

Sam Tells His Story.

"Will you come in Clare," said Sam, when she stopped her car at his gate a few days later. "I have something to tell you."

Sam seated Clare near a big south window, then walked across the room to his own easy chair and sat down.

"You look serious," said Clare lightly.

Sam nodded. At his next words she sat staring at him with big eyes.

"You will be surprised Clare to know that I was born on a farm only a few miles from here. You wouldn't know about the holdup in our old Squire's home forty-~~five~~^{five} years ago,

but at the time, this whole countryside knew about it. What they didn't know, was, that I was the holdup man.

Three months after my mother died my father married our housekeeper, Widow Sparks. I never thought of her as anything but an impostor. My mother's father left his farm to my mother who was his only child, the farm that had been in her family since one of my fore-fathers, an old Scotch settler bought the land in 1775. My father was a school teacher. He contributed little to the support of our home. When he was not teaching, he roved about hunting and fishing while my mother and I did the farm work. When my father died one year

after he married Widow Sparks
the farm was sold, and his widow
demanded her share. I made up
my mind that she should not have
a dollar from that farm. Was I
to stand by and see that impostor
have a share of the farm that my
mother's people had worked hard for!
I went to our old Squire. He knew I
wanted an education, and he knew
that the brazen woman who had
married my father was out for all
she could get. The Squire hatched up
a plan and I carried it out. He
set a day and time for the widow
to come to his house for her money.
He sat opposite to her at a table
199.

with a stack of bills in front of him. The door opened, and in walked a masked man who pointed a pistol at the Squire, picked up the money and backed out of the door. The Squire scrambled to his feet, yelled for help and rushed to the door.

I was on my way! Two hours later I was on an express train to Chicago where I lived until I came back to New Jersey again. At the age of seventeen I left youth behind me. I changed my name, took my middle name Terry, and added Van, the first part of my mother's maiden name. I had been a good student in school, and I had no difficulty in entering college. I gave myself whole-heartedly to study.

I had no outside interests, and no intimate friends. I prepared to study medicine. When I graduated from medical school I had the good luck to become assistant to one of the best doctors in the city. When he retired a few years later he turned his practice over to me.

The last ten years I practiced I took in an assistant, so I could let up on night work and rest week ends. A few miles out from the city limit I had a cabin built

by a lake, a place where I could spend a day or two at a time resting and fishing. I had no phone there and no visitors. I relaxed, and came back to my work refreshed.

Then came the shock! Through the carelessness of a nurse one of my patients lost the use of her right arm. I was sued. I didn't mind paying the money, but to have that happen to me after all my good years as a physician was too much! I had served my patients with all my heart and skill. My work had been my life. Now I began to have sleepless nights. For the

125.

first time, I felt old, tired, and not sure of myself. The knowledge of my past good record did not comfort me. At this time my Filipino Boy left me to marry a girl down in Georgia. He had been my cook and butler ten years. I felt lost without him. Billy, the Filipino Boy who took his place wasn't the trained capable boy that I had depended on.

Following the departure of my Filipino Boy, I had a visit one evening from a patient of twenty years standing.

"Doc," he began, "I think I'll

have to change doctors. You are getting along in years and naturally your methods are a bit behind the times." He talked at great length, enthusing over the new drugs and treatments. I let him ramble on. When he finished with all he had to say, and arose to go, I went with him to the door and bowed him out."

"I was deeply hurt, but I reflected. It is true that I am getting old, and I asked myself if I was as interested in my work as I was forty years ago. I admitted to myself that I did not always agree

that the new drugs and methods of treating disease were better than the old. I'd had many years of experience, and had been a successful doctor. I became moody for the first time in my life. I felt that I could not go on, and while debating what I should do, one of my old patients visited me. She came in smiling. "Doctor, I've come to tell you how grateful I am to you. Do you remember how low in spirits I was a year ago, how I threatened to take my life. I told you all my troubles and

fears, and you comforted me. You told me that time was a great healer that I must give myself a chance. You was sure I had enough spunk in reserve to go on and fight it out. I promised you I'd try, and I did, for a while, then one night I grew desperate. I got out the bottle of capsules I had saved so long, and I thought - "Now is the time - I'll end it all;" then I thought of you, of your kindly talks to me, and your words came back to me - 'Time is a healer - I'm sure you have enough spunk in reserve to go on;' I hurried to the bathroom and emptied every

199.

capsule down the toilet. From that day I began to get well, and now, I'm so glad that I am alive."

That woman's visit made me realize, how often we doctors give advice that we don't practice. It was evening. I got into my car and drove out to my cabin, made a roaring fire in the fire-place, and sat in front of it all through the night. I felt that I must make a decision. Slowly it dawned upon me that it wasn't just the hurt of losing a case; the loss of a superior man-servant; or the irritation of studying new methods

1.21.

that had brought me to the state I was in. It was grinding away at my work all the best years of my life and never taking time to travel or have a little fun. I realized that I had been too serious and conscientious. Now at the age of sixty-two I deserved a rest. I thought of my days on the farm. I loved our old home-farm when my mother lived. Could a man go back and capture what he had loved in his youth. It would be a healthy way of life. I might try it. It seemed to me that setting out a small orchard of young fruit trees, tending them,

and watching them grow year after year until they bore fruit might give a man an incentive to live.

By daybreak I had made up my mind what I should do. I drove back to my office in the city. When my assistant came in I told him I was giving up my practice and turning it over to him. He was a bright capable man. I liked him, and I liked his wife. I was glad to do them a good turn. Next, I called on a real-estate man who had long wanted my lake property. I told him I would sell the land, and keep the cabin, that

I'd have the cabin moved. It had been built so that it could be taken away in sections and rebuilt.

Next, I made arrangements with my lawyer, who was an old friend of mine, to come out here to New Jersey to purchase a farm for me. I told him just what I wanted, and where.

By the time he had settled everything for me I had gathered up all loose ends out Chicago way and engaged men to come out with me to set up my cabin.

The week before I left, I visited a friend who had been one of my patients years ago. He was a nervous wreck

when he came to me after failing in business. At that time I told him the best thing he could do was to go out to his farm where he spent his summers. "You and your wife and your boy and your girl all love the country - Go out there & get yourself half a dozen Toggenburg goats. You need goat milk with your digestion as it is; get a flock of chickens, raise vegetables and fruits. The good Earth is what you need right now."

Much to my surprise, he took my advice, and if there is a more contented man on this Earth today I wouldn't know where to find him.

From time to time I drove out to his farm to see him. This time I told him my plans.

"By George! That is fine!" he exclaimed. "You must take a couple of my Toggenburg goats with you and half a dozen of my fine Plymouth Rocks."

While we talked, a young Beagle Hound came running up to us. He ran all around me sniffing, and looking up at me with friendly brown eyes.

"My favorite dog," said I. "I had one just like him when I was a boy. I called him Uno. He was the best companion dog I ever owned, followed at my heels wherever I went; a good rabbit dog too, and of all

dog voices I ever heard, his was the most musical."

"I'll give this one to you if you want him, I have two more like him."

"I'll take him gladly," I said, as I rubbed the young hound's long ears.

"That's all Clare. I didn't buy this farm to make a living on it, nor to be a gentleman farmer. I wanted something to interest me, and a natural way of living. Now it's time for you to go if you want to reach home before dark."

Tom looked at Clare soberly.

"You can think over what I just told you. I wanted you to know."