Jacqueline of Golden River

By VICTOR ROUSSEAU

LOVE, ADVENTURE, FIGHTING, TREASURE.

"Jacqueline of Golden River" is a romance of love, adventure and fighting—the basis of all good romance. It is no preachment in story form; no ax-grinding novel; no propaganda under the guise of fiction. It is a real romance and its purpose is to entertain. And, as if love, adventure and fighting were not enough, a most engrossing mystery is added to furnish the motive reason for the plot and action. The heroine is beautiful, fascinating—and mysterious. The hero, freed from city drudgery by a legacy, is ripe for adventure and when it comes embraces it whole-heartedly. And such an adventure as it proves to be! It begins in a big city and swiftly the scene changes to the Canadian wilds. Action in every stage and the mystery deepening with each new development.—Editor's Note.

CHAPTER I.

A Dog and a Dancer.

As I sat on a bench in Madison square after half past eleven in the evening a dog came trotting up to me, stopped at my feet and whined.

There is nothing remarkable in having a stranger dog run to one, nor in seeing the creature rise on its hind legs and paw at you for notice and a bone. Only, this happened to be no Kaintoo dog.

I stroked the beast, which lay down at my feet, raising its head sometimes to watch the surrounding shadows. As I did it, a tall, wiry and coming back to tug at my knee. Then I began to think. For my mind was the most active thing I had to take any but a perfunctory interest in its movements. My right eye, partly of thankless drudgery as a clerk, following on a brief adventurous period after I ran away to sea from my English home, had received at three days before upon receipt of a legacy, and I had a nice left Tom Carney's employment.

Six thousand pounds—thirty thousand dollars—the will said.

I had been for weeks in a state that can mean to get rid of me. It had been a satisfaction to me to get rid of him instead.

So I had taken alternately a prospector and a company promoter all the working years of his shabby life. Tom was as secretive as a clam, except with Simon Lovcon.

Lovcon was a portan politician from some place near Quebec, and his chain-sharer, wrinkled face was as hard and mean as any city boss in the United States. He and old Tom used to be closeted together for hours at a time.

I never liked the man and I never cared for Carney's business ways, but I was glad to leave him the day after my legacy arrived.

My plans were vague. I had been scraping, at a low salary, a tiny apartment consisting of two rooms, a bath and what is called a "kitchenette," at the top of an old building in the Fifties, and I had no desire to be pulled down. I had half planned to take boat for Jamaica. I wanted to think and plan.

The Kaintoo dog was growing uneasy. It would run from me a few feet, round and whining a succession of short barks, then run back and rub at my overcoat again.

Evidently it wished me to accompany it, and I wondered who its master was and how it came to be there.

I rose and followed the beast, which moved its eager dog-body a few feet ahead of me, turning round at times to bark, and then continuing on its way with a precision which showed that it was making for some goal in front.

The dog turned down a street in the Seventies, ran on a few yards, leaped up a flight of stone steps and began scratching at the panel of a door that was apparently empty.

This place I knew by reputation. It was Jim Dale's notorious but decently conducted gambling and drinking club, which was running full blast at a time when most other institutions of the character had found it convenient to shut down.

As the creature's nose went inside Dale's and it wished me to go into his club, I looked to some disappointment at the closed doors and turned away.

I meant to go home, and I had proceeded about three paces when the door behind me opened and Dale's voice called: "Stop!"

The door opened cautiously and the grey head of Jim's negro butler appeared.

Then emerged one of the most beautiful women that I have ever seen.

She could not have been more than twenty years of age. Her body was of a fair brown, the features modeled splendidly, the head poised upon a flawless throat that gleamed white between the masses of dark, dishevelled hair.

She carried a noble scarf, too, and under those furs was a dress of magnificent fashion and cut that contrasted curiously with them. I thought that these house dresses had passed away before the nineteenth century died. In one hand she carried a long, lean whip, also was strolling a large roll of bills.

She paused so close to me that her furs brushed my overcoat, and for an instant her eyes met mine. There was a look in them that I could not read, but not half-interested, and I thought that she had suffered some tremendous shock which made her actions more unnaturally than ourselves.

"Stop!" she screamed, and for an instant her eyes met mine. There was a look in them that I could not read, but not half-interested, and I thought that she had suffered some tremendous shock which made her actions more unnaturally than ourselves.

I was bewildered. What was a girl like that doing in Dale's at half past twelve in the morning?

She began walking slowly and rather aimlessly in the direction of the street in the direction of Ninth avenue. My curiosity was stimulated. I followed her at a decent interval to see what she was going to do, since she did not seem to know.

The dog trotted ahead, stayed after her and two men began walking slowly at her on the other side of the road. I followed more cautiously.

As she stood upon the curb on the east side of Ninth avenue I saw her glance timidly up and down before venturing to cross. It was quite brief a minute before she summoned resolution to plunge beneath the structure of the elevated railroad. When she had reached the other side she stood there still again before continuing west.

The two men crossed the street and were speaking to a man that stood near the elevated railroad stairs. That was she! I looked. Yes, it was the same girl. I never could have forgotten her face.