

## INSPIRATION (Version 1)

As I lay half asleep in my best last night  
A forewarning thought came to me,  
And the picture it brought, I'm frank to admit,  
Was one that I cared not to see.

'Twas a sinister face, all wrinkled and worn,  
That laughed in the darkness at me;  
"You can't get away from your conscience," it said,  
"Regardless of where you may be."

So I said to myself, "If this be the truth,  
There's only one thing worth my while;  
I'll create a conscience through beautiful deeds  
Whose ghost in the night wears a smile."

By Ellen M. Stewart (Alice Whitson Norton)

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# THE BLESSED TREASURE

By CLARA V. WINLOW

*Carol, Vlasta, and their friend, Jan, are on a search for a hidden treasure, according to a code left in a legacy letter by Carol's great-grandfather.*

## CHAPTER VII

SOMEWHAT amused at the girls' gasps at what they saw, Jan looked down at his hands tingling yet from the pressure he had exerted in forcing what proved to be a narrow opening into the extended tunnel. "It went ever so much harder than this at first," he said, "and it will naturally go easier if it is opened more. We used this extension only twice; the last time was after you had warned us regarding Anton. Then we put our clock in there."

"So that was what you meant when I asked you if it had been hurt and you said what implied that they hadn't seen it."

As Jan nodded, Vlasta asked, "Would you mind telling us what the other time was that you used it?"

"Not at all," Jan replied. "At first, my helpers and I were so afraid of being heard, that after I had discovered this entrance we decided we would make use of the extension for greater safety. We went to what seemed the end of the tunnel. We worked there only once, for we were convinced we heard voices. The strange thing about that was these voices seemed to come from as deep down under the earth as we were, or pretty nearly. So we didn't stay."

"How do you explain these voices?" asked Vlasta.

"I don't explain them, although I'd like to. We did think of a lot of explanations, even that it might have been Anton and company."

"You said it seemed the end of the tunnel," Carol here put in; "didn't you try to

find out if it really was the end of it?"

Jan gave a somewhat patronizing smile. "We were too—what is the word?—ah, yes, too en-gross-ed" (he pronounced it as if it had three syllables) "with our en-deav-or to think of anything other." Here he gave his familiar grin as he proposed: "But why not be explorers now?"

"Yes! Yes!" came from Carol and Vlasta, their eyes sparkling.

"You'd better each take one of the candles we've kept handy here," suggested Jan.

"I'll take one, but Vlasta has a flashlight," Carol hastened to inform him; "she always carries it with her."

"Good!" commented Jan. "And I have my new one which I did buy when I was in Brno. Not at the fair, though." As he spoke, his thoughts ran: "Carries a flashlight always! Looks as if they've already been exploring. Wonder where and why. Could it be tunnels? I hardly think that." Instead of voicing this, he said: "It will be best for me to go first, for we must be careful. Not that I think of danger, but we should be careful on general principles."

"Where does he pick up all those expressions?" Carol wondered, as he finished speaking. The thought came, too, as it did so often now, how very much slower she was in mastering his language. But these were only flashing thoughts; the prospect before them was too exciting not to have her full attention.

SO in single file, Jan first, then Carol, and last Vlasta, they moved slowly forward, throwing their lights on the walls they passed in search of anything that seemed different. It was strangely quiet and the feeling grew in the two girls that they had entered a region of mystery where anything fairylike might happen.

It took some minutes to reach the end of which Jan had spoken. At this point the tunnel widened out considerably.

"Here is where we should make our—our major examination," Jan said, as Carol, trembling with an expectation of something, she hardly knew what, with Vlasta only a trifle calmer, looked up at him. "And what do you say if we begin with the walls nearest here. There might be another tunnel leading into this wide part, or we may find this same tunnel goes on." Jan looked particularly at Carol as if she were the one to decide.

OH, yes," Carol exclaimed nervously. "Let's begin here. Surely this must be an artificial end. Oh, and if we find—" She stopped herself in time, while Jan looked at her so strangely that quite involuntarily she burst out with: "It's not right, Jan, to keep our secret any longer from you. But perhaps I ought to bind you to secrecy before I tell you what it is."

Jan at once placed his right hand directly over his heart. "You can believe I won't—ah, blab, unless you want me to. But perhaps you'd like me to swear before a notary."

"Please stop being sarcastic; of course, your word is enough," said Carol, seriously. "Now I must tell you that I have a particular interest in finding something. You see, my great-grandfather left a legacy—"

At this Jan's face also became serious. He had plainly not expected anything like this and he listened eagerly.

"Unfortunately," Carol continued, "Great-grandfather didn't tell what the legacy was in the only paper about it that we have. He only said it was 'blessed and more precious than jewels'."

Jan pursed his lips for a whistle, but no sound came. Instead he exclaimed: "Say, that's great! Did he tell where it was, or give any clues?"

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