

## Triumph of the Amazon

—Jane Beuret

The summer that Steve Knight went to work for Jed Tilton, Minnie Tilton gained complete domination over her husband, Jed. Steve, though just out of high school, was a good worker. Jed had hired him for a dollar a day. He had twelve acres of cabbage for Steve to take care of. This was really putting Steve's position in the world up a notch, for there was no one else in the surrounding country quite as fond of his farm as Jed. He would no more have let an ordinary "hand" work on it than a mother with one child would let an ordinary nurse take care of the child. Jed's farm meant everything to him that a pretty wife, a nice family, and a successful business mean to many men. For Jed didn't have these other things, as Steve soon found out.

Steve got along very well with Jed, for Jed left the boy to himself, well aware that he knew how to grow cabbage. Then Jed liked the boy.

Mis' Tilton was of a different mind, however. She strenuously opposed Steve's coming, had almost forbidden it, but at the time she still had a little respect left for her husband's wishes and opinions. And she did realize that Jed couldn't take care of the new land he had bought. Minnie wanted this land to pay as much as Jed did; it would mean more money in the stocking. Minnie liked money. But she didn't like the idea of having another person live with them; it was enough, she said, to have one sausage mill to feed, of course referring to Jed. This was unfair, because, when she put the ever-present dish of potatoes on the table, Jed and Steve were each allotted two, while she took the other five. She looked it, too. Had she cared enough about her appearance to be weighed,

she would have made the scales register about three hundred pounds, while Jed was a little man who weighed not an ounce over a hundred and twenty-five pounds. They were an odd sight together: Minnie, in her dirty blue calico dress, which would have made two whole suits for Jed; and Jed, a half a head shorter than his wife, in his diminutive overalls.

Besides half starving Jed, Minnie kept him in such continuous nervous tremor that the flesh couldn't stay on his bones. She began it in the morning, when Jed was still sleeping peacefully (for he managed to keep her out of his dreams) with, "You over there, get up. I declare, if I was as lazy as you we wouldn't have no roof over our heads. The milkin' has to be did this morning." And Jed got up. Then when he brought in the milk it was, "Go feed them hogs. You won't get no meat offa them if you don't." And Jed fed the hogs. There was no need to push Jed so. He was much the more industrious of the two. But Minnie evidently knew this, so in self-defense she found fault with Jed. When Minnie and Jed were married, she had respected him; he was so small and thin, she thought he must have a superior intelligence. But when the gloss wore off their marriage, she found him just a bit dull. Since then she had grown increasingly authoritative. But Jed had a certain wiry strength of character, so that until the summer Steve worked for Jed she never quite mastered him. Besides, she had some sentimental illusions about the supremacy of the male.

Steve was thoroughly disgusted with Minnie and couldn't see why Jed wasn't. She was messy and dirty; she never swept the house; the back



porch was littered with furniture and boxes which had been standing on it for years. The cooking was no better. Minnie put a quantity of grease in the skillet and then put the food in. It was always burned or undone. But Steve stood it all summer until Minnie turned him out, and mastered Jed.

This was the result of Jed's drinking. Not that Minnie objected to liquor; she only objected to Jed's having pleasure. In the fourth year of their marriage, Jed had decided that a little drop now and then would not hurt him; would, on the contrary, fortify him against Minnie's attacks. While prohibition was in effect this did no harm; he had to buy it from a bootlegger and he seldom had enough money for this. Even when he cut his own hair and pilfered his wife's pocketbook, he could never buy more than a half-pint at a time. And he was afraid to get too drunk for fear he would wreck the truck. That would have made Minnie furious. She threatened to beat Jed and send him to bed without his supper if he ever came home drunk. Jed didn't think there would be much left of him if Minnie beat him. So, though he considered it the contrary, it was an unhappy day for him when prohibition was repealed. After that he could buy drinks at a dozen little shops in town. This he did when Steve was there to drive him home, but still Jed didn't have money for too many. So it wasn't until one day in August that Jed was really drunk.

That day Jed had sold some hogs in town for more than Minnie expected, and Jed thought he could take this extra money without Minnie's ever finding out about it. So Jed and Steve stopped for lunch and Jed had two beers. Then they stopped at the grocery and Jed had some straight whiskey. He insisted on driving around the town, though Minnie had told them to be home at one o'clock. Jed didn't think of this; he was hav-

ing too good a time. They stopped at Halgren's farm for some cider that was already hard. And then, in spite of Steve's conscientious protests, he insisted on having just another little sip.

On the way home he began to wonder if it wouldn't have been better to have started home earlier. If Minnie didn't get the truck when she wanted it, she was usually very angry. She'd been acting worse than usual this summer, too. She did not want Steve around. Jed was in an unhappy mood when they arrived home. Steve's efforts to sober him were useless. Jed looked at his watch as they drove in the gates, and groaned. They were two hours late. Minnie stood in the doorway to the kitchen. Jed, benumbed as were his senses, saw something menacing in her attitude. She was standing with her hands on her hips, her shiny cheeks puffed out, and her whole face red with anger.

"Jed Tilton," and there was the sound of the day of doom in her voice, "come here."

Jed looked up at Steve piteously, but did not hesitate to obey.

"You there in the car, pack your things and get out." She had taken the authority of firing Jed's help. But this wasn't all of her triumph. She took Jed by the ear and led him into the wood-shed. Steve ran upstairs, and while he was packing, heard a series of loud whackings and howls, and then there was silence.

When Steve went downstairs to leave, Minnie was bending over the stove frying greasy porkchops; evidently she thought that the beating had been sufficient punishment for Jed and that he needn't be sent to bed supperless. It had been as sobering as chaggrinning to Jed. He looked at Steve sheepishly. He walked carefully over to Steve, as if he were afraid of falling apart, and shook hands feebly with Steve. "Sorry to see you go," he managed



to say, and then looked furtively at Minnie, as if in fear that this would offend her. But the good dame only sniffed. She was tired from the exertion. As Steve reached the gate, the two were still standing there, Minnie with her back to the room, frying the chops, and Jed looking sorrowfully after Steve, as if with Steve his last bit of independence departed.

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## The Usual Procedure

Harriette Perkins

One warm summer day a stately carriage came to a standstill in a quiet little lane that jutted off from the highway about three miles from the village of Campden. The driver jumped down from his seat, and opened the door, and a gentleman dismounted slowly—a tall, stooped man, with a broad-brimmed hat set rather jauntily upon his head. This he immediately took off and slung back into the carriage. He ran his hands through his hair, smoothing it; then brushed the sleeves of his white coat briefly, picked up a gold-headed cane from the floor of the carriage, and set forth up the lane. His hair was gray, but his face was young, and his walk was vigorous; he was not an old man, and did not need a cane—he cut the weeds that leaned out across the lane, or made circles with it in the air, as he walked. The driver stood leaning against the carriage, flicking the dust with his whip, and looking after the departing figure. Then he sighed deeply, climbed back upon his seat, and slouched down into a comfortable, mid-summer attitude, and closed his eyes. Soon his head dropped to one side, and he slept. This was all a part of the usual procedure.

So was the way in which the gentleman took long strides up the lane, and down the broad highway to a great iron gate on either side of which stretched thick double hedges of lilac and dwarf spruce, and behind which rose tall trees. At this gate he paused and looked through the grating with wistful eyes.

Finally he unlocked the gates, pushed them open, and walked through. The house he approached as he walked up the broad driveway was of stone, substantial and well built. It had wide porches at the front and side; and tall windows and doors. However, the windows and doors were boarded up, and vines had grown over them in places.

The tall gentleman walked around the house several times, stopping every now and then to lean on his cane, and stare into space with a thoughtful, faraway look in his eyes.

At last he strolled into small grape arbor that extended along the side lawn and ended in a little gate in the front hedge. The grapes were ripening on the vines; red and blue and white, they hung in heavy clusters. Soon they could be taken and pressed into wine. What beautiful wine! It would have this warm sunshine in it, and the cool leaf-green of this quiet arbor. Wine to be sipped on cold winter evenings to bring the summer gladness back into the heart again. He stood now regarding the fruit solemnly, looking as though his eyes could drink their wine——.

As he stood thus, he heard the sound of horses coming at a rapid trot along the highway. He hurried to the end of the arbor and peeked out through the vines to watch the approaching carriage; a very fine carriage it was, gayly trimmed, but not gaudy; and the black horses pranced along as though they were proud to be the bearers of it. The driver was handsomely dressed in a red jacket and cap; and he, too, seemed proud of his position, for he sat up very straight, and held the