

# **In the Garden of the Gods**

BY WILLIAM McLEOD RAINE

## **In the Garden of the Gods**

When one is in the Garden of the Gods one should be, I suppose, in Elysian humor. My mood, to the contrary, for private reasons of my own, was thunderous. I lay on my elbow among the kinni-kinic where I had flung myself down in the shade of a silver spruce. But the sun was higher now, and its rare, untempered beat was on me. Naturally I used the shifting orb as a text on the futility of life. What was the use of arranging things comfortably when they always disarranged themselves as promptly as possible? Now, there was Katherine—

The sound of a revolver cracked into my sombre discontent. Hard on its echoes came the slap of running feet, and, as I guessed, the swish of petticoats. A raucous command to stop brought me to my feet instantly. It also brought the runner to a halt just out of my sight beyond the shoulder of the hill.

“I dare you to touch me,” panted a high-pitched voice that struck in me a bell of recognition.

“I’m not going to hurt you,” replied he of the hoarse bellow, soothingly. “You know that mighty well.”

“If you put a finger on me I’ll cry for help.”

“There wouldn’t anybody hear, Miss,” replied the heavy bass.

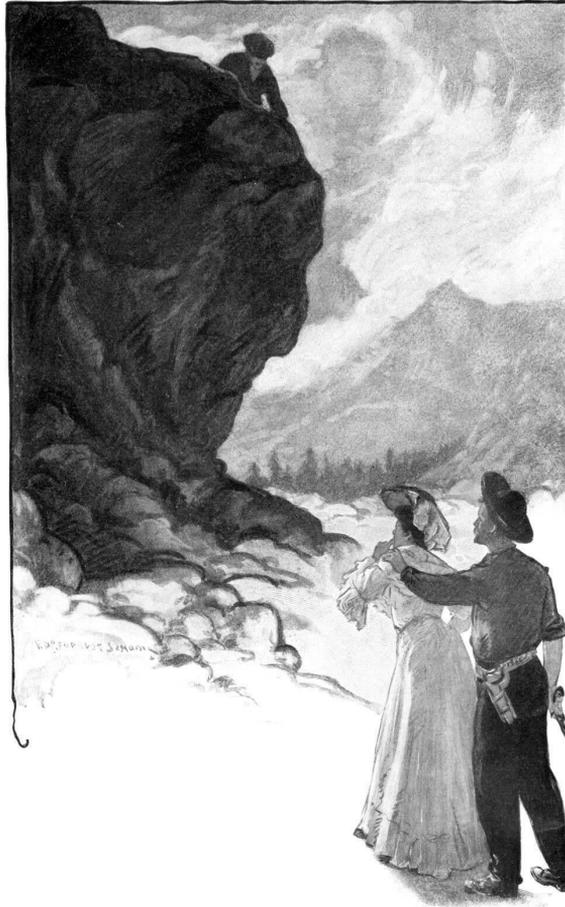
“You—you coward!” Her voice was like a whip.

“Oh, you can call me anything you like but you got to go along with me, Miss,” he said sullenly.

“I’ll not go a step.”

“I reckon you got to go, lady.”

“May I go, too?” My contribution to the conversation came from the knoll just above them.



"My contribution to the conversation came from just above them."

They whirled as at the press of a button. The man was a huge hulking fellow in corduroys, but he did not look the villain by a long shot. Indeed, his guileless face, lit with amazement at my words, begged to offer a guarantee of honesty. Here certainly

was no finished desperado. The first glimpse of him relieved my mind. We were in no personal danger at least.

“Who in time are you?” he wanted to know.

“Tavis Q. Damron, at your service. And you—since introductions are going?”

The young woman—she was a Miss Katherine Gray, stopping at the same hotel as I at Manitou—promptly took the opportunity to slip behind my back. For me, I was in a glow of triumph. It had not been twenty-four hours since Miss Gray had informed me that she meant never to speak again to me. And already the favoring gods had brought her to me on the run. In my relation I felt myself a match for a score of lowering countrymen.

“He shot at me,” she cried over my shoulder.

“It went off accidentally,” protested the man.

“I don’t care. He shot.”

“He’ll not do it again,” I promised, complacently.

My unlucky triumph must have crept into my voice. I felt her appraise with deliberate eye my sixty-six scant inches. Nothing “hips” me more than an inference that I am short. To be sure, I am not a giant physically. Neither was Napoleon.

“I’m sorry not to meet with your approbation,” I said huffily.

“Oh, I did not say that. It would be unjust. You can’t help being little,” she was pleased to say, and I swear I heard the chuckle in her voice.

“Any more than you can help being offensive when you are in the humor.”

“Don’t take it so to heart. You may grow yet. You are very young, you know.”

“Perhaps I am *de trop*. Very likely you were looking for somebody else when you came galloping down the hill,” I said sulkily.

“I was looking for a man.” Her casual eye swept the valley. Tavis Q. Damron really did not appear to be on the map.

“I am certain you will not have to look long,” I assured her with excessive politeness.

“Thank you.” She glanced scornfully at me. “I suppose you mean that for a compliment? I think it impertinent, if you want to know.”

It was odd how we had almost forgotten the presence of our friend in corduroys; yet not so strange either, for he looked the picture of awkward indecision, much more the detected schoolboy than the “bad man” bandit. His fat, red hand, wandering restlessly about, included us in its orbit.

“I say, my man! Put up that gun! You make me nervous,” I barked.

“It might go off again accidentally,” suggested Miss Gray derisively. “We can’t risk Mr. Damron’s fainting. I suppose you have no restoratives with you, Mr. Corduroy?”

There came a shout from the cliff five hundred feet above. A man standing on the edge was beckoning to us.

“Somebody appears to want us to come and to share his beautiful view,” I said.

Corduroy’s indecision came to an end. “I guess we better be going back, Miss.”

“I thought I understood her to say she did not care to go back,” I said, eyeing him steadily.

Corduroy shifted uneasily. “She hadn’t any call to run away. Her father’s up there.”

“He’s a prisoner,” explained Miss Gray.

I gasped. “A prisoner?”

“Yes. Mr. Halloway is keeping him on that cliff and won’t let him leave,” she said, quite calmly.

“Halloway! Bob Halloway?”

She nodded defiantly. “Yes, Bob Halloway.”

“But—why, the thing is impossible.”

“Isn’t it ridiculous?” She gave a sudden charming smile. “I didn’t know the West was so delightfully primitive.”

“Surely one can’t hold up a copper king in that primeval fashion. It has to be done on Wall street.” Reflecting on Simon Gray’s probable reflections, I smiled. Immediately I regretted my indiscretion. The study of Miss Gray’s moods was a

continual education. They were teaching me just now that she might laugh at that which I might not.

“Isn’t it humorous?” said Miss Gray, a little too sweetly. “Don’t let me curb your gayety. He’s only my father.”

Instantly I switched the indecorous mirth from my face. “I don’t see how he dares,” I murmured, to bridge the pause.

“Dares! I thought you knew Bob Halloway better,” she said scornfully. “He dares anything.”

I did know him better. He would stick at nothing. Whatever else his smiling insolence covered, it did not hide any lack of courage to back his recklessness. He was the type of man that women find fascinating, especially women of the high-spirited, chivalrous order. You know the sort of scamp I mean—the kind whose dark, unscrupulous eyes and devil-may-care fearlessness draw the poor moths to the singeing flame. And though for his unworthiness his father two years before had shipped him to a ranch in Colorado and cut him adrift, my resurrected suspicions painted him a rival still to be feared. Katherine had liked him then; she liked him now. I knew it from the moment when the picturesque vagabond galloped up to our hotel two days before and offered her his strong brown hand and candid smile.

I meditated. “Of course it is a holdup of some sort. He isn’t doing it for fun. What does he want?”

Looking up, I happened to catch Katherine Gray’s eyes. They were blushing.

“Oh!” I exclaimed understandingly.

“Nothing of the kind! Don’t be silly, Tavis,” she told me sharply.

“Then I’m hanged if I *can* understand. I seem to be playing blind euchre with my eyes shut. First one finds Miss Katherine Gray, daughter and sole heir to Simon Gray, the Copper King, scudding over the mountains with Mr. Corduroy’s revolver barking at her.”

“I told you it was accidental,” growled the bass voice. “I couldn’t catch her, so I took out my gun to frighten her into stopping.”

“Then one hears that the Copper King himself is viewing scenery he does not enjoy, under enforced restraint at the hands of a young man who used to lead cotillions with his daughter before he fell into evil ways. You know I told you he was a scamp.”

“Don’t be a parrot, Mr. Damron,” Katherine snapped. “I told *you* yesterday that I wasn’t interested in your opinion of Mr. Hallway. You so often forget that you are not my chaperon.”

“Of course I don’t want to rub it in, but if you had listened to—  
—”

“——Grandmother Damron. Well, I didn’t—and I’m not going to.” Miss Gray’s chin was in the air. She wheeled and began to climb the hillside.

“Where are you going?” I asked.

She can be very deaf on occasion.

“Oh, up the hill,” she flung over her shoulder in answer to my question repeated.

“But you said you weren’t going back.”

“Can’t I change my mind, Grandmother?”

“You don’t need to be rude,” I said sulking.

I toiled in her wake, and Corduroy in mine. The pace she set soon had us puffing. Miss Gray is one of those young women who do outdoor things better than most men. She never fainted in her life, and nerves are a fairy tale to her. It always ruffles my temper and my vanity to do a twosome with her at golf.

“Hello, you people! Just in time for lunch. Glad to see you, Damron,” sang out Halloway cheerily as we emerged from the aspens into view at the rear of the cliff.

A most appealing luncheon was set forth on the white table cloth spread on a camp table among the boulders. Halloway, in his shirt sleeves, was making coffee, opening cans of deviled ham, unpacking a box of fried chicken, and otherwise endeavoring to be several places at once. He fell immediately to issuing orders.

“Bring that box of ice with the bottles in it from the wagon, John. I say, Damron, do you know how to broil bacon? Well, you’ll never learn younger. Shake those coals down and set to work, my son. And don’t let the coffee boil over.” His enthusiasm was contagious. I found myself obeying him mechanically. “You might unpack the sandwiches, Kate. We’re

going to have the jolliest little lunch you ever saw. I suspect you are hungry. Scudding over these hills is great for the appetite. By the way, you made a fine run of it." He was so genial and friendly to her that one could hardly believe he knew that his confederate had just brought her back under the menace of his revolver.

Miss Gray probably thought his assurance was akin to cheek. At any rate she gave him the full benefit of her un-willowy five foot seven. He met with smiling admiration her level indignant eyes; and indeed the girl's long curves, her frank good looks, her flashing sunburnt beauty, had led captive many a man's fancy. Turning on her heel, she joined her father. Simon Gray, multimillionaire, was seated morosely on a rock, frowning down into the Garden of the Gods with blazing eyes. Far below a dozen dwarfed carriages might be seen wheeling along the red ribbon of road, and many burros with tourists on their backs crawled like ants among the rocks, but for all practical purposes the grim-eyed captain of industry was as much a prisoner as if the gates of a jail had closed on him.

His dignity was too precious to be risked in a futile attempt to escape from the long-legged powerful young athlete. Possibly it was because I was so interested in the situation that I burnt the bacon to a crisp. Miss Grey, with one of her sudden changes of humor, drove me from the fire and broiled the bacon herself. The truth is that despite her frowns the girl was enjoying herself hugely. The excitement of a new experience filled through her blood.

I joined Mr. Gray and we conversed in whispers. He explained to me the absolute necessity of his being in Denver that

afternoon to attend an important meeting of the Copper Consolidated Corporation. It was the day of the biennial election of officers. He had bought Consolidated stock sufficient to win the control from the present management, but without his presence or his proxies the old management would still be able to carry the election and reinstate itself. James Halloway was president of the Consolidated, and the two men had been fighting for control more years than one.

“Last call for dinner in the dining car,” sang out Halloway, and notwithstanding our lack of harmony the sharp air of the Rockies had made us hungry enough to sink, for the moment, at least, all differences. Halloway, easy, alert, and masterful, dispensed refreshments with debonair hospitality to his unwilling guests.

“Finest bacon I ever ate. It would be a pleasure to have you for a housekeeper, Miss Gray,” our host tossed out audaciously.

“You are such a good provider, Mr. Halloway, that I am sure it would be a pleasure to be your housekeeper,” returned Miss Gray demurely.

“And if I neglected my duties you could always send your man out to shoot at me.”



“And if I neglected my duties you could always send a man out to shoot me.”

“Ah! That only shows my solicitude to detain you. One couldn’t bear the idea of having you leave our party, and yet one couldn’t in common politeness desert Mr. Gray to follow you. It remained only to send a message via John requesting you to return.”

“Well, he delivered it,” the girl said, dimpling reminiscently.

Halloway smiled. "I'm afraid John is a little abrupt sometimes."

Her eyes mocked him boldly. "In your profession of highwayman, abruptness, one would think, might sometimes be essential."

"It was cruel of you to desert us without warning," he said, ignoring her irony.

"I went to get help."

"That was good of you, but we did not really need it," he returned, misunderstanding her promptly. "Though of course we are very glad to have Damron with us."

"I suppose you know that it will be a criminal offense to keep Mr. Gray here till night as you threaten. You invited him here to a picnic. You have no right to detain him a moment longer than he desires. Your outrageous course is very much against the law, Mr. Halloway," I said stiffly.

He looked politely interested. "Is it? No, I didn't know just how illegal it was. Of course I guessed I was skating on thin ice, but the truth is that I didn't get legal advice. That shows the advantage of having a lawyer along when one goes buccaneering. How much could they give me, Damron?"

"You'll not think it so much of a joke when you are behind the bars."

"No, I daresay not. I expect I would better enjoy it while I have the opportunity. Try one of these peaches, Miss Gray." He leaned against a rock and smoked the placid post-prandial cigar of him whose soul is at peace. I, too, had lit up, but my

mind was far from equable. I was possessed by the vision of a headlong generous girl under the fascination of this charming young vagabond. Yet I confess that for myself I admired as much as I disliked his dare-devil indifference to consequences, though for the life of me I could not guess what his game was or how it could advantage him to detain the Copper King on this mountain top against his will.

He expounded his easy philosophy with airy candor. "After all, laws are made for man, not man for the laws. Mr. Gray is a capitalist, and he can tell you that laws are to be obeyed with discretion. There would not be any use in having them if somebody did not break them occasionally. Well, this is my day off. I'm playing ping-pong with the statutes of Colorado"

"But why?" I demanded. "What good does it do you?"

"Oh come, Damron! Mayn't I have a secret or two of my own? I don't suppose you ever explained publicly just why you happen to be spending your vacation in Colorado instead of Timbuctoo."

I fear I blushed. Glancing covertly at my reason, I found it the fairest under the sun, but too present to admit of discussion.

Suddenly Simon Gray cut crisply into the talk for the first time.

"Of course I understand why you are holding me here, Halloway. You are working under instructions from your father to keep me until after the election this afternoon. But the thing is too barefaced. It won't hold in law. It's a conspiracy."

Halloway's masterful eyes looked straight at him.

“I have not seen or heard from my father in two years, Mr. Gray. He does not have anything to do with his scalawag son. You do not need to look beyond me to place the responsibility for this. But you’re right in one thing. I intend that you shall not reach Denver in time for the Copper Consolidated meeting.”

They were both dominant men, and their eyes met like the flash of steel.

“No? Why not?” asked Gray quietly, his lids narrowing to long watchful slits.

“Because you are going there to take what doesn’t belong to you—to vote away from my father and his associates the control of a business which they have given twenty years of their lives to build. Theirs is a legitimate business enterprise. They developed and extended it gradually. It grew to be a big thing. Then you took a fancy for copper. You——”

“You don’t know what you are talking about young man. I am going there to take what the law allows me—what I have bought and paid for in the open market,” broke in Gray harshly.

“Yes, the law allows it to you, and it doesn’t allow me to interfere. That is where the law is defective. It is true, too, that you have manipulated the market in such a way as to get temporary control of a majority of the stock. But that does not affect the fact that my father and his friends have the moral right to direct the affairs of the Consolidated. Their whole life is bound up in it. You are interested simply for speculative purposes. They have earned the right to direct its affairs. You haven’t.”

“Such talk is sheer folly. You do not understand finance, sir. You have been living outside of the currents of business. The matter is a plain business one, not an ethical or sentimental affair at all.”

Halloway’s daring eyes swept whimsically across the table and rested momentarily on Katherine. “I am trying to keep it on a business basis so that sentiment may not interfere, sir.”

Then Katherine spoke with silken cruelty. “You have a very flattering opinion of my father, Mr. Halloway. It makes his daughter proud to know that one of such notable achievement thinks so highly of him.”

Halloway bowed, a sardonic smile on his good-looking face. “I can hardly expect my course to commend itself to Miss Gray,” he said simply.

Miss Katherine’s dark flashing eyes showed their anger at the presumption of this lawless, high-handed youth. She had, in company with many charming women, a capacity for injustice, but she had, too, a quick instinctive appreciation for fine points of character. Her feelings were outraged that this young man, who had once wanted to marry her and who still held much fascination for her, had taken advantage of his position as host to overreach her father. But she was very much a creature of moods, and I knew her well enough to fear the revulsion which would follow when she began to take into account his motive—loyalty to a father who had disowned him. And I was certain that even now there was running through her rage an admiration of his audacity that would remain when the anger had evaporated.

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