

Three Brothers and Their Inheritance

by MABEL L. REES

IT IS evening and I have settled down to write about today's exciting events in my diary, concerning my multimillionaire cousins, Gerald, Raymond and Barry Hazelton. They inherited wealth from their father, who was my uncle. At seventy I am about twice their age, but I have always been a confidant of theirs. Though comfortably well off, I am, by their standard "poor." They have offered to help me increase my holdings but I am too cautious to take the risks they take. They can afford to lose by the twists and turns of fortune, and sometimes they do.

According to my diary it was just ten years ago today that Gerald, the oldest, inherited the family mansion surrounded by acres of landscaped gardens. He also became the owner of a large tract of woodland, highly valued for its growth of timber. Just recently he received an attractive offer from a building contractor and decided to accept it.

To celebrate the success of the transaction he invited a party of friends to his home. I was included, and as we strolled through the gardens we heard angry voices just outside the property. A forlorn group of men, women and children were clustered at the estate entrance half imploring and half demanding to see the owner. It seems they were squatters from the edge of the forest where demolition of the trees had begun. They had been told to move on because their camp stood in the way of the equipment and impeded the work of the lumberjacks.

Gerald turned unhesitatingly and walked in their direction, but a moment later a gunshot was heard. The luncheon party reached a shocking climax even before it had begun. I went with my cousin to the hospital and fortunately the wound was pronounced

superficial. No one knew who fired the shot and no gun was found. He said he doubted that any of the squatters did it—more likely it was the disappointed stockholder who had recently sent him anonymous threats.

As the family relationship is very close I wanted to send word to his brothers, and it happens that Raymond returned just a few days ago from an absence of several years abroad. He is the one who inherited the luxurious seaside resort known as Hazelton's Holiday Beach. There fashionable hotels and night clubs as well as opportunities for every kind of outdoor sport, afforded a gay life but Raymond left it to go on a long safari in Africa to hunt big game.

He maintained only a spasmodic contact with his agents saying he would be home soon—then for a long interval all communications ceased while great changes took place in his resort. Something like the boom and bust gold rush days took over as a trade center was established in an adjoining seaport and a different element drifted in. The surrounding area was rezoned for commercial use and many of the select residents sold their beach homes.

When he finally returned he was told that the property which had once been an asset had become more of a liability. Far from being discouraged at the turn of events he started at once to transform his hitherto merrymaking center to one of merchandising.

Later when I reached Barry on the telephone his news proved more exciting than mine. He was the youngest, and some believe he was his father's favorite. He used to say that B stood for brains as well as Barry, and everyone noticed how expert Barry was in deciphering complicated financial statistics and following the score board at