



(Continued.)

CHAPTER II.
MY DOUBLE.

Perhaps Professor Gorgensen was right in declaring himself a second Solomon, whose life would have repeated precisely that of the Biblical one but for his nineteenth century environments.

One amazing fact, however, was unquestionable. He was correct as to myself. My strength was as prodigious, as marvellous, as irresistible as that of the man who, many centuries ago, killed 1,000 with the jaw-bone of an ass and pulled down the gates of Gaza after suffering woeful indignities at the hands of the Philistines and dying amid the ruins, the blind victim of the faithless Delloh.

My mother was the only one who suspected the truth, for I was handicapped by the warning of the professor, that I must not call the gift into use except in the event of necessity.

So when I wrestled with my playmates I sometimes suffered them to throw me, when by putting forth a tithe of my tremendous power I could have hurled them lifeless to the earth. In the contests of leaping I seemed to strive to the utmost, but never exceeded the champions by more than a few inches. I maintained my supremacy, but by a hair breadth.

A burly brute came to Fayville to take charge of the village school. He was more than six feet in height, with the frame and strength of a giant.

With little book knowledge, he gave his main attention to administering the birch. He conquered the obstreperous bullies, and then showed regret that no more insubordination cropped up that he might have the pleasure of subduing it.

Harmon Westcott still remained after school. He thundered as I gathered up my books and started to follow the rest of the boys from the room. I laid the books on the desk behind me and sat down, wondering what the trouble was, for he had never as yet struck me with his merciless rod.

When we were alone, he spoke, fidgeting meanwhile the gad, as if unable to restrain his eagerness to bring it down about my shoulders.

"So you have been fighting, young man?"

"No, sir, I have not been fighting."

"Silence, sir! No lying to me! Didn't you strike Jack Gibbs?"

"Jack Gibbs raised his hand to strike little Tim Metcalf, who accidentally fell over Jack's feet. Tim is a cripple and could not help himself. I caught Jack's arm and told him that if he struck Tim I would lick him. He didn't strike him, so there was no fighting."

"But you would have hit Jack Gibbs if he had harmed Tim Metcalf."

"Certainly; I would hit any coward who did that."

"Then you've got the disposition to fight; that's just as bad as if you did fight. Off with your coat!"

I hesitated. I could do as well with my coat on as off, and I would not please this ruffian by obeying him.

"Why don't you do as told?" he demanded, livid with rage.

"I shan't take off my coat, and if you lay your hand on me you'll regret it as long as you live."

He roared like a bull, and, raising the big stick over his head, aimed a terrific blow at me. Before it could descend I had him by the throat, bent him backward over the bench behind and twisted him to the floor as easily as if he had been an ewe lamb.

Not only that, I tightened my grip until he gasped for breath. I was using only one hand and did not exert a tenth part of the strength at my command.

The miserable wretch must have thought he was stricken with paralysis. With my other hand I twisted the rod and twisted it through the air with a force that surely raised a ridge through his garments with every stroke. When he had received a dozen or so, I lifted him clear of the floor and flung him across the room. He would have gone farther had he not crashed into the row of desks.

"Shall I take off my coat?" I asked, mockingly.

He stared in a dazed way and muttered an oath. He could not understand it.

"Good day," and I walked out of the room and went home.

"I hope he won't tell of it," I reflected, "for it will be hard for me to explain it to the rest of the boys."

No fear of the teacher making public his own discomfiture, and so it remained a secret. I was too generous to take advantage of my triumph, and so long as he remained in charge of the school, he treated me with a consideration that made me sometimes regret the violence I had been compelled to use toward him.

Professor Gorgensen's transcendent wisdom did not enable him to prolong his life to that of the patriarchs of the olden times, for he died suddenly, about the date of the incident just told. I had no brothers and sisters, and so well had my mother and I kept the secret of my incredible strength that even my father did not suspect it, though aware that I was unusually powerful for a lad of my years.

Strange to say, though my mother knew the marvellous truth, she very seldom or never referred to it. There was something so uncanny in the whole thing that it filled her with awe, as it did myself. Father passed away, still ignorant on the point, and at the age of 19, when I was home on vacation from college, I drove to the old country church when only my mother as a companion.

It was a curious coincidence that the preacher's sermon that day was founded on the story of Samson. He went over the whole wonderful narrative, giving it a spiritual significance

by proving that every Christian can be a Samson against the world so long as he rises superior to temptation. Once I glanced at my mother, who occupied the pew with me. She smiled faintly, and I blushed. Both of us were thinking of the same thing, but neither referred to it on our way home.

At the top of the high hill, near our house, the horse, as black as night and with the strength of a Hercules, gave way to his inmate devilry, took the bit in his mouth and started down the incline on a dead run. Mother paled for a moment and then said, in her quiet manner:—

"Harmon, I hope there's no need of your killing him."

I knew what she meant. She was aware that I could do so if I chose.

"I won't unless it is necessary," I answered, beginning to pull on the reins.

My fear was that they would break. And break they did, though new and strong. Just as I was beginning to worry the savage brute both lines snapped as if they were rotten twine. Being wholly free, the enraged horse was off again as heading as ever.

My mother was dreadfully alarmed, for both of us were in peril.

"I'll bring him to terms," I said, stepping out on the shafts and leaping astride the back of the plunging animal. Working forward, I placed one arm under his throat and began drawing backward steadily and irresistibly.

I could have broken his neck as if it were a pipe-stem, but I did not wish to do that though sorely tempted. The devil fought, swung his head viciously, but I never let up. With a scream of fury he reared on his hind legs and began pawing the air. My mother sat pale, but cool.

"You had better kill him, Harmon," she called, "or he will kill you."

"I'll show him first that I am his master."

Suddenly he lowered his head, like a bucking broncho, resting most of his weight on his forelegs. This gave me my chance. He had broken free from the carriage, and the dropping of his head allowed me to leap to the ground beside him. I retained my grip, and the next instant the fierce horse was flung violently on his side. I used none of the tricks of the cavalryman or circus performer to trip him, but did it by main strength alone.

He was not yet conquered. With a whinny of rage he struggled upward, the flames of hatred in his eye. He meant to bite and paw me to death, but at the moment he was ready to attack down he went again, with a shock that must have rattled every bone in his body. With undaunted courage he instantly repeated the effort, but was flung as ignominiously as before.

This scared him. His self-confidence was weakened. No animal is quicker than a horse to recognize his master. He required a little urging to regain his feet. I helped him to do so. He was all a-tremble, and finally opened his mouth and made a savage bite at me. His teeth had hardly snapped together, close to my face, when I struck him a single blow alongside his head, which tumbled him like a log to the earth.

That was enough. He refused to rise, and I lifted him to his feet. He shivered from nose to fetlock, and was as docile as a lamb. I patched up the harness as best I could, re-fastened him between the wrenched shafts, and he trotted meekly homeward.

"Harmon," said my mother in a tremulous whisper.

"Yes?" I replied, looking enquiringly around.

"Did you exert all your strength?"

"No, mother, only the smallest part of it."

"Isn't it wonderful, my son? How do you restrain yourself?"

"I have never forgotten Professor Gorgensen's warning. My aim is never to summon it except the necessity exists."

"And that?"

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"Occurs very rarely. Father never knew of it, and you wouldn't have known except from the late professor." "Do none of your college mates suspect it?"

"I think not. I allowed the champion leaper to beat me, when I could have left him out of sight, and have been content to let the star football players and baseball men, and, in fact, all the athletes, keep their honours without dispute from me."

"You are wise. Doubtless plenty of occasions will arise, and I have the feeling that at some time you will commit the fatal mistake and drive the gift from you."

"If I do, I shall be as ordinary men. I hope the misfortune will not come at the hands of any Delloh or that I shall have my eyes gouged out in the process."

That was the last and indeed the first time we ever held such a conversation. Six months later my beloved mother was laid away to rest, and I was alone in the world.

I had been graduated from college and the world was before me. Not until my sainted mother was gone did the full measure of her self-sacrifice for her unworthy son become

known to me. She had spent her last penny, depriving herself of almost the necessities of life, for the sake of giving me an education.

My self-reproach was at my own blindness in not suspecting this sad truth, so as to check it. But it was done, and it was useless to repine over it.

Graduated, well groomed, and with the appearance of a young gentleman with a surplusage of means, I had not \$100 that I could call my own. Nor did I know which way to turn or what to do to obtain more.

"And yet something must be done and that very soon," I bitterly mused as I sauntered down Fifth avenue on that glorious May morning. "There must be plenty of openings in this great city. I can become a clerk, a student of law or," I grimly reflected, "I could attain the position of the boss porter of the metropolis. That would be a case where the exercise of my strength would be a necessity. As a last resort I will fall back on that."

My musings took a new turn.

"I studied boxing in college and acquired a fair knowledge of it. Why not become a teacher of the art in some gymnasium? When I put on the gloves with one more skillful than myself, I can knock him out with one blow."

My breath almost left me.

For scarcely 100 yards away, on the same side of the avenue, and sauntering toward me, I saw—

My double!

Professor Gorgensen was right. I was not the only reincarnation of Samson, at least so far as appearances went. Here was a second. Dressed more fashionably than I, he was yet my perfect counterpart.

He recognized the fact, and returned my wondering stare with as profound amazement as my own. Our eyes were never once removed from each other, and, when we came opposite, we involuntarily paused and extended our hands.

"Who are you? What is your name?" I managed to ask.

"My name is Westcott. What is yours?" he demanded.

"Harmon."

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A Straggler.

General Horace Porter, in The Century, tells an amusing story of the explosion of the Petersburg mine. It seems that a prisoner who had been dug out of the crater was carried to one of the field hospitals. Although his eyes were bunged and his face covered with bruises, he was in a very amiable frame of mind. "After this," he said, "I will be the most unpopular man in my regiment. You see, I appeared to get started a little earlier than the other boys that had taken passage with me aboard that volcano, and as I was coming down I met the rest of 'em a-go-in up, and they looked as if they had kind o' soured on me and yelled after me, 'Straggler!'"

In the Days to Come.



"Yes, poor old Grandfather Scorch is getting very feeble. He has to carry a cane now."—New York Journal.

A Georgia Mule's Queer Appette.

An old southwest Georgia negro called to one of the laborers in his vineyard: "You, John! Hit's time ter feed dat mule. Give him a couple er fence rails, quick."

"He doesn't eat fence rails, does he?" inquired a bystander.

"Lawd bless you, yes, suh," replied the old man. "Dat des whets his appetite. He use ter b'long ter one er dese officeseekers, on he got so hungry standin' hitched in de sun dat he started on fence rails fer a livin, en now he won't tackle grass tell he's done eat up a string er fence, den he eats oats, or grass, fer dessert. W'y, suh," continued the old man, "he got loose de yuther day en took en eat up one whole gable end er Ebenezer chapel, en w'en we run up on him he wuz makin a break fer de pews en de pulpit. Dey wouldn't been much en dat meetin house left er ever he'd got ter de inside er it. Give him dem fence rails, John. He got ter do some hard plowin dis mawnin'."—Atlanta Constitution.

Clever Jim.

"I guess Jim can get away for that fishing party all right."

"What makes you think so?"

"I was up to his house last night. His wife used to be an amateur elocutionist before they were married, and he asked her to recite. She'll never refuse him now."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

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