the hotel. As the headwaiter saw his gaunt figure stalking in, wrapped in a worn-out dusty cloak, carrying an old leather satchel, he measured his wealth by his looks, and ordered the assistant to show him to a small room in the uppermost story. Moltke followed without remonstrance. As he was making himself comfortable in the attic, another assistant came, as is customary there, to ask the silent stranger his name and rank. These created no small consternation in the office of the hotel. The consequence was that a few minutes later mine host, with a retinue of "Kellner," all in full dress, appeared at the attic door to inform his excellency that a better room had just been vacated in the "Belgate." "Give that to my servant," replied Moltke, "when he comes with our carriage. This is good enough for me." And he remained.

\$1,000 FOR A CHICKEN.—At the Birmingham, England, poultry show, the Earl of Ellesmere paid \$1,000 for a gamecock. The gamecock, a fine black-red, is said to be one of the most perfect of its kind in existence. It has a wonderful reach, is almost perfect in shape and size, while its fine tail is one of its best points. It has a fine ancestral record of prizes and triumphs, and is a heavy winner itself.

Geese are unusually abundant in Georgia this year, and the superstitious think they must be a "sign" of something or other. Recently an immense flock of these birds, over a mile in length, passed over the town of Carrollton.