

**FORTUNE'S  
TANGLED  
SKEIN: A NOVEL**

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Fortune's Tangled Skein: A Novel by Jeannette H. Walworth

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**JEANNETTE H. WALWORTH**

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SKEIN: A NOVEL**



# FORTUNE'S TANGLED SKEIN

*A NOVEL*

BY

JEANNETTE H. WALWORTH

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"The Martlett Seal," "Uncle Scipio,"  
etc., etc., etc.*



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## FORTUNE'S TANGLED SKEIN

### I

#### BLACK PRINCE BRINGS A STRANGER TO FROGNECK AND A SURPRISE TO ONE OF ITS INMATES

It was the sort of night to make one grateful for any kind of shelter and thankful for the privilege of staying at home, even in a hotel.

Among the civilized mitigations of the city, such as electric lights, cabs, good sidewalks, and well-defined crossings, it would have been called a nasty night. Among suburban surroundings, which bordered on wildness under the brightest of suns, it was nothing short of dismal.

A beating rain, mixed with substantial hailstones, fell mercilessly. Wherever a window-sash had been left unshuttered through carelessness, or been deprived of such protection by an exceptionally rude blast, the hailstones got in some destructive work.

## FORTUNE'S TANGLED SKEIN

By the incessant play of lightning a broad expanse of open country was brought briefly into view for the discouragement of a man on horseback, who had been unwise enough to leave a comfortable hotel on the very eve of an uncomfortable storm. Friendly warnings had not been lacking. Taking off his steel-rimmed spectacles, the better to read the darkening heavens, his host of an hour had said:

"I reckon you ain't much of a cloud-reader, sir, or you wouldn't be so brash about settin' out on a eight-mile ride if it's a rod."

A friendly commercial traveller, who had reached the little town of Ponola by the same noon train, added his protest to the landlord's:

"If it's Frogneck you're bent on starting for in such thundering haste, take the advice of a man who has wrestled with Mississippi roads in fair weather and foul. True"—with a resounding slap on the landlord's broad shirt-back—"the Traveller's Rest and Jimmie Dale are good things to get away from, but there's a goodish stretch of ugly country between this and Frogneck. You'd better stay under shelter till them clouds roll by."

The gentle voice of the barefoot hostler, whose hue was blacker than the swift-scudding storm-clouds, was the last lifted in warning:



## A STRANGER AND A SURPRISE

"Less'n it's a mighty matter wid you, boss, to get to Frogneck to-night, I sholy would think twicet befo' startin'."

The traveller threw him a quarter, and vaulted into the saddle with a laughing taunt for all his advisers.

"You think more of a few drops of rain in this country than we do in mine." He rode gayly away, with scarcely a glance at the lowering heavens.

Before expressing an opinion the landlord of the Traveller's Rest slowly shifted from one cheek to the other the quid of tobacco which lent a touch of irregularity to the contour of his face:

"That man's a fool, if he did come from Chicago. Clouds like them may spit 'a few drops of rain' where he come from, but they mean business in this State."

"I am afraid he's in for it," said the drummer, expanding his jaws in a capacious yawn. A profitless afternoon stretched dully ahead of him, and he would have liked the Chicago man's companionship.

The hostler looked at his quarter and sighed. "I sho' do hate t' see ole Black Prince took out in the face of a storm; but that's a rale gentleman."