

## ROBERT DULL ELDER'S "THE SOJOURNER"\*

It is interesting now and then to come on the delineation of a cad in a book that is written under a man's name. It happens but seldom, and in this particular instance Kenneth Spenser, cheat at Princeton, fake rescuer of women, is enough like women novelists' conceptions of good cads to be operated on for malformation of the brain. Jack Holi-

\*The Sojourner. By Robert Dull Elder. New York: Harper and Brothers.

day, son of a financier and in love with Kenneth's sister Violet—who later prates of Man and Superman and puts over again the incident of the boa-constrictor—is forced out of Princeton three months before he graduates by the united efforts of Violet and Kenneth to save the latter from the consequences of his cheating at examinations, when Jack said simply, "I'm on the Senior Council—how can I do otherwise than report you then?"

A flash of comprehension and wrath distorted Spenser's visage into the malign beauty of some powerful feline creature which lusts to crush and tear; he flung his gloves upon the floor and took one lithe stride toward Holliday, his hands balled into knotted marble. The venomous black eyes flared as close as might be to the level blue ones, but Holliday moved not a muscle. Spenser drew a quivering breath and stood up. "You damned Pharisee!" he snarled bitterly, "a vox humana on the pedal bass of a Satanic organ."

This is intense living, even at Princeton in one's Senior year.

Follows a quarrel between Jack and his father, the chivalric rescue of a little white slave, and then Jack's departure to the great West. Here he is a man among men, and acts as guide to Violet when she comes out to collect impressions of the mountains. Just why he should at the end marry Violet, who is a young Tartar in petticoats, capable of reversion to type at any crossing of her will, is a psychological mystery that is not made clear, however large a quota of illogical deeds we are wont to lay at the door of blinded love. It is very much like the marrying of Galahad with Catherine of Russia, which would always be a pity.

The Sojourner himself—he who has read Madame Blavatsky's—or is it Annie Besant's—story of the White Brotherhood will be strangely haunted by the reminiscent lines in this book. Jack Holliday runs into a young man on Broadway with a builder's square and a tool box under his arm whose eyes

are ineffably sweet. But it seems a dream. Out West a tall young man with a burro passes in the night prophesying good luck, and names himself "a sojourner in these mountains." But it seems a dream. Steve the outlaw crosses trails with a man whose eyes are the same earnest wells of light. "My name is Maestro," he tells Steve. "I might be any one." Steve wakes up to find himself in a hospital, brought there by a stranger on a burro. But all this, too, seems like a dream. Of Maestro there is either too little or too much. This attempt to blend visualised theosophy with breaking wild horses, a Western man hunt, and all the rest is not well enough done to do more than put one in mind not so much of *The Servant in the House* as of the gay and frivolous and unreverent comments on it.